

RESEARCH REPORT

Evaluation of the 'Parenting Through Separation' Programme



MINISTRY OF
JUSTICE
Tāhū o te Ture

Evaluation of the 'Parenting Through Separation' Programme

Prepared for the Ministry of Justice by

**Jeremy Robertson and Jan Pryor
Roy McKenzie Centre for the Study of Families,
Victoria University**

July 2009



**MINISTRY OF
JUSTICE**
Tāhū o te Ture

Disclaimer

All reasonable effort has been made to ensure that the information provided in this publication is accurate, up to date, and otherwise adequate in all respects as of the date when the report was completed. Nevertheless, this information is made available strictly on the basis that the Ministry of Justice disclaims any and all responsibility for any inaccuracy, error, omission, or any other kind of inadequacy, deficiency, or flaw in, or in relation to, the information; and fully excludes any and all liability of any kind to any person or entity that chooses to rely upon the information.

Published July 2009

Ministry of Justice

PO Box 180

Wellington 6140

New Zealand

www.justice.govt.nz

ISBN 978-0-478-29069-1

2009 © Crown Copyright

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the help and support that we received from everyone involved in the research. In particular, we would like to thank those parents and children who spoke to us about their experiences and who returned our survey. We also want to thank those representing organisations who spoke to us about their experience of working with families and children. Thanks are also due to Vaaiga Maiava and Keri Lawson-Te Aho for providing comment and assistance with interviewing key informants and parents. Finally, our thanks to the Ministry of Justice and their reviewers for providing useful advice and for commenting on drafts of this report.

Contents

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Acknowledgements | 3 |
| Tables | 7 |
| Figures | 9 |
| Executive summary | 11 |
| 1 Introduction | 15 |
| 1.1 Background – parental separation | 15 |
| 1.2 The Parenting Through Separation programme | 16 |
| 1.3 Objectives of the Parenting Through Separation programme | 17 |
| 1.4 Research questions | 18 |
| 1.5 Structure of the report | 19 |
| 2 Evaluation methods | 21 |
| 2.1 Research design | 21 |
| 2.2 Data collection | 21 |
| 2.3 Analysis | 26 |
| 2.4 Ethical considerations | 27 |
| 3 The Parenting Through Separation programme | 29 |
| 3.1 Assessing ‘best practice’ in divorce education programmes | 29 |
| 3.2 Goals and focus of Parenting Through Separation | 29 |
| 3.3 Content of Parenting Through Separation compared to ‘best practice’ | 31 |
| 3.4 Programme delivery | 34 |
| 3.5 Supporting materials | 35 |
| 3.6 Parenting Through Separation and ‘best practice’ | 36 |
| 4 Running the Parenting Through Separation course | 37 |
| 4.1 Numbers attending Parenting Through Separation courses | 37 |
| 4.2 Parenting Through Separation providers | 42 |
| 4.3 Finding out about the Parenting Through Separation course | 44 |
| 4.4 Delivering the Parenting Through Separation course | 48 |
| 4.5 Facilitating the Parenting Through Separation course | 54 |
| 4.6 Quality of Parenting Through Separation materials | 56 |
| 4.7 Suggested changes in the Parenting Through Separation programme | 57 |
| 4.8 Summary | 59 |
| 5 Parents prior to attending a Parenting Through Separation course | 61 |
| 5.1 Characteristics of parent sample and current childcare arrangements | 61 |
| 5.2 What parents want from the Parenting Through Separation course | 65 |
| 5.3 Parent and child needs after separation | 67 |
| 5.4 Child behaviour after separation | 70 |
| 5.5 Summary | 71 |

| | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 6 | Impact of the Parenting Through Separation course | 73 |
| 6.1 | Providers' and key informants' views on the suitability of the course | 73 |
| 6.2 | Key informants' and providers' views of the Parenting Through Separation course impact | 76 |
| 6.3 | Parent post-course evaluations | 77 |
| 6.4 | Parents survey sample – childcare arrangements at follow-up | 79 |
| 6.5 | Parents survey sample – impact of the Parenting Through Separation course on parents' knowledge | 83 |
| 6.6 | Parents survey sample – parents' views of the Parenting Through Separation course | 84 |
| 6.7 | Changes in parent and child needs and issues of separation at follow-up | 90 |
| 6.8 | Changes in child behaviour at follow-up | 91 |
| 6.9 | Summary | 93 |
| 7 | Summary and conclusions | 95 |
| 7.1 | Parenting Through Separation and 'best practice' for parent education programmes | 95 |
| 7.2 | Programme uptake | 96 |
| 7.3 | Programme delivery | 98 |
| 7.4 | Programme delivery by different providers | 99 |
| 7.5 | Programme impact | 100 |
| 7.6 | Conclusion | 102 |
| | Glossary | 105 |
| | References | 107 |
| Appendix 1 | Programme providers in each region | 111 |
| Appendix 2 | Descriptive statistics on measures of parent adjustment at initial pre-programme survey | 115 |
| Appendix 3 | Participant information sheets and consent forms | 117 |
| Appendix 4 | Surveys and interview schedules | 129 |
| Appendix 5 | Analytic approach | 181 |

Tables

| | | |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Table 2.1: | Summary of data sources used in the PTS evaluation | 21 |
| Table 3.1: | The aims of the Parenting Through Separation programme in relation to course content | 34 |
| Table 4.1: | Sex and ethnicity of parents attending the programme | 38 |
| Table 4.2: | Relationship status of parents attending the programme | 39 |
| Table 4.3: | Prior contact with the Family Court and type of contact (multiple types of contact possible) | 40 |
| Table 4.4: | Participation in PTS programme by region, compared to 2006 Census Population regional distribution | 42 |
| Table 4.5: | PTS provider organisation type and area covered – number and percent of providers (n=40) | 43 |
| Table 4.6: | PTS provider coordination of services – number and percent of providers, multiple responses possible (n=38) | 44 |
| Table 4.7: | How parents heard about the programme – registration forms (n=4289) | 45 |
| Table 4.8: | Main sources of referral identified by PTS providers – number and percent of providers, multiple responses possible (n=40) | 46 |
| Table 4.9: | PTS providers' views of main reasons parents did not turn up to course when register – number and percent of providers, multiple responses possible (n=40) | 50 |
| Table 4.10: | Barriers or obstacles to attending the PTS course – percent, parents follow-up survey, multiple responses possible (n=80) | 51 |
| Table 4.11: | Preferred timing of PTS course – percent, parents follow-up survey, multiple responses possible (n=80) | 51 |
| Table 4.12: | Preferred number of sessions in PTS course – percent, parents follow-up survey, multiple responses possible (n=81) | 52 |
| Table 4.13: | PTS provider contact with enrolled parents prior to the course – number and percent of providers, multiple responses possible (n=38) | 52 |
| Table 4.14: | PTS provider ratings of the usefulness of aspects of the programme – numbers of providers | 56 |
| Table 4.15: | Parents' ratings of elements of the programme – percentages (maximum n=3902) | 57 |
| Table 5.1: | Characteristics of parents responding to pre-programme survey – number and percent | 62 |
| Table 5.2: | Demographics of children and current care arrangements – parents' pre-programme survey, numbers and percent | 63 |
| Table 5.3: | Unresolved Family Court applications by current care agreement – parents' pre-programme survey (n=106) | 64 |
| Table 5.4: | Frequency of contact with mothers' and fathers' extended families – percent, parents' pre-programme survey (n=104) | 64 |

| | | |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Table 5.5: | Parent hopes from the Parenting Through Separation course – percentage parents mentioning issues pre-programme (n=119) | 65 |
| Table 5.6: | Summary scores on parent measures of parent and child needs prior to PTS course | 68 |
| Table 5.7: | Parents' summary scores on issues of separation prior to PTS course | 68 |
| Table 5.8: | Percentage of children whose behaviour is rated problematic on pre-programme parents survey – Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (parent version) (n=100) | 70 |
| Table 6.1: | PTS provider ratings of the suitability of the programme for various groups of parents – numbers of providers | 73 |
| Table 6.2: | Types of onward referrals made by PTS providers – numbers and percent of providers, multiple responses possible (n=39) | 75 |
| Table 6.3: | PTS providers' ratings of improvement in parents' adjustment after attending the PTS course – number of providers | 76 |
| Table 6.4: | Parents' ratings of the programme – percentages agreeing with statement (maximum n=3956) | 78 |
| Table 6.5: | Type of Family Court contact post-PTS course – percent, parents follow-up survey, multiple responses possible (n=76) | 80 |
| Table 6.6: | Parents' follow-up scores on measures of parent and child needs and statistical comparison with pre-programme scores | 90 |
| Table 6.7: | Parents' follow-up scores on measures of issues of separation and statistical comparison with pre-programme scores | 91 |

Figures

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Figure 4.1: Number of PTS course participants per month | 41 |
| Figure 5.1: Percentage of parents who are uncertain or who disagree with each statement about separation prior to attending PTS | 69 |
| Figure 6.1: Percentage of children whose behaviour is rated borderline or abnormal at follow-up compared to initial pre-course survey – Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (parent version) | 92 |

Executive summary

Parental separation is a common occurrence in New Zealand and other western countries. Research indicates that parental separation is often associated with negative outcomes for children and that parents can help to minimise the impact of separation on their children. Programmes have been developed for parents to assist them to help their children. These programmes aim to educate parents on the impact of separation on children, how to minimise parental conflict and how to make post-separation care arrangements that are in children's best interests.

The Ministry of Justice has funded the development and provision of the Parenting Through Separation (PTS) programme for separating parents in New Zealand. This report presents an evaluation of the PTS programme. Information was obtained from multiple informants, including programme providers and programme participants. This information was used to evaluate the programme in terms of its goals and its impact on parents.

A review of the objectives, focus and content of the PTS programme in terms of 'best practice' in parent-education programmes for separating parents indicates that the PTS programme is in line with 'best practice'. The PTS course is child focused and covers a broad range of topics in the time available. These topics are similar to those covered in overseas programmes. Having clear goals and a programme manual helps maintain a child focus and helps to ensure that all providers are clear as to what is to be delivered to parents. There is also a good variety of supporting materials (eg, DVDs) to help providers with programme delivery.

Since the introduction of the PTS course almost 4,500 parents have attended a course run by one of the contracted providers throughout New Zealand. The course is being attended by all ethnic groups in approximate proportion to their representation in the national population. Parents from all areas of New Zealand appear to have accessed the course. More women than men have attended the programme and parents attending have on average been in their mid-thirties. Most of these parents were separated at the time of doing the course.

Information from a survey of providers showed how the providers delivered the programme, the extent to which they coordinated services with other providers, how they enrolled parents and efforts they made to avoid people not completing the programme. Additional information from parents was used to identify how parents found out about the course and to identify factors that might limit attendance. Since one factor possibly limiting attendance was the timing of the course, parents were asked which day and time they would prefer. Most of those with a preference wanted weekday evening courses spread over two sessions.

Parent and provider information was used to rate the supporting materials used during the course (eg, DVD, handouts). Parents' comments indicated that the Child DVD had a particularly strong impact on participants. While both providers and parents rated these materials highly, there was less satisfaction with the course activities.

A survey of a sample of parents who intended to attend a PTS course provided information on parents' hopes from the course. This information indicated a diverse group of parents who were at different stages of negotiating post-separation parenting agreements and had different needs. Parents indicated that they hoped the course would help them talk to their children about the separation and show them how to help their children cope with the separation. These expectations clearly match the goals of the course and are no doubt the reasons parents had sought out a PTS course.

The main concern of parents prior to attending the course was with the reaction of their children to the separation and how the parent should manage any new relationships they might enter into. Parents' concerns with child adjustment were reflected in the rate of 'abnormal' scores on a standard measure of child behaviour (the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire), which was twice that expected in a community sample.

Information from key informants, providers and parents was also used to assess the impact of the PTS programme. Providers and key informants considered the PTS course suitable for a wide range of parents, although they had some reservations about the suitability for those with English as a second language. Most providers felt that the course best suited those who had just separated, or were considering separating. While parents sometimes became upset during the course, providers felt able to cope with this situation and where appropriate made onward referrals.

In terms of the achievement of the goals of the PTS programme, providers and key informants felt that it had helped parents in almost all areas targeted by the programmes. When parents completed the evaluation form after the course they rated the programme as having helped them improve the way they would manage the issues around the separation and the care of their children. They reported they would recommend the programme to others and that they found it interesting. An aspect of the programme that was rated as relatively less successful concerned the extent to which the programme helped participants talk to their ex-partner. This finding mirrors that from providers, who thought the programme was least successful in improving the couple relationship.

The follow-up survey of parents (four to six months post-course) provided information on the extent to which parents felt they had benefited from attending the course. In line with programme goals it appeared that children were having more contact with parents and with extended family since the course. However many of the care agreements were still not settled and some parents were still involved in applications before the Family Court. Responses to open-ended questions indicated that the majority of the parents felt the course had increased their knowledge of the effects of separation on children, helped them talk to their children, and had met their information needs (although some wanted more information on the topics covered). Over half felt the course helped them communicate with their ex-partner, although only a quarter felt it helped them with cooperating on issues concerning the day-to-day care of their children.

Relatively few parents said they learnt of new support services, but this was mainly because they had a good knowledge of such services already. Parents' comments about the way the course was run and the supporting materials (eg, DVD) supported the very positive post-course evaluations. At follow-up parents reported that the course had been well run and made positive comments about the course materials, especially the DVD and handouts. Parents appreciated a comfortable venue and the provision of refreshments.

The measures at follow-up revealed that children were significantly less likely than before the course to be caught in the middle of parental conflict and general parental conflict, both of which are goals of the PTS course. Parents were also significantly more satisfied with care, contact and support, reported greater knowledge of separation issues and better adjustment to the separation/divorce. Parents also rated their child's behaviour as less problematic at follow-up. All these changes provide evidence for the effectiveness of the PTS programme, although natural improvement over time cannot be ruled out as an alternative, or contributory, explanation.

The PTS programme meets an important informational need for separating parents. Key stakeholders see value in the programme and wish to see it continue to be available and more widely advertised. Those who have attended are very positive about the course and would recommend it to others. There is evidence from this evaluation that the PTS programme is achieving its goals, although there are some areas for improvement.

1 Introduction

This chapter provides background to the evaluation. It briefly outlines the development of the PTS programme and its objectives. The evaluation research questions are then presented.

1.1 Background – parental separation

Although divorce rates have stabilised in the last ten years they are significantly higher than they were thirty years ago. In addition, with the growth in cohabitation, there are increasing numbers of couples with children whose relationships breakdown, but who are not recorded in divorce statistics. The increased rates of divorce and parental separation in the case of cohabiting couples have resulted in a growing number of New Zealand parents and children being affected by partnership dissolution. The changes brought about by this include changes of home and school, changes in patterns of contact with family and friends, and relationship changes when parents repartner after separation. These trends are also a concern since parental separation can have a significant adverse impact on child development, particularly where there is ongoing conflict between parents after separation (Pryor and Rodgers, 2001).

An estimate of the number of adults and children affected by relationship breakdown in any year comes from data from Statistics New Zealand's Survey of Family, Income and Employment longitudinal survey. Analysis of this data reveals that, between 2003 and 2004, an estimated 25,000 adults and 35,000 children moved from being in a 'Couple with children' family type to a 'One parent with Children' family type (New Zealand Families Commission, 2007). These figures give some indication of the potential pool of parents for any educational intervention for separating parents.¹

Evidence from Australia and New Zealand suggests that, in the majority of cases, children spend most of their time with their mothers and have varying patterns of contact with their fathers (eg, Smyth and Maloney, 2008). In Australia in 2003, for example, 82 percent of non-resident parents were men (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006). In New Zealand, Statistics New Zealand data indicates that 81.8 percent of lone parent households were headed by women (Statistics New Zealand, 2007).

Increasing rates of relationship breakdown and concern at the impact on children (Pryor and Rodgers, 2001) have led to the development of programmes to help parents, and their children, through separation. Providing information to parents on children's needs and adjustment following separation will, it is hoped, assist parents to better care for their children at this time. Better management of the separation by parents will then mitigate many of the negative effects of separation on children.

¹ These figures are estimates only. Any course is open to all separated parents, so those who separated in past years should also be included in any figure of potential attendees.

Providing a relatively inexpensive intervention at an early stage should also reduce the need for parents to use the Family Court in future, resulting in a significant saving in costs and reducing the likelihood of parental conflict. Early intervention should result in more parents being able to negotiate stable post-separation parenting arrangements, to the benefit of both parents and children. For example one study of divorce education in the US found that at two year follow-up, parents who had attended the course re-litigated their case half as often as a control group of parents who had not attended (Arbuthnot, Kramer and Gordon, 1997). Recent reviews of the NZ Family Court (eg, Law Commission, 2003) called for New Zealand to follow international trends in the provision of information sessions for separating parents.

International evaluations of parent-education programmes indicate that they assist parents to communicate, reduce conflict, reduce domestic violence and lessen children's exposure to conflict (see Gillard and Seymour, 2005 for a review). These factors are all linked with optimal outcomes for children after parental separation. Kelly (2006) concludes that research also shows parents in these programmes:

have reported increased parental awareness of children's needs as separate from adult needs; a greater willingness among residential parents to have their children spend time with the non-resident parents; a reduction in parental behaviours that put children in the middle of disputes; better communication; and greater willingness to settle custody and access disputes (p40).

There has been relatively little research on parent-education programmes for separating couples in New Zealand. In 2004 a parent-education programme was trialled at the North Shore Family Court by the Auckland Family Courts Association and the University of Auckland. 'Children in the Middle', based on overseas programmes, consisted of two, two-hour evening sessions for parents held one week apart. Participants on the programme completed questionnaires before attending the first session, soon after the last session and three to six months later. The researchers also interviewed a sub-sample of parents who had completed the programme and eight key stakeholders. Gillard and Seymour (2005) reported an increase in parent knowledge about the impact of separation on their children, improvement in children's behaviour and wellbeing, and a reduction in parental conflict.

Following the successful trialling of the 'Children in the Middle' programme in Auckland the Ministry of Justice obtained funding for, and then developed, the 'Parenting Through Separation' programme, which began operation in May 2006.

1.2 The Parenting Through Separation programme

'Parenting Through Separation' is a free voluntary information programme that aims to educate parents about the effects of separation on children, and teach parenting skills to reduce children's stress during separation. Programme leaders or facilitators provide information to small groups of parents in two two-hour sessions. In some instances, providers hold one four-hour session. Rather than being support groups or providing counselling, the sessions provide information and opportunities for parents to ask questions.

Programme content covers:

- how separation affects children
- what children need during separation
- talking with children
- talking with ex-partners about arrangements for the children
- keeping children away from parental arguments
- how the Family Court works.

The Ministry of Justice provides materials for providers to use in the delivery of the programme. Information brochures or pamphlets and two free DVDs, one for parents and the other for their children, are also available to participants.

The programme is now available from more than 50 providers in approximately 170 sites throughout New Zealand (see Appendix 1 for areas and providers), and can be provided by independent professionals or individuals employed by organisations. All are experienced in working with families, and have been approved by, and work under contract to, the Ministry of Justice.

Participants can self-refer to the programme. Some parents will be newly separated while others will have been apart for some time. Parents who are considering separating, but are still living together may also attend. Although it is considered optimal for both parents to attend the programme they are encouraged to attend at different times.

1.3 Objectives of the Parenting Through Separation programme

The overarching objectives of the Parenting Through Separation programme are to:

- educate parents so they can understand and manage the effect of separation on their children
- improve the maintenance of children's connections with both parents and their wider families in the event of parental separation
- minimise the negative effects of parental separation on children and thereby lower the risk of further negative outcomes for those children, such as youth offending.

The programme aims to achieve these overarching objectives by:

- increasing parents' knowledge of the effect of their separation on children
- helping parents communicate more effectively with their children
- reducing children's exposure to parental conflict
- helping parents communicate more effectively with each other
- encouraging parents to adopt plans and make arrangements that are in the best interests of their children
- encouraging parents to resolve care and custody disputes without resorting to court proceedings, where possible

- increasing parents' knowledge of services available to support and assist their family resolve disputes, where possible.

It is also intended the programme will be:

- available throughout New Zealand
- available to people living in both rural and urban communities
- accessible to Māori, Pacific and other cultures
- accessible to people for whom English is a second language
- accessible to people from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds
- accessible to people with disabilities
- run regularly and at times which take into account participants' work and childcare commitments.

1.4 Research questions

The overall aim of this study is to assess the extent to which the PTS programme is meeting its objectives, as outlined in the previous section.

The evaluation aimed to:

- assess the programme design and delivery against best practice for this type of programme
- assess programme design and programme delivery for:
 - Māori, Pacific and other cultures
 - people with a disability
 - a range of socioeconomic groups
 - parents and families experiencing multiple issues
- assess the quality of programme materials and suggest improvements
- assess to what extent programme delivery at the local level complies with the training manual
- assess programme uptake, including how people found out about the programme, the extent to which the Family Court might be more proactive in referring/directing parents to the programme, the impact of any delays and possible barriers to uptake
- assess how well the programme is meeting parents' information needs
- assess the extent to which providers have processes for onward referrals when they cannot meet all the needs of parents
- assess programme delivery by different providers
- assess different methods of delivery and facilitator skills, including strengths and weaknesses
- note any other issues associated with the programme and its delivery
- identify any unintended impacts of the programme.

1.5 Structure of the report

The following chapter outlines the research methods used by this evaluation to address the evaluation questions. The third chapter describes and assesses the content of the PTS programme in terms of 'best practice' for parent education programmes for those who are separating or have separated. The next chapter (Chapter 4) describes how many parents have attended the programme nationally to date. It also provides information on who has been delivering the programme throughout New Zealand and how they have delivered the PTS course. An assessment is also made of the programme materials (eg, DVD and handouts) and consideration is given to suggested improvements to the operation of the PTS programme.

Chapter 5 considers the needs of separated parents prior to their attending a PTS course. It describes the results of a survey of a sample of parents before they attended the course, which provided information on childcare arrangements and what parents hoped to get from the course. Pre-programme measures of parents' concerns with issues of separation and satisfaction with post-separation parenting arrangements are also presented, as is a measure of child behaviour. Chapter 6 reviews evidence of the impact of the PTS programme, from the perspective of our informants (ie, key informants, programme providers and parents). The parents surveyed prior to the programme were surveyed again four to six months after they had completed the course, and the results of the follow-up survey are also presented in Chapter 6. Changes in issues of concern, satisfaction with arrangements and child behaviour are described and any changes tested for statistical significance.

Finally, the report concludes with Chapter 7, where the information collected during the evaluation is used to address the questions regarding the effectiveness and operation of the PTS programme.

2 Evaluation methods

This chapter outlines the methods adopted in order to answer the research questions detailed in the previous chapter. The variety of sources of information is described along with the general analytic approach and the ethical issues considered when conducting the evaluation.

2.1 Research design

The evaluation used mixed methods to evaluate the PTS programme, with qualitative and quantitative information collected from a variety of informants in a variety of formats. Data from registration and evaluation forms filled out by all parents completing a PTS course was made available to the evaluators. The views of PTS programme providers were obtained by surveying all providers contracted to run the programme. Some of the programme providers were also interviewed and other interviews were conducted with a range of key informants. Finally the programme content, manual and materials were reviewed.

A pre- and post-programme measures design was used to assess the impact of the programme on a sample of participants. Parents were asked to complete a survey prior to entering the programme and followed-up three to six months after programme completion. Previous research scales (McKenzie and Guberman, 1996; Sieppert, et al, 1999) were used to assess participants on a number of dimensions related to the goals of the programme. By using the same measures at both points in time, the evaluators were able to compare responses and test for significant improvements in knowledge and adjustment.

2.2 Data collection

Table 2.1 presents a summary of the information collected as part of the evaluation.

Table 2.1: Summary of data sources used in the PTS evaluation

| Data source | Number of responses |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Parent registration forms | 4406 |
| Parent post-programme evaluations | 3979 |
| Survey of parents – | |
| Pre-programme | 119 |
| Follow-up of those who completed pre-programme survey | 81 |
| Sample of Māori parents post-PTS course | 7 |
| Programme provider survey | 40 |
| Key informant interviews | 42 |

Parents post-programme evaluations

All parents attending the PTS course are asked to complete a Registration and Evaluation form. These are sent to the Ministry of Justice by the provider, along with an invoice for

payment. The forms are entered into a database and the evaluators were supplied with an Excel spreadsheet containing all the forms entered to 18 September 2008.

Registration Forms. These forms are completed by all parents when they enrol in the programme. This form provides information on gender, ethnicity, date of birth, whether separated or not, whether they have ever been to the Family Court, and any concerns about safety. The evaluation analysed 4406 registration forms.

Evaluation Forms. These are filled in by parents when the programme has been completed (usually at the end of the last session). Participants are asked to indicate on a 5-point scale whether, for example, they now know more about how separation affects their children, whether the programme will help them talk to their children, their views on the materials received, and how the programme could be improved. The evaluation analysed 3979 evaluation forms.

Survey of participants

In order to implement the pre- and post- measure design the evaluators needed to recruit parents into the study, and have them complete the initial survey prior to their attending the course. After extensive consultations with a number of programme providers it was agreed that the most practical way to recruit parents was the following procedure.

- The evaluators provided the programme providers with prepaid A4 envelopes containing an introductory letter, an information sheet, a consent form and a survey (see Appendix 3 and 4) with a prepaid return envelope addressed to the evaluators.
- When parents contacted the provider, the programme providers told the parents that the PTS course was currently being evaluated by university researchers. They asked parents if they were interested in receiving information about the evaluation and if the provider could send out the evaluation material. It was then up to parents, once they had received the evaluation material, to decide whether or not they wished to take part in the evaluation.
- The programme sent out the evaluator's envelope prior to the first session (preferably at least a week before). In a few cases the providers handed out the evaluation materials at the first session, but because the time taken to complete the survey reduced the time for the course, this was the exception.
- Parents who wished to take part sent back the survey and consent form to the evaluators in the prepaid envelope.

Providers were selected and approached to take part in this phase of the study on the basis of an assessment of the numbers of parents who had attended their courses. The sample also included a selection of smaller sites (eg, rural sites or sites with specific characteristics such as high proportions of specific ethnic groups). A total of 25 providers from throughout New Zealand helped in recruiting parents into the evaluation. Recruiting took place over a four month period during 2008 (although some additional surveys were received after this period and these were included). A total of 119 initial, pre-programme, surveys were returned to the evaluators.

Using registration and evaluation information supplied by the Ministry of Justice the evaluators were able to identify when parents in the sample had completed a PTS course. After a three to four month period the parents surveyed prior to the course were sent a letter and consent form, the follow-up survey (Appendix 3 and 4) and a prepaid return envelope. They were also offered the option of being interviewed, either face-to-face or over the telephone. Parents were sent a reminder letter 10 days after the follow-up survey and if they had not returned the survey within three weeks they were phoned. As separating parents were likely to be moving, the follow-up phone call enabled the evaluators to check addresses and send out another copy of the survey if necessary.

A total of 81 parents who had attended a PTS course returned a follow-up survey (including one parent who was interviewed face-to-face and one who was interviewed over the telephone)². In addition three parents who had not attended a PTS course returned a survey that asked about the reasons they had not attended the course.

The initial survey asked parents about the current status of their relationship, the arrangements for the care of their children, whether children had been consulted about the arrangements, what they wanted from the course, and knowledge of support services. Parents then completed measures of the extent to which their children were placed in the middle of parental conflict, general parental conflict, joint parenting post-separation, and use of low contact strategies. Parents also indicated their degree of agreement with a series of questions regarding issues of separation; level of satisfaction with care, contact and support, levels of knowledge related to separation issues, levels of adjustment in relation to the separation/divorce, satisfaction with parent–child relationships, the importance of the child's best interests in making care arrangements, and confidence in reaching agreement in the future. Finally basic demographic information was collected and parents rated the behaviour of one of their children on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman, Meltzer, and Bailey, 1998).

The follow-up survey also began by asking for details of the current arrangements for the care of the children, details of changes in these or new parenting plans, any Family Court contact and whether attending the course had helped in reaching childcare agreements. Parents were asked if the course had increased their knowledge of the possible effects of separation on children, whether they had spoken to the children about childcare arrangements since the course and if the course helped them to do so. A series of questions asked about how parents found out about the course, their preferences for a provider, problems in enrolling on a course and any obstacles to their attending the course (eg, childcare or transport problems). Parents were asked for their preferences for the timing of the course and whether it is run in one or more sessions. The measures from the initial survey, including the SDQ, were then completed.

The follow-up survey then asked a series of questions about parents' experiences of, and views on, the PTS course they attended. Parents were asked whether the course met their

² In addition a number of the parents were spoken to and offered the option of a telephone interview at follow-up. Although the course was briefly discussed, these parents later completed the follow-up survey.

needs and if anything was missing from the course, and they were asked to identify additional issues that might be covered. Parents commented on the facilitation of the course and the course content and materials. They were asked to list new support services they had learnt about as a result of attending the course and to indicate whether or not they would recommend the course to others. Finally parents were asked if attending the course had helped them communicate better with their partner, reduced conflict, and/or led to more day-to-day cooperation between them. Parents were also asked for any additional comments they wished to make.

Additional parent interviews

Because of the relatively low representation of Māori and Pacific parents in the survey sample we sought to interview Māori and Pacific parents who had attended a course in the last eight months. Those who had attended a course indicated whether they would be willing to talk to the evaluators. We were able to contact and interview seven Māori parents who had completed the programme and agreed to contact on the post-course evaluation form. Unfortunately there were very few Pacific parents who had attended the course in the last eight months and agreed to contact and we were not able to interview additional Pacific parents.

Children of programme participants

All those parents who had completed the programme between July and November 2008 (but were not already in the sample of parents who had been surveyed prior to the course), and who had agreed to contact by the evaluators, were sent a letter and survey, with a prepaid return envelope. Parents were asked if the evaluators could talk to any of their children aged 9–16 years old, to ask these children if they would like to assist with the evaluation by talking to the evaluators. A total of 170 letters were sent to parents, but only five were returned by parents who indicated that the evaluators could talk to one of their children. One of these parents gave permission for a child with whom she was not having contact (due to Child, Youth and Family action) and because of this, and the young age of the child (less than nine years old) this child was not interviewed.

The evaluators contacted the parents and arranged to visit and talk to the children regarding the evaluation. The children in these three families were visited, had the study explained to them and given a consent form to sign. All agreed to talk to the evaluators. Open ended face-to-face interviews were held with four children (aged 9–16 years) of parents who had participated in the programme. The interview (Appendix 4) discussed children's knowledge of the programmes, whether parents had discussed it with them and whether parents had talked to them about the care arrangements or separation since attending the course and whether they had been shown the programme materials, such as the DVD.

Previous research with children whose parents have separated has also found that it is very difficult to recruit child participants (eg, Rigg, 2009). Due to the small number of children interviewed it is not possible to draw any conclusions about the children's perceptions of the impact of the PTS course, and therefore we did not use their information in the report.

Programme providers

A list of contracted programme providers was supplied to the evaluation team by the Ministry of Justice. Since some of the providers had offices covering different areas, all of the larger providers (eg, Relationship Services, Barnardos, and Family Works) were contacted and a database of individual programmes/courses was compiled. In total there were 74 providers identified (including all offices running the programme for the national providers such as Relationship Services and Barnardos), including 15 providers who had yet to run a course. All providers were sent an initial letter introducing the evaluation team, and indicating that they would be given the opportunity to complete a survey. All programme providers in the database were then sent a survey with a cover letter and return prepaid envelope.

The survey (Appendix 4) asked for basic information on the provider organisation, the area covered, the source of referrals, the courses run, facilitators' training and experience, assessment of programme materials, judgement of programme effectiveness and suggestions for the future development of the programme. Those providers who had not run a course were asked to only complete relevant sections of the survey, including a question on why they had not been able to run the PTS course. After 10 days a reminder letter and email was sent to those who had not returned the survey. In total 40 providers returned a survey.

Key informants

A range of key informants was interviewed about the PTS programme. The evaluators identified key informants in consultation with the Ministry of Justice and PTS programme providers. In addition our cultural consultants identified relevant key informants who could comment on issues for Māori and Pacific families. Key informants' contact details were obtained from the Ministry and programme providers, and key informants were contacted by the evaluators. Evaluators arranged to meet with key informants, at which time they were given an information sheet, had the study explained to them, and if they agreed they were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix 3).

In total 42 key informants were interviewed:

- fourteen programme providers
- four Family Court judges
- five Family Court lawyers
- ten representatives from Māori, Pacific and other non-government organisations
- seven Ministry of Justice National Office and Family Court staff
- two other key informants who were associated with the development of the programme.

The programme providers came from throughout New Zealand and represented both larger national organisations and smaller local providers. The Family Court lawyers were all experienced senior lawyers who practised mainly in Auckland and Wellington, with diverse client groups. All had been practicing at the time the PTS course was introduced. The representatives from Māori, Pacific and community organisations came mainly from North

Island urban areas. Finally, the Family Court staff worked in both larger urban courts and smaller courts in the North and South Islands.

Key informants provided background information on their role in relation to the programme and any information they had about its development. They were asked if they thought there was a need for the programme and whether it was widely available to parents in their area. Reasons for parents not attending the programme were sought and the possibility of making the course mandatory for parents filing applications in the court was discussed. The issue of extending funding to include parental supporters (eg, new partners) was then discussed.

Where appropriate key informants were asked if they referred parents to the PTS programme, whether this was done for all parents or only select groups, if they would continue to refer and whether their organisation received referrals from the programme. Key informants were asked if they knew of the content of the programme, and if they did what they knew of programme delivery in their area. They rated programme materials and the extent to which the PTS programme was suitable for specific groups of parents (eg, different cultural groups, victims of domestic violence). Where they could do so, key informants rated the impact of the programme on specific knowledge areas and its overall effectiveness. Any unintended effects were identified by key informants and they were asked to make suggestions for additional content and future enhancement of the programme.

While efforts were made to ask all informants a basic set of questions, with additional questions relevant to their role, when interviewed it was found that most of the non-provider key informants were not aware of the detailed operation or content of the PTS course or able to comment on its impact on individual parents. Where they have been able to comment this has been noted, but there are a considerable number of instances in which most were unable to do so.

Review of programme documentation and materials

Documentation and programme materials were assessed in terms of best practice standards derived from a review of the international literature, programmes and guidelines.

2.3 Analysis

The data collected from the surveys and interviews was entered into a computer file for further analysis. Some of the questions had precoded response options while others were open ended. In the later case all the comments for a specific question were examined and general themes identified. These themes were then used to code the comments. The general analytic approach is outlined in Appendix 5.

The items on the measures of parent and child needs, issues of separation and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire were used to construct summary scores. A comparison was made of scores on these measures, comparing the individual's initial survey and follow-up survey scores. This approach tests if, on average, individuals have statistically significant improvements (or declines) on the measures of parent and child needs and issues of

separation after attending a PTS course. They also test if parents rate their children's behaviour as better (or worse) at follow-up compared to at the initial survey.

2.4 Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Victoria University Human Ethics Committee. The submission to the Ethics Committee detailed procedures for fully informing those being asked to take part in interviews or complete a survey, for obtaining their consent, and for procedures for storing and maintaining the confidentiality of information. All participants in the evaluation were provided with information sheets outlining the study and the conditions under which they were being asked to take part, including that:

- participation was voluntary
- all information supplied would be treated as confidential to the research team
- respondents had the right to refrain from answering any specific questions and could withdraw from the interview or evaluation at any time.

All participants were asked to sign a consent form prior to interview or completing a survey. All participants were asked to indicate if they wished to receive a brief summary of the research findings at the conclusion of the research.

It was considered possible that participants may have become distressed when discussing some topics. In order to minimise this possibility the evaluators made clear that participants could refuse to answer any question and could withdraw from the study at any time. Interviewers could also offer the contact details of counsellors or support organisations.

3 The Parenting Through Separation programme

This chapter reviews the goals and contents of the Parenting Through Separation programme in terms of what are generally agreed to be 'best practices' for such programmes. The review first outlines the evidence base for the assessment of the PTS programme: the overseas programmes examined and practice guidelines referred to. The PTS goals are then assessed and the general focus and approach of the programme is identified. The detailed content of the programme is then compared to that of other established programmes. Finally an overall assessment is made of the degree to which the programme and its contents meet standards of 'best practice'.

3.1 Assessing 'best practice' in divorce education programmes

There is no one document that can be referred to in order to establish 'best practice' for divorce education programmes. As research and evaluation of these programmes is relatively limited there is no clear empirical base on which to recommend 'best practice', although there is tentative evidence for some practices. However it is possible to refer to a number of studies, programmes and guidelines and to compare the PTS programme to what seems to be the consensus on how to run these programmes.

Divorce education programmes for parents have been widely used in the United States (Pollet and Lombreglia, 2008) and are beginning to be developed in other countries. For example, Alberta has implemented and evaluated parenting after separation seminars (Sieppert, et al, 1999) and the RESOLUTION organisation in the UK has recently developed a resource/programme for separating parents (McGee, 2008).

A number of different programmes have been developed and delivered in different States in the US (see National Centre for State Courts 2004 for a list of State programmes) and some of these programmes have been evaluated (Goodman, et al, 2004). Some of these States have also developed guidelines for parent education programmes (New York State Parent Education Advisory Board, 2003) or proposed model programmes (Supreme Court of Virginia, 2000).

Education programmes for separating couples are also part of the more general category of parent education programmes, including general parenting programmes and targeted programmes, for example for couples with children with child behaviour problems or learning difficulties. Research into various types of parenting programmes has also established general 'best practice' guidelines for such programmes (eg, Kerslake-Hendricks and Balakrishnan, 2005).

3.2 Goals and focus of Parenting Through Separation

Successful programmes have been found to have clearly articulated goals that can be realistically achieved through the proposed intervention (Kerslake-Hendricks and

Balakrishnan, 2005). Clear goals help maintain a focus for the programme and enable an assessment of the extent to which it achieves its goals.

The overarching goals of the Parenting Through Separation programme are to:

- educate parents so they can understand and manage the effects of separation on their children
- improve the maintenance of children's connections with both parents and their wider families in the event of parental separation
- minimise the negative effects of parental separation on children and thereby lower the risk of further negative outcomes for those children, such as youth offending.

The programme aims to achieve these overarching objectives by:

- increasing parents' knowledge of the effect of their separation on children
- helping parents communicate more effectively with their children
- reducing children's exposure to parental conflict
- helping parents communicate more effectively with each other
- encouraging parents to adopt plans and make arrangements that are in the best interests of their children
- encouraging parents to resolve care and custody disputes without resorting to court proceedings, where possible
- increasing parents' knowledge of services available to support and assist their family resolve disputes, where possible.

These clear objectives are in line with the research evidence that children suffer when parents are involved in high conflict separations and that parents have an important role in helping children cope with their parents' separation (Pryor and Rodgers, 2001). Research also indicates that, where possible, children benefit if they can maintain contact with both parents after separation (Pryor and Rodgers, 2001). The means by which these objectives can be achieved are also clearly specified and in line with the research evidence on the importance of healthy relationships for children's wellbeing.

The goals of the PTS programme are very similar to those outlined for parent education programmes overseas. For example, the 'Parents Forever' (University of Minnesota, 2006) programme goals are to:

- eliminate parental conflict in front of children
- keep the children out of parents' issues
- provide children with access to both parents
- put the best interests of children first.

The New York guidelines (New York State Parent Education Advisory Board, 2003) recommend programmes encourage parents to:

- create and maintain supportive parent–child relationships
- provide a stable, supportive home environment
- maintain healthy parental functioning and psychological wellbeing
- protect children from ongoing conflict between parents.

There has been some discussion of the focus of parent education courses. Braver, et al's (1996) review of the content of 102 US divorce education programmes found that the content of these fell into three broad categories: parent-focused goals, child-focused goals, and court-focused goals. They found the emphasis was on parent-focused goals in most of the programmes they reviewed. However recent guidelines recommend that programmes be child-focused and designed to help parents understand what their children are experiencing (Supreme Court of Virginia, 2000; New York State Parent Education Advisory Board, 2003). The focus of programmes may depend in part on the nature of the programme, with many of the shorter (one to two hour) court-led seminars focused more on informing parents about parental adjustment to divorce and legal process.

The above goals of PTS indicate that the course is child-focused, with its clear emphasis on the impact of separation on children. To achieve these goals it is also necessary to address some parent issues, such as the quality of communication between parents. The child focus of the PTS programme is in keeping with the focus recommended as best practice for parent education programmes for separating parents.

3.3 Content of Parenting Through Separation compared to 'best practice'

Best practice for parenting programmes suggests that programmes perform better when they use a manual to clearly outline the details of the programme (Kerlake-Hendricks and Balakrishnan, 2005). Detailing the course structure and content in a manual is particularly important where multiple providers are running the programme, as it ensures programme integrity (eg, that different providers are delivering the same course content). The PTS programme is outlined in a programme manual, where the ten topics covered in the sessions are detailed. The topics are divided into two sections to match the usual format of two sessions.

Session 1:

Topic 1: Children need parents who understand what separation is like for children (includes information about the process of separation for parents).

Topic 2: Children need parents who protect them from adult conflict.

Topic 3: Children need parents who help them get through the tough times (includes suggestions for parents getting help themselves if necessary and introduces community support services).

Topic 4: Children need parents who are willing to try changes to make things better.

Session 2:

Topic 5: Children need parents who are willing to try changes to make things better (this is a reporting back session from Topic 4).

Topic 6: The best arrangements for children are made by parents who put their children's interests first. (This topic is sometimes taken by lawyers and includes information about UNCROC³, the Care of Children Act 2003, etc. It also emphasises the need for family and whānau to understand the legal aspects of children's rights).

Topic 7: The best arrangements for children are made by the parents themselves, involving children when they are willing and able. This section includes suggestions for parenting plans and offers exemplars of calendars to be used by families.

Topic 8: The best arrangements for children are where parents try to avoid conflict with their ex-partners.

Topic 9: The best arrangements for children hardly ever involve a Family Court hearing. This topic is also presented by a lawyer if present, and has strong emphasis on avoiding court if possible.

Topic 10: The best arrangements for children require commitment from parents.

In comparison, the New Zealand programme 'Children in the Middle' covered a very similar range of topics:

- how separation affects children
- parents' experience of separation
- what parents can do to help children
- understanding the Family Court
- options for parenting plans
- how to parent with your ex-partner
- other sources of information.

Examination of overseas programmes and guidelines indicates that they cover similar topics, with some additional material. For example, the New York State guidelines (New York State Parent Education Advisory Board, 2003) suggest that courses cover the following –

- children's reactions and adjustment to divorce
- responding to children's reactions to divorce
- stages of divorce
- co-parenting communication skills
- parents' reactions and adjustment to divorce

³ United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children.

- cooperative and parallel parenting
- referrals to services
- custody and visitation
- essentials of parenting and co-parenting
- children at risk.

At 12 hours, the 'Parents Forever' (University of Minnesota, 2006) programme is significantly longer than PTS (4 hours), but it is worth comparing the content of both programmes. In three sessions the 'Parents Forever' programme covers the following –

Session 1:

- impact of divorce on adults and how to cope
- legal issues and role of mediation in divorce.

Session 2:

- impact of divorce on children and how best to help them adjust
- developmental needs and age-related behaviour
- parenting style, communication skills between parents, tools to develop parallel parenting plan.

Session 3:

- money issues in divorce
- pathways to a new life. Letting go of the past, redefining their shared role as parents; effects of new relationships; developing a new circle of support.

Many of the issues covered are similar to the PTS topics, but the longer 'Parents Forever' course makes it possible to cover them in more depth. It appears that Session 3 of 'Parents Forever' covers two topics that are not covered by PTS: financial issues and parents moving on to a new relationship. However, these are more parent-focused issues and would not be considered a high priority in a child-focused course such as PTS. The PTS course does include some discussion of the role of new partners and managing their relationship with the children. Some programmes give explicit consideration to issues of child and parent safety, topics that might be touched upon in individual PTS courses depending on the situation of the parents attending.

While the content of the PTS course is similar to that of other programmes it also needs to be examined in light of the PTS programme objectives. Table 3.1 lists the aims of the PTS course, and shows topics and supporting fact sheets related to the aims. All aims are covered by at least one fact sheet or topic.

Table 3.1: The aims of the Parenting Through Separation programme in relation to course content

| Aim | Topic covering aim | Fact sheet covering aim |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| To increase parents' knowledge of the effect of separation on children | 1 | √√ |
| Helping parents communicate more effectively with their children | 3 | √ |
| Helping parents communicate more effectively with one another | 8 | √√ |
| Reducing children's exposure to parental conflict | 2, 8 | √√ |
| Encourage parents to adopt plans that are in the best interests of their children | 4, 6, 7 | √√√√ |
| Encourage parents to resolve disputes without resorting to court proceedings | 7, 9 | √√ |
| Increasing parents' knowledge of services available | 3 | √ |

It appears that the content of the PTS programme outlined in the facilitators' manual is similar to topics covered in other parent education programmes for separating parents. It also appears that most of the content of the programme is clearly related to its goals.

3.4 Programme delivery

Parent education programmes vary in their length and intensity. Some programmes are relatively short (an hour or less) one-off seminars, often involving a short video presentation and brochures. In the US these short seminars aim to present information to all those who approach the court. Other programmes have been designed for parents who are experiencing difficulties in negotiating parenting after separation. These tend to be longer multi-session programmes targeting parents with high levels of conflict and often concentrate on communication and parenting skills. Between these extremes are relatively short-term courses (eg, two to six hours), usually held over one to two sessions. They have fairly comprehensive coverage of a range of issues related to separation and divorce, and children's adjustment.

Most programmes comparable to the PTS programme last at least four hours (Alberta – six hours; Vermont's 'Coping with Separation and Divorce' – four hours). There is no agreement on the ideal length of courses, with one State guideline recommending courses lasting at least four hours (Supreme Court of Virginia, 2000) while another recommends a minimum of six hours but no more than eight hours (New York State Parent Education Advisory Board, 2003). The PTS course, which lasts four hours, falls within the former guideline, but not the latter. Guidelines also recommend that multiple sessions be held in order to avoid information overload.

The ideal class size of education courses for separating parents varies from programme to programme. The New York State guidelines suggest a maximum size of 50 parents, with a

facilitator–parent ratio of 15:1. The Virginia guidelines propose a class maximum of 20 parents, the Children in the Middle (US) programme recommends class sizes of 12–20 parents, and the University of Vermont programme recommends group sizes of 10–25 parents. In New Zealand, with a smaller population base than overseas programmes, it would be rare for the maximum number of 16 parents on a course to be exceeded. However courses frequently run with less than 10 parents, which may impact on how the course is conducted.

Programmes have also been characterised as differing in the extent to which they are skill-based, psycho-educational, or affect-based (informing parents about children’s feelings about divorce). For example, the Children in the Middle (US) course is characterised as skills-based with an emphasis on giving parents skills to enable them to reduce conflict and improve communication (Gordon and Arbuthnot, 2008). Research (Geasler and Blaisure, 1999; Kramer et al, 1998) suggests that programmes incorporating video, skill-building demonstrations and exercises, discussions, handouts, and some didactic presentations are more effective than programmes relying on just one format. While the Parenting Through Separation course includes most of these elements (see next section) there is some doubt about the extent to which the current course is able to provide practical experience to develop new skills. The skills and experience of the facilitator and the size of the PTS group may be important in determining the extent to which skill building is included in any PTS session.

3.5 Supporting materials

The nature and quality of supporting course materials are important to the success of any programme. As the Virginia guidelines state: “Due to parents varying learning styles, literacy levels, languages and cultures, teaching techniques should include a combination of lecture, discussion, videos, role-play, and visual and auditory teaching tools” (Supreme Court of Virginia, 2000). These guidelines also recommend that parents be provided with a comprehensive manual, which covers information presented in the course. Many of the courses reviewed supply booklets detailing the information covered in the course (eg, Children in the Middle (US); Parents Forever).

The PTS programme has a number of supporting materials to assist with the presentation of the course. There are two DVDs used by the course and available free to parents: ‘Families Talk About Separation’ and ‘Kids Talk About Separation’. The ‘Families Talk about Separation’ DVD is two hours long and covers the same material covered in the two sessions of the course. The ‘Kids Talk about Separation’ DVD is intended to also be shown to children and discusses the feelings and worries children typically have when their parents separate. It includes children talking about their experience of separation. These DVDs are well produced, easy to follow and highly relevant to the course aims and content.

Unlike some of the overseas courses, there is no single PTS document/booklet covering the course contents. Participants are provided with a range of brochures covering legal issues and booklets, for both parents and children, offering guidance to separation and involvement

in the Family Court. There is a booklet that helps parents develop parenting plans and there are a number of fact sheets cover the following:

- what children need from parents
- children need parents to protect them from conflict
- children need parents to help them through tough times
- working out arrangements for children
- how to make arrangements for children after separation
- getting on as a separated parent
- new partners and stepfamilies
- change-overs and moving between households
- tips for grandparents and other family/whānau
- answering difficult questions from children.

Facilitators also supply a list of local support services, and the 'Putting the Kids First' brochure includes a list of resources.

The PTS manual also includes a number of suggested activities to support the programme. For example, during session one it is suggested that participants are invited to discuss the 'myths and realities' surrounding separation and its impact on children. During Topic two parents may be asked to take time to consider the questions their children might ask about the separation and how they might respond to these.

Overall, the materials and resources for PTS are similar to those reviewed in the US and UK. Although some information is given about court processes, the course seeks to help parents avoid the Family Court where possible. This reflects a difference between the US and New Zealand in the use and acceptance of court processes – a large majority of separating parents in the US use the court whereas a minority file applications in the Family Court in New Zealand.

3.6 Parenting Through Separation and 'best practice'

A review of the objectives, focus and content of the PTS programme in terms of 'best practice' in parent education programmes for separating parents indicates that the PTS programme is in line with 'best practice'. There is a good variety of supporting materials (eg, DVDs). The PTS course is child focused and covers a broad range of topics in the time available. These topics are similar to those covered in overseas programmes. Having clear goals and a programme manual help maintain a child-focus and helps to ensure that all providers are clear as to what is to be delivered to parents. However a programme manual does not ensure that providers deliver the course as outlined in the manual and the following chapters will evaluate how the course is implemented in practice.

4 Running the Parenting Through Separation course

This chapter describes how the Parenting Through Separation programme is run nationally. Information from the registration and evaluation forms is used to describe the characteristics of those attending the programme nationally. Providers' surveys and key informant interviews are then used to detail who is providing the course and how these providers are delivering the course throughout New Zealand. Information from parents is used to describe how they found out about the PTS programme and any obstacles or barriers to their attending. Information from providers and parents is also used to describe how courses are facilitated (including significant variations in practice) and to assess the quality of the supporting programme materials (eg, DVDs and handouts).

4.1 Numbers attending Parenting Through Separation courses

Registration forms are completed by parents when they attend the first session of the programme and an evaluation form is generally completed at the end of the second, and final, session. This information is then sent to the Ministry of Justice for compilation.

Registration form data was available for 4406 parents, and evaluation form data on 3979 parents, who had completed the PTS course between May 2006 and 18 September 2008.⁴ Note that in the following tables percentages are for valid responses only (eg, missing data is excluded) and therefore numbers do not always add up to 4406 (registration form data) or 3979 (evaluation form data).

Information on the demographic characteristics of the parents is presented in Table 4.1. In keeping with the generally greater participation by women in parenting programmes (Kerlake-Hendricks and Balakrishnan, 2005) more mothers than fathers had attended the programme. New Zealand European ethnicity was the main ethnic group identity of parents, with 71.7 percent identifying with the NZ European ethnic group, compared to 67.6 percent in the 2006 Census.⁵ Māori, at 15.6 percent were in proportion to their representation in the general New Zealand population (14.6 percent in the 2006 Census identified with the Māori ethnic group).

⁴ As there are delays in sending forms to the Ministry, it is likely that more parents had attended the programme prior to 18 September 2008.

⁵ Ethnicity has been coded in two ways. Priority coding has been used in the following analysis, where parents identifying as Māori were coded as Māori (irrespective of other ethnicities cited), then any of the remaining parents identifying with a Pacific ethnicity were coded as Pacific, and finally those of the remaining selecting NZ European ethnicity were coded NZE. The table also displays all those who selected each of the ethnic groups, so some are coded twice or more often. In this case percentages add up to more than 100. This coding has been used to compare the data with NZ Statistics results from the 2006 Census, which is based on this later approach.

Table 4.1: Sex and ethnicity of parents attending the programme

| | | Frequency | Percent |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Sex (n=4387) | Female | 2732 | 62.3 |
| | Male | 1655 | 37.7 |
| Ethnic Group (n=4335) | Any Māori | 678 | 15.6 |
| | Tongan | 95 | 2.2 |
| | Samoan | 88 | 2.0 |
| | Cook Island Māori | 39 | 0.9 |
| | Niuean | 19 | 0.4 |
| | Other Pacific | 52 | 1.2 |
| | Any Pacific | 293 | 6.9 |
| | New Zealand European | 2888 | 66.6 |
| | Any NZ European | 3109 | 71.7 |
| | Other European | 266 | 6.1 |
| | Chinese | 54 | 1.2 |
| | Indian | 63 | 1.5 |
| | Other | 94 | 2.1 |

Pacific peoples were also represented in proportion to their representation in the New Zealand population (6.9 percent in this sample and 6.9 percent in the 2006 Census). However the individual Pacific ethnic groups showed some interesting variations in participation in PTS. In the general New Zealand population Samoans make up the largest proportion (49 percent) of Pacific peoples, followed by Cook Island Māori (22 percent); Tongans (19 percent); Niueans (8 percent); Fijians (4 percent); Tokelauans (3 percent); and Tuvaluans (1 percent). However more of the Pacific PTS participants were Tongan and fewer were Samoan than might be expected. This may reflect the impact of one major South Auckland provider who has good links to the Tongan community.

The other point to note is that relatively few Asian parents appear to be taking part in the PTS programme, compared to their representation in the population. It needs to be noted here that since we do not know what proportion of each ethnic group experiences relationship separation we do not know what proportion of separated parents in each ethnic group are taking up the programme. Census data can only serve as a rough estimate of expected participation, but some ethnic groups may have relatively high, or low, separation rates.

Parents ranged in age from 16 to 75 years, with a mean age of 37.7 years. There is no limit on the age of parents attending, or of their children, so it is possible that some of the older participants were parents who had separated sometime ago and who now had adult children. These older parents may have specific needs when attending the course, such as how to continue in their relationship with their adult children.⁶ Women tended to be younger (mean age 36.4) than men (mean age 38.4) ($t=7.6$, $df=4047$, $p<.000$).

⁶ It is also possible that these were grandparents caring for grandchildren, or were extended family or whānau who were attending as support people. This later group is not covered by funding and should not, in theory, have completed the registration form.

Although 10 percent of the parents were still living with their partner, most parents indicated that they were separated (90 percent) and for almost half (44 percent) of these parents this separation had occurred over a year ago (Table 4.2). The relatively high proportion who had been separated for over 12 months may partly reflect the fact that the PTS course is new and there is a potential backlog of separated parents who want to attend the course. The proportion of parents who had been separated over 12 months decreased from 44 percent in 2006 and 46 percent in 2007 to 39 percent in 2008 (time separated by year – $X=19.03$, $df=6$, $P=.004$).

Table 4.2: Relationship status of parents attending the programme

| | | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------|---------|
| Relationship status (n=4339) | Separated | 3903 | 90.0 |
| | Living together | 436 | 10.0 |
| Time separated (n=3803) | less than 3 months | 837 | 22.0 |
| | 3 to 6 months | 725 | 19.1 |
| | 7 to 12 months | 580 | 15.3 |
| | over 12 months | 1661 | 43.7 |

Note: Difference in number of parents separated due to some indicating they were separated but not providing length of separation.

Pacific (71 percent) and Asian (80 percent) parents were less likely to be separated than other ethnic groups (NZE 93 percent, Māori 89 percent) ($X=1.46$, $df=3$, $p<.000$). However of those who were separated the length of time they had been separated did not differ for parents from each of the ethnic groups.

Parents were asked on the registration form 'Are you concerned about your safety, or your children's safety, if you attend this programme'. Relatively few parents had safety concerns (n=245, 5.7 percent), with similar proportions of men (6.0 percent) and women (5.6 percent) having safety concerns. However, comments made by parents on the registration form illustrate a range of general concerns, few of which related specifically to attending the course.

Concern with ex-partner's anger and violence –

Protection order in place

Father intimidation/threats/violence

Not physical but psychological concerns.

Concern for safety of children when with other parent –

Children's safety

Child's safety within wife's care

[Ex-partner] suffers depression which has an impact on son's safety.

Concern with ex-partner's new partner –

What people are around my boy

My daughter's mum's partner has violent convictions; there has been domestic violence in their house.

Relatively few safety concerns related specifically to attendance on the PTS course –

Would like to keep this [attendance on the course] confidential to avoid deterioration

Sort of concerned that he might turn up

Only safety concern is my ex turning up at the same time [course] as me.

Safety concerns were more likely to be expressed by Pacific parents (20.1 percent) compared to Asian (10.9 percent), Māori (6.1 percent) and NZ European (3.7 percent) parents.

Table 4.3 presents information on parents' prior contact with the Family Court. Over half the parents had been to the Family Court, with more of the separated parents (57 percent) reporting having been to the Family Court compared to those who were still living together (29 percent) ($X^2=121$, $df=1$, $p<.001$). Of those who had been to the Family Court two-thirds had been for counselling. Over half of those who had been to the Family Court had been for orders, including a quarter who had been for protection orders.

Table 4.3: Prior contact with the Family Court and type of contact

| | | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Family Court (n=4320) | Been to Family Court previously | 2338 | 54.1 |
| | Not been to Family Court previously | 1982 | 45.9 |
| Nature of contact (n=4195) | Counselling | 1464 | 34.9 |
| | Protection order | 587 | 14.0 |
| | Other orders | 1173 | 28.0 |

Note: Multiple types of contact possible.

Amongst those who were separated, more Māori (60 percent) and NZ European (58 percent) parents had been to the Family Court than Asian (44 percent) and Pacific parents (44 percent) ($X^2=20.2$, $df=3$, $p<.001$). NZ European (39 percent) and Māori (35 percent) parents were more likely to have been to the Family Court for counselling than Asian (30 percent) and Pacific parents (23 percent) ($X^2=22.4$, $df=3$, $p<.001$). Māori (37 percent) were more likely to have been to the Family Court for 'other orders' (apart from domestic protection orders), than NZ European (30 percent), Pacific peoples (21 percent) and Asian (17 percent) parents ($X^2=21.2$, $df=3$, $p<.001$).

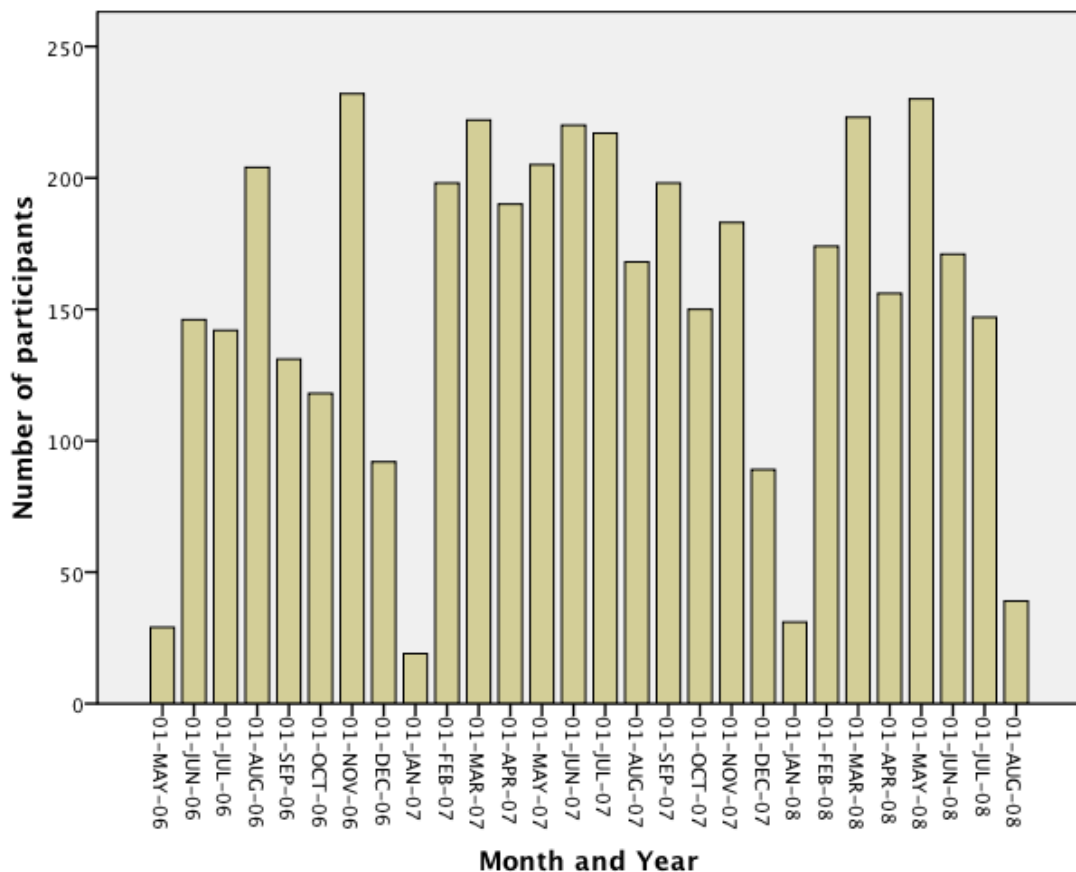
Of those separated, Māori (21 percent) and Asian (21 percent) parents were more likely to have been to the Family Court for protection orders, compared to NZ European (14 percent) and Pacific (14 percent) parents. Given the earlier finding that 20 percent of Pacific parents had safety concerns about attending the course the rate of domestic protection applications in this group seems low. However, most (90 percent) of those parents who had been to the Family Court on domestic protection matters did not have safety concerns regarding

attending the PTS course. In part the higher rate of safety concerns amongst Pacific parents may reflect the fact that some had yet to separate and were concerned their partner might find out they were attending the course.

Women (15.3 percent) were more likely to have been to the Family Court in relation to a protection order, compared to men (11.9 percent) ($\chi^2=1.68$, $df=2$, $p<.000$). As any order involves both parents, the relative under-representation of men who have been to the Family Court for domestic protection orders in the sample suggests that men subject to these orders are slightly less likely to attend the PTS course.

Figure 4.1 shows the number of parents attending the PTS courses throughout New Zealand each month since it began in May 2006. There are two trends in the data that are apparent from this graph. Firstly, there is a drop in PTS participation in January and, to a lesser extent, December each year. It is likely that relatively few courses are run during this summer holiday period. Secondly, although there is some variation from month to month it appears that participation in 2006 was lower than in 2007 and 2008. Excluding the first and last months, and the January and December months, on average 183 parents attend the course each month.

Figure 4.1: Number of PTS course participants per month⁷



⁷ The figure for August 2008 is likely to be incomplete as there is often a delay in providers sending in Registration and Evaluation forms to the Ministry of Justice.

Table 4.4 presents the number of parents who have attended the PTS programme in the different areas of New Zealand. In addition the table shows the proportion of the New Zealand population in each of the areas at the 2006 Census. A comparison of these figures shows a close match between the proportion of the participants in each region and the proportion of the population living in that region. Although using national population figures to represent the eligible population of parents is not perfect, there is no reason to believe that regions differ widely in the proportion of their population comprising separated parents. The figures in Appendix 1 showing provider coverage over New Zealand and this data on programme uptake, suggest the PTS programme is widely available to all parents throughout New Zealand.

Table 4.4: Participation in PTS programme by region, compared to 2006 Census Population regional distribution

| Area | PTS participants | | 2006 Census Percent |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| | Number | Percent | |
| Northland | 137 | 3.1 | 3.7 |
| Auckland | 1290 | 29.3 | 32.3 |
| Waikato and Rotorua Taupo (incl. Tokoroa) | 507 | 11.5 | 9.5 |
| Bay of Plenty | 255 | 5.8 | 6.4 |
| Taranaki | 122 | 2.8 | 2.6 |
| Palmerston North and Wanganui | 223 | 5.0 | 5.5 |
| Gisborne | 79 | 1.8 | 1.1 |
| Hawkes Bay | 126 | 2.9 | 3.7 |
| Wellington, Horowhenua and Wairarapa | 559 | 12.7 | 11.1 |
| Nelson | 167 | 3.8 | 2.2 |
| Blenheim | 67 | 1.5 | 1.1 |
| West Coast | 13 | 0.3 | 0.8 |
| Christchurch and North South Canterbury | 505 | 11.4 | 12.9 |
| Otago and Queenstown | 307 | 6.9 | 4.8 |
| Southland | 41 | 0.9 | 2.3 |
| Total | 4398 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Source – Statistics New Zealand; <http://www.stats.govt.nz/NR/rdonlyres/19D6A4B9-7D98-4AF9-970D-5BBD139794CA/0/RegionalSummaryTablesRegionalCouncil.xls>

4.2 Parenting Through Separation providers

A variety of programme providers was initially contracted to deliver the course throughout New Zealand (see Appendix 1). The main providers have been the national organisations – Relationship Services, Barnardos and Family Works – along with local providers in the main cities and rural centres. Fifteen of the originally contracted providers do not appear to have run the course and another ten providers had delivered the course to less than 20 parents at the beginning of the evaluation.

A survey was sent to 74 providers we had identified as being contracted to provide the course, irrespective of whether or not they had run the course.⁸ A total of 40 providers returned a survey to the evaluators. One of those who returned the survey said they had not run the programme as they had not had enough referrals. There were no returns from the

⁸ The 74 includes all the offices of larger providers.

other 14 providers who were contracted to run the programme, but had never done so.⁹ The 39 responses from providers who had delivered the PTS programme represent 66 percent of the 59 providers who have run the programme. Table 4.5 shows the type of organisation the surveyed PTS provider represented. Almost half were from national organisations, such as Relationship Services or Barnardos, and almost a third were local community organisations. Five were providers associated with Māori organisations and six were independent private practitioners.

**Table 4.5: PTS provider organisation type and area covered
– number and percent of providers (n=40)**

| | Number | Percent |
|-----------------------------|--------|---------|
| Type of organisation | | |
| National | 17 | 43 |
| Local community | 12 | 30 |
| Māori provider | 5 | 13 |
| Private practitioners | 6 | 15 |
| Area of New Zealand | | |
| North of Auckland | 2 | 5 |
| Auckland region | 9 | 23 |
| Waikato and Bay of Plenty | 6 | 15 |
| Central North Island | 7 | 18 |
| Wellington region | 2 | 5 |
| Top of South Island | 3 | 8 |
| Canterbury | 5 | 13 |
| Otago | 4 | 10 |
| Southland | 1 | 3 |
| Missing | 1 | 3 |

Responses came from providers throughout the country, with the largest number coming from Auckland. As might be expected, over 80 percent reported providing the course in cities, although 45 percent also provided courses for parents in rural areas. Just under a third (30 percent) provided courses in towns and two Māori providers reported providing the course to parents in a specific rohe (area of specific tribal group).

The majority (80 percent) of the providers reported running other parenting courses in their area. These included programmes targeted at specific groups, such as sole parents, fathers or teenagers. Others ran government-funded programmes such as 'Strategies for Kids, Information for Parents' (SKIP) or 'Parents as First Teachers' (PAFT) and some also ran programmes aimed at addressing domestic violence.

Providers were also asked if they were aware of other PTS providers operating in their area. Only two providers said they were the sole PTS provider in their area, and both were located in the south of the South Island. Fifteen percent were aware of only one other PTS provider in their area and a further 25 percent were aware of two other providers. While a third

⁹ The cover letter with the survey to providers requested that all providers respond, even if they had yet to run the programme. It is possible that in these organisations they did not respond as no one had knowledge of the programme, for example those initially trained to deliver the programme had left the organisation.

operated in areas with at least three other providers, almost a quarter (22 percent) of the providers did not know how many other providers there were in their area.¹⁰

Just over a third (35 percent) of the providers were aware of Māori providers in their area and a quarter were aware of Pacific providers. However six of the providers did not know if there were any Māori or Pacific providers. If there are no Māori or Pacific providers in their area, or providers are not aware of those operating, then it is unlikely that parents of these ethnic/cultural groups will know of or be referred to a provider of their culture.

Table 4.6: PTS provider coordination of services – number and percent of providers, multiple responses possible (n=38)

| | Number | Percent |
|-------------------------------------|--------|---------|
| No coordination | 14 | 37 |
| Run at different times | 19 | 50 |
| Take turns to run course | 2 | 5 |
| Run joint course | 2 | 5 |
| Run in different areas locally | 2 | 5 |
| Run for different groups of parents | 1 | 3 |

Those with other providers in their area were asked if they meet with any of the other providers to try to coordinate their PTS services (Table 4.6). Over a third did not meet with other providers, but for those who did the major outcome was that they ran courses at different times or on different days. One provider might run their course on the weekend while the other might run the PTS course in the mornings on a weekday. In this way they provided parents in the area with more options for when they might attend the course. A few providers took turns at running the course, ran the course in different areas or ran joint courses. One Māori provider indicated that they had coordinated with other providers to cater for different groups of parents, with this provider catering mainly for Māori parents in the area.

4.3 Finding out about the Parenting Through Separation course

A significant issue identified by the interviews with key informants (including providers) was the lower than expected number of referrals initially.

There was a great deal of frustration and dissatisfaction at times about the work that went into promoting it and the small number of referrals – and the expense because people were not turning up. [Provider]

This had led some of the contracted providers to withdraw from delivering the programme (as is evidenced by the figures presented in the previous section). In particular the smaller providers had found it difficult to sustain offering the programme when they were not getting any referrals and could not offer their facilitators regular work. It was not financially viable for them to run courses for only a few parents, as unlike the larger organisations, they could not cross subsidise services.

¹⁰ It is possible they were aware of other providers but could not identify how many there were.

An important element in getting parents to attend the programme is letting them know it exists. Table 4.7 presents information from the registration forms on how parents who attended PTS found out about the programme. Most had heard about the programme from counsellors (24 percent) or the Family Court (18 percent). Fathers were more likely to have heard about it from the Family Court (22 percent compared with 16 percent for mothers). Family/friends and lawyers were also a source of information for about one-in-ten parents. The 'Other' category included a range of responses that were reported by very few parents or were not specific enough to be coded into existing categories.

Table 4.7: How parents heard about the programme – registration forms (n=4289)

| | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Counsellor | 1013 | 24 |
| Family Court | 777 | 18 |
| Family/friends | 489 | 11 |
| Lawyer | 486 | 11 |
| Newspaper/advertisement | 447 | 10 |
| Programme provider | 372 | 9 |
| Radio | 108 | 3 |
| 0800 211 211 Helpline | 95 | 2 |
| Website/Internet | 86 | 2 |
| Citizens Advice Bureau | 66 | 2 |
| School | 58 | 1 |
| Health or Family Support | 52 | 1 |
| Community agency | 43 | 1 |
| Government agency | 35 | 1 |
| Current or ex-partner | 30 | 1 |
| Community Law Centre | 29 | 1 |
| Women's refuge | 18 | 1 |
| Other | 85 | 2 |

Pacific parents were more likely to cite family/friends and programme providers as informing them of the PTS programme than Māori and NZ European parents who were more likely to cite counsellors.

The above data indicates that parents heard about the PTS course from a range of sources. Providers were asked to indicate the main sources of referral to their programme (Table 4.8). The source most often cited as the main referral source was clients already engaged with the service, cited by almost three-quarters of the providers. Almost as many providers received referrals from the Family Court and over half had parents referred by counsellors. Four in ten of the providers cited lawyers as providing referrals and a similar proportion received referrals via the free phone (0800) number. A variety of other sources of referral was noted, including health workers (eg, doctors and plunket nurses), Citizens Advice Bureaus, Māori and Pacific agencies and professionals, and church groups.

Comparing these results with parents' reports of how they found out about the course (Table 4.7) indicates some agreement and some differences in how parents came to attend a

course.¹¹ While providers identify referrals from their own service as a main source of referrals, less than 10 percent of parents said they heard about the programme from a provider. There is more agreement about the relative importance of the Family Court, counsellors and lawyers as information and referral sources.

Table 4.8: Main sources of referral identified by PTS providers – number and percent of providers, multiple responses possible (n=40)

| | Number | Percent |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------|---------|
| Clients of your service | 31 | 78 |
| Family Court | 29 | 73 |
| Counsellors | 26 | 65 |
| Local lawyers | 17 | 43 |
| 0800 number | 16 | 40 |
| Citizens Advice Bureau/Community organisations | 8 | 20 |
| Health professionals (eg, Doctors) | 6 | 15 |
| Other Māori providers | 6 | 15 |
| Māori Professionals (eg, Māori counsellors) | 3 | 8 |
| Other Pacific providers | 1 | 3 |
| Pacific Professionals (eg, Pacific counsellors) | 1 | 3 |
| Church groups | 1 | 3 |

According to Māori key informants, larger and longstanding organisations that had Māori workers such as Relationship Services were seen as being more experienced and able to deliver the programme more effectively than the new Māori providers who were not well known and/or did not have experience in delivering this type of programme. The smaller, newer Māori providers, tended not to receive referrals or to lobby for them.

Māori providers who do receive referrals tended to be those who had specialised experience in working with issues such as domestic violence and child abuse. These are longer standing Māori providers that are known to referring agencies and the local Māori community with a measure of perceived professional credibility.

In the main, the providers catered for a general cross section of their local population. A few providers catered for specific cultural groups (eg, Chinese, Māori) or had parents from specific groups (eg, young parents, supervised contact centre clients). This no doubt reflects the fact that clients of the service are being referred to the programme, and that if they specialise in providing a service to specific population groups then these will be over-represented in the PTS courses.

Although community groups are mentioned by providers as an important source of referrals, some of the community groups spoken to were not aware of the PTS programme, or seemed to confuse it with other services funded by the Family Court (eg, counselling, Domestic Violence Act 1995 programmes). However, where key informants were aware of the existence of the programme they had all referred parents to the programme, and were confident that they would continue to do so in the future.

¹¹ These are different questions. The parents are asked how they found out about the course, while the providers are asked where their referrals come from.

Few of the key informants referred parents to specific programme providers. In general they would direct parents to the local Family Court, to the Family Court website or give them lists of providers in the local area. The onus was then on parents themselves to make contact with a PTS provider. One key informant commented that the problem with this was that parents might then contact a provider who was not currently running the course and therefore be put off attending. Some key informants directed parents to Māori and Pacific providers, but one noted that they would not necessarily know of the parents' ethnic group, for example if talking to them on the phone.

Some Family Courts have been very active in publicising the course and in referring parents to the programme. In one area the Family Court coordinator provides parents making applications in the Family Court with a referral form, including a list of providers. The parent chooses a provider and returns the form to the Family Court coordinator, who forwards it to the relevant provider. Family Court coordinators are generally active in promoting the programme, and courts make available course pamphlets and DVDs.

Both Family Court staff and many providers also actively promote the course in their local community. Pamphlets are dropped off, or sent, to doctors, community organisations, schools and Family Court lawyers. Some Family Court coordinators send out lists of providers and updated dates and times for courses. Some providers have used their own agencies resources to advertise the course in local media (eg, radio and newspapers).

It was noted by many key informants that referrals increased when the PTS course was advertised on national radio, and most thought this should continue. However, key informants also noted that potential referrers need to have face-to-face contact with providers, so they had a better understanding of the course and confidence in those providing it. There are a large number of brochures and pamphlets on a range of issues and there is the potential for PTS pamphlets to be lost in the volume of material. For example, one key informant who was a Family Court lawyer said she attended a breakfast session where local providers spoke about the programme. This gave her a good understanding of the programme and the confidence to refer her clients to a course. She also commented that while those regularly practising in the Family Court would support such a programme, some lawyers have limited experience of Family Court work and may not be referring parents.

In one area there was a concern that lawyers were giving their clients the programme materials to take home, instead of making a referral to a provider. These parents would not benefit from the presentation and discussions held at the course and thus not obtain the full benefit of the PTS programme. In some Family Courts, judges are also suggesting to parents making applications that they attend the PTS course. However there is currently no way in which parents can be directed to attend the PTS course. Key informants were asked if attendance at a PTS course should be made mandatory for parents filing care of children applications in the Family Court. Key informants had varying views on this issue.

I don't think there would be better uptake if it was mandatory. I'm not keen on saying 'thou shalt do it now' – doesn't do it for me. . . . [Judge]

No I think it should be a parent's choice to go. [Provider]

If they are filing an application it should be. Make them do some work before filing applications. [Family Court staff]

It was felt that having parents attend against their wishes might result in disruption to the course and be to the detriment to the other parents. Some key informants had experienced this and one reported having to ask a parent to leave a course. However others noted that sometimes these reluctant parents benefited greatly from the course, once they had got over their initial reluctance. Key informants commented that the suitability of the course to different parent groups depended on the make up of the particular course and on the skills of the facilitator to adapt to parent needs.

While key informants often made referrals to the PTS programme, it is possible they might get referrals from the programme. Where appropriate, key informants were asked if they received referrals as a result of parents attending the PTS course. Those providers offering a range of services reported that some parents were referred to other services they offered, for example parenting programmes. These agencies also referred their existing clients to the PTS programme. As the larger agencies are running other programmes for couples or parents who are likely to be eligible for the PTS course, this is appropriate. In cases where agency clients attended the PTS course, the providers felt that they benefited since the client's background was known to the provider and the programme could be tailored to their needs and clients could be followed up at a later date.

4.4 Delivering the Parenting Through Separation course

Providers who returned the survey were asked how many times they had run the PTS course in their area. Two providers did not respond and another two could not give an exact number, other than to confirm they had been running the course. One provider had not run the course, commenting that they had not had enough referrals. Another provider had run only three to five courses, but were no longer running any courses as their facilitator had left. Of the remaining providers, eight had run between six and ten courses and 26 had run more than 10 courses.

Most of the providers (83 percent) said they had also been using the PTS materials in other contexts. Over three-quarters said they used the materials in a one-on-one session with parents, sometimes with parents who had been unable to make the course. A few providers used the materials for staff training and education or with other parenting groups.

Māori providers who had other whānau¹² related health and social services programmes to deliver could include the PTS programme with other whānau work they were doing such as providing health education advice and programmes, such as Strengthening Families where they were accessing the same whānau/parents and children under stress. However, this was not considered to be ideal because it could be confusing to whānau and may be experienced as overwhelming.

¹² See Glossary.

Once parents contact the provider, they are generally enrolled on the next programme being offered by that provider. Providers usually ran the course once a month, although they may have to cancel a course if they did not get enough participants. Seventy percent of the providers had cancelled at least one course in 2008, with a quarter cancelling three to four courses in that time. Providers reported giving up running courses in some areas as a result of poor attendance and 40 percent of providers said there were local areas where they no longer ran the course. Typically these were smaller towns and it was thought possible for parents to travel to courses in the nearest major city.

Three-quarters of the providers reported aiming for five to seven parents per course, although a fifth reported planning for groups of eight to ten parents. Non-attendance of enrolled parents was reported to be a problem by many providers, with only four of the 38 providers currently running the course reporting that all parents normally turn up to their courses. Most providers (74 percent) reported that they normally had one or two parents not turn up to their courses, with the remaining providers (16 percent) normally getting three to four parents not turning up.

Recently the Ministry of Justice has allowed providers to run the course with less than five parents in attendance. All providers reported being aware that they could run the course with less than five parents. All but three of the providers said they had run courses with less than five parents attending, with almost half the providers routinely doing so. Over half thought it was financially viable to run the course with less than five parents, but this may reflect the new policy to pay a minimum amount per course, irrespective of numbers attending.

The main reasons cited by providers for parents not attending the course as planned are shown in Table 4.9. Five providers indicated they did not know why parents did not turn up despite enrolling for a course. A lack of childcare was the major issue noted by providers, with almost three-quarters of current providers identifying this as an issue. A third of providers also thought that transport problems cause parents to miss the course. The day on which the course was held and the time it was held were cited by a fifth of the providers. In addition there were a number of other factors that sometimes contributed to parents not turning up, including sometimes having to wait for a course or concerns about privacy.

Māori key informants reported that access issues for some Māori parents, were a concern in terms of their ability to attend the PTS programme. These issues apply across the social services sector and are not unique to this particular programme. However, poverty (equating to lack of transport, no ability to pay for childcare) was seen as the biggest prohibiting factor to Māori parent participation in this programme.

Dropouts between session one and two (if run in two sessions) were less of a problem for providers. Parents sometimes had sick children and so could not make the second session, and in some cases providers would follow-up with these parents to cover the second session material.

Table 4.9: PTS providers' views of main reasons parents did not turn up to course when registered – number and percent of providers, multiple responses possible (n=40)

| | Number | Percent |
|-------------------------------|--------|---------|
| Lack of childcare | 27 | 71 |
| Lack of transport | 12 | 32 |
| Day the course held | 8 | 21 |
| Time the course held | 7 | 18 |
| Having to wait for a course | 4 | 11 |
| Sickness (of child or parent) | 4 | 11 |
| Parents reconcile | 3 | 8 |
| Privacy concerns | 2 | 5 |
| Don't know | 5 | 13 |

When parents were surveyed after the course, only six parents of the 81 reported that they had had a problem finding a PTS programme to attend. The main reason cited by these parents was there were no courses available in their area. Only five parents had a preference for a particular provider. These parents selected the provider based on prior knowledge of the preferred provider (eg, they had previously attended the service). Only one of these parents was unable to attend their preferred provider, because they were temporarily not running the course.

Eight parents reported they had problems enrolling on a course. Two of these parents said they left messages with a provider but did not hear back from them.

When I phoned, the receptionist was away and a note was taken. When I phoned back the receptionist had no note.

Parents had to wait between less than a week and up to 12 weeks to attend a PTS course; with an average wait of three weeks. For the 26 parents (34 percent) who had to wait more than three weeks the majority did not find this delay created any problem for them. Only two parents indicated that the delay was a problem, with an increase in stress experienced as a result of the wait.

In order to find out what might be contributing to non-attendance of enrolled parents they were asked if they had experienced any obstacles or barriers to their actually attending the PTS course they had selected. Almost 60 percent could not identify any barriers to attending the course, while the remainder identified a number of these (Table 4.10).

Where they experienced obstacles to attendance the main ones were finding childcare, having to wait for a course and finding a course at the right time. Four parents noted other issues. For one parent this involved avoiding a course being attended by his partner.

Yes I had to make sure my ex-wife was not booked on same course due to protection order issues.

Table 4.10: Barriers or obstacles to attending the PTS course – percent, parents follow-up survey, multiple responses possible (n=80)

| | Number | Percent |
|------------------------------------------------|--------|---------|
| None | 46 | 58 |
| Finding childcare | 13 | 16 |
| Having to wait for a course | 11 | 14 |
| Finding a course held on the right day | 11 | 14 |
| Finding a course held at the right time of day | 11 | 14 |
| Ex-partners possible negative reaction | 6 | 8 |
| Finding a course nearby | 4 | 5 |
| Concerns about relevance | 4 | 5 |
| Getting transport to the course | 3 | 4 |
| Concerns about privacy | 3 | 4 |
| Getting leave or time away from work | 3 | 4 |

As the timing of the course is an issue for some parents, all parents who were surveyed were asked when they would prefer the course to be run (Table 4.11). While just under a third had no preference, more parents (39 percent) would have preferred a course that was run on weekday evenings. Weekday daytime (19 percent) and weekend daytime (14 percent) were preferred by fewer parents and weekend evening sessions were preferred by relatively few parents. Mothers were more likely to express a preference for a day time course (83 percent) compared to fathers (50 percent) ($\chi^2=11.9$, $df=1$, $p<.001$). Mothers preferred weekday sessions, whether during the daytime or at night.

Table 4.11: Preferred timing of PTS course – percent, parents follow-up survey, multiple responses possible (n=80)

| | Number | Percent |
|-----------------|--------|---------|
| No preference | 25 | 31 |
| Weekday evening | 31 | 39 |
| Weekday daytime | 15 | 19 |
| Weekend daytime | 11 | 14 |
| Weekend evening | 5 | 6 |

The course is generally run in two two-hour sessions, but some providers run it in one four hour block. Parents were asked what they would prefer for the number and length of the sessions (Table 4.12). Almost two-thirds of the parents preferred to have the course run in two two-hour sessions, with almost a quarter preferring one four-hour session. These preferences may simply reflect what parents experienced when they attended the course or parents may find having two shorter sessions suit them better. As was discussed earlier, guidelines suggest that programmes do not overload parents by having sessions that are too long.

Table 4.12: Preferred number of sessions in PTS course – percent, parents follow-up survey, multiple responses possible (n=81)

| | Number | Percent |
|------------------------|--------|---------|
| No preference | 11 | 14 |
| Two two-hour sessions | 52 | 64 |
| One four-hour session | 19 | 24 |
| Four one-hour sessions | 3 | 4 |

In order to ensure that as many parents as possible turn up to the course providers had adopted a number of strategies to maximise participation (Table 4.13). The most common strategy was to phone the parents prior to the course. Over half the providers sent out a letter to parents and many included pamphlets with the letter. Two providers also included the course DVDs with the contact letters. A small number of providers reported visiting parents at home prior to the course. Many providers adopted multiple strategies, the most common being sending out a letter and pamphlets, followed by a reminder phone call (27 providers). Only six providers relied solely on a phone call prior to the course.

Table 4.13: PTS provider contact with enrolled parents prior to the course – number and percent of providers, multiple responses possible (n=38)

| | Number | Percent |
|---------------------|--------|---------|
| Phone contact | 33 | 87 |
| Letter | 23 | 60 |
| Pamphlets sent out | 22 | 58 |
| Kōrero | 3 | 8 |
| Home visit | 3 | 8 |
| Child DVD sent out | 2 | 5 |
| Parent DVD sent out | 2 | 5 |

A number of other issues regarding running the PTS programme were canvassed with providers. It is considered desirable that both parents attend the parent education courses, but go to different sessions (New York State Parent Education Advisory Board, 2003). A third of providers routinely made attempts to contact a parent's ex-partner to inform them of the PTS course, with another third occasionally doing so. Most providers reported they only occasionally had both parents attending their courses (separately), but it is also possible that parents choose to attend different providers in order not to have to wait for a course.

Māori key informants felt the programme had some excellent content and acknowledged that the expertise of the provider to adapt it culturally, for application to Māori parents, was important. The PTS programme was perceived as having value for the whānau, tamariki¹³ Māori and parents, particularly when Māori providers had the expertise to, and actually did, tailor it for application to Māori.

The limit of four hours for delivery was a concern for Māori providers because this prohibited the application of cultural processes such as whakawhānau ngatanga and mihimihi. In some

¹³ See Glossary.

cases, Māori providers either take a longer time to deliver the programme so that it is inclusive of core cultural processes (without payment for the additional hours). Some Māori providers include the programme as part of a more comprehensive package of services, such as health promotion and health education training in order to 'kill two birds with one stone'. This is a pragmatic approach that may work, but the risk is that the focus of the PTS programme is lost in a package of services.

The programme does not recognise the extensive role of the extended whānau in the care and protection of Māori children, although it uses the terms family/whānau interchangeably. This was identified by most of the Māori respondents as a foundational oversight in terms of its application to Māori parents and tamariki. The preference was to either develop a specialised Māori programme with whakapapa protection¹⁴ (tiaki whakapapa) as the frame within which all of the content is understood and applied, or to tailor the current programme and formalise the cultural content to have a more culturally appropriate application to Māori. It was noted that each rohe or tribal area does things differently and so what may be appropriate in terms of 'Ngati Poroutanga' will be different from 'Tuhoetanga'. However, there are generalisations that can be made across different tribal regions such as the meaning and obligations of whakapapa, tuakana/teina relationships.

Māori constructs such as aroha, whakapapa, manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga are not included in the programme and there was widespread support for the development of a Māori specific programme utilising Māori cultural constructs such as those listed above.

Māori language is used interchangeably with Māori parents and their whānau by Māori providers. For example, words such as hara (conflict), mamae (pain), whatumanawa (heart), koro ma, kuia ma (older generations), whakapapa (genealogy-based relationships), pukuriri (anger), whawhai (to fight) wairua (spirit) are commonly used terms which convey deep cultural meanings that the current course does not recognise or contain. It is language that makes sense to Māori parents and their whānau.

These comments raise the issue of having support people attending the course with a parent. These may be extended family or whānau or they could be a new partner. The wish to bring support to the course may be more prevalent for some cultural groups. In fact over half the providers had had requests from Māori parents to bring whānau to support them on the course and most reported being able to accommodate these requests. In general three-quarters of providers reported having had occasional requests for parents to bring support people to the course, usually to the first session only.

Most key informants felt that funding should be extended to cover support people. Sometimes these support people were themselves eligible to attend the course, since they were new partners who were themselves separated. Since extended family and new partners often played major roles in the care of the children it was considered appropriate they attend the course. With all those involved in the care of the children receiving the same information it was thought that children would be more likely to benefit.

¹⁴ Whakapapa protection has been used as a construct that shapes the responsibility of whānau, Hapū and iwi Māori to Māori children.

Māori providers reported that whānau support was important for Māori parents, but Māori providers had to meet the costs of hosting whānau support as they are not covered in the contract price. The majority of the Māori providers interviewed, would only deliver this programme with whānau support present as this is most appropriate culturally. Most Māori providers refused to limit the programme to parents only on tikanga grounds. They would cover the cost of hosting whānau themselves.

Key informants sometimes expressed concerns about the attendance of support people. It was felt they might change the balance of the group, especially where large numbers of extended family attended. One Pacific provider commented that the appropriate cultural response to separation would include family members, but would involve a different process and would be more focused on negotiating parenting arrangements, rather than delivering an educational programme.

4.5 Facilitating the Parenting Through Separation course

Providers were asked for the qualifications and experience of their main facilitators. Four facilitators had masters level qualifications, ten had bachelor degrees, and fifteen had diplomas (mostly in social work or counselling). The remainder had certificates in counselling or social work. As might be expected from the nature of these qualifications, most facilitators had worked as counsellors (16 facilitators) or social workers (10 facilitators). The remainder had some relevant experience, such as running a domestic violence programme or being a parent educator.

Twenty-three of the facilitators had at least two years experience in running the PTS course, and only seven had been running the course for a year or less. Six facilitators had run 10 or more courses in the past year, 16 had run between five and nine courses and nine had run fewer than five courses in the last year. In addition one facilitator had yet to run a course.

Most facilitators received regular ongoing training, support and supervision from their organisation. Smaller organisations commented that they had fewer resources (financial and staffing) for ongoing training. Some providers and key informants commented that there was a need for follow-up training, especially for those providers who had lost their trained facilitators and no longer had anyone to run the course. This was particularly a problem for smaller providers, who did not have the staff resources and experience to train new facilitators.

Over half the providers (58 percent) usually ran the course with two facilitators, while the remainder used one facilitator. Most providers said they could offer the course in English (39 providers), although five offered the course in Māori, two in Chinese, two in Indian and one in Cook Island Māori. However few had actually run the course in these other languages, with four conducting the course in Māori, one in Chinese and one in Cook Island Māori. Most providers were satisfied there were sufficient resources available in the languages of the parents, with seven providers wanting improvements in the materials. However, given that the majority run the programme in English and most of their client group are English speaking parents, providers may not have had a need for materials in other languages.

Cultural variations in the way the course was run were reported by over half the providers. The variations depended on the main client groups attending the programme, with Māori providers adapting the programme to include:

Mihi, karakia, and culturally appropriate examples.

Reo, waiata, mihimihi, pepeha depending on the group.

Tikanga and kawa is a must for us. Shows respect and upholds whakapapa and retaking their identity.

As one Māori provider said:

We just deliver the content in a way that makes sense to our whānau. Sometimes that means that we talk about the importance of Tiaki Whakapapa and what it means for the continuity of life and what obligations it creates for us as whānau. Other times, we talk about what happened to the tamariki on 'Once were Warriors' because they can relate to it, but it does not put the spotlight onto them and their whānau situation but it gives them permission to relate.

The Māori providers interviewed, reported that there is scope for them to adapt the content to a Māori audience so that the use of metaphors and story telling (relating the content of the course to Māori scenarios) enables the programme to be culturally tailored and applied. Examples used ranged from stories from the providers/trainers' own whānau backgrounds, scenarios created from films and television such as 'Once were Warriors' and 'bro'Town' and the use of metaphors such as in the separation story of Rangī and Papatuanuku.

One PTS provider has been very successful in recruiting Pacific parents into the programme. The course facilitator is a respected member of the Pacific community, with links to the local churches, and has considerable training and experience in delivering parenting programmes. He has developed the course materials to include metaphors based on his island's culture and finds that Pacific parents find these beneficial.

Other variations included running the programme in one four-hour session, instead of two two-hour sessions, or including extra content.

We combine two sessions on the same day to make the course convenient for all the participants. We also provide childcare and toys for the kids who might have distracted the participants otherwise.

We include extra material on parents' responses /adjustment to separation to help them grasp the children's responses.

We use a few extra activities to enable active participation – better feel for some issues.

We sometimes go over time in the PTS programmes we run in XX and YY [poor rural towns]. We invite Inland Revenue Department family liaison person to discuss child

support family tax credit with participants. This is very strongly supported by parents who always get a lot of information they need.

Relatively few key informants were aware of the details of the operation of the programme (with the exception of key informants who were programme providers). Few Family Court staff, lawyers or community informants had attended the course, although they may have read the pamphlets or attended the initial training sessions. Thus few felt they could comment on PTS course specifics. Where they could comment, most felt the course as run in their area complied with the manual. As one commented:

The programme manual is fairly specific . . . the Māori provider used to run the course in people's homes. That was their kaupapa.

Despite the above comment, few key informants were aware of variations in programme delivery. They thought variations in the programme were more likely with providers who ran the PTS programme for Pacific and Māori parents. As outlined above, these variations included the use of culturally appropriate protocols and examples to illustrate the main points made during the course.

Time pressures were noted by most of the programme providers, and some of the Family Court key informants. It was felt by some that there was too much to cover and this detracted from opportunities for full discussion. However other providers felt they had developed the course to the point where they could comfortably deliver the material in the time provided. These providers had put the material into a Powerpoint presentation and felt this assisted with the presentation.

4.6 Quality of Parenting Through Separation materials

As has been discussed earlier, the programme has a range of supporting materials that are available to providers to help them run the PTS course. Providers were asked to assess the usefulness of the PTS resources and these ratings are shown in Table 4.14. The majority of providers rated the handouts, the DVDs and the group discussions as very useful. However the activities and presentations were seen as less useful and some providers reported that they did not use any activities when running the programme.

Table 4.14: PTS provider ratings of the usefulness of aspects of the programme – numbers of providers

| | Very useful | Reasonably useful | Not useful |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|------------|
| Handouts | 34 | 2 | 1 |
| Parent DVD | 32 | 4 | 0 |
| Child DVD | 30 | 5 | 0 |
| Group discussions | 30 | 6 | 0 |
| Presentations | 23 | 12 | 2 |
| Activities | 13 | 13 | 6 |

One of the reasons mentioned by the providers for not using any activities was the pressure to cover the material in the time available. Forty percent of the providers felt the length of the course was not long enough to fully cover the course material/content.

Parents were also asked to rate elements of the programme on the post-course evaluation forms. Most aspects of the programme were rated very highly by the parents (Table 4.15). As with the programme providers, the programme activities were least likely to be rated as good, and this suggests an area for improvement for the programme. Although rated as good by over three-quarters of the parents the rooms used, the time of day and the length of sessions were rated OK or poor by one in five parents. Having courses run at different times and locations might better suit some parents.

Table 4.15: Parent ratings of elements of the programme – percentages (maximum n=3902)

| | Good | OK | Poor |
|-----------------------------------|------|----|------|
| Presentations/when people talked | 90 | 9 | 1 |
| Discussion and questions | 88 | 11 | 1 |
| Handouts | 87 | 12 | 1 |
| DVD | 84 | 15 | 1 |
| The time of day sessions are held | 80 | 19 | 1 |
| The length of the sessions | 80 | 19 | 1 |
| The rooms used | 78 | 20 | 2 |
| Activities | 68 | 30 | 2 |

Men were less likely to rate all programme elements (except the presentations) as good, compared to women. It needs to be noted that the substantial majority of men still rated all elements of the programme as good. There was no difference in the rating of programme elements between separated and non-separated parents.

The only significant difference in the rating of elements of the programme for different ethnic groups was that the Pacific parents were more likely to rate the activities as being good, compared to the other main ethnic groups (NZE, Māori and Asian).

Key informants were also asked to rate the quality of various aspects of the programme. Where they had seen the material, they commented that it was of good quality, particularly the Family and Child DVD. The DVD with children talking about their parents' separation was seen as particularly powerful.

There are two or three children whose ability to convey so poignantly what is happening for them that it really speaks incredibly loudly to parents. [Provider]

4.7 Suggested changes in the Parenting Through Separation programme

All key informants were asked for comments on possible improvements to the operation of the PTS programme for the future. All felt it was important for the programme to continue and that it was filling an important need:

*It is incredibly valuable. It is a vital part of our tool kit to get parenting agreements.
[Family Court staff]*

*I am concerned the PTS might not continue. It is a really important course. People
have got to learn how to parent in a new way. [Lawyer]*

*There is certainly a need for PTS programmes in (city). We need courses which
maintain, and work with, cultural sensitivity. [Provider]*

The greatest concern expressed was about the lower than expected rate of uptake of the programme and how parents might be encouraged to attend. Parents needed to know about the programme, but also they needed to overcome any obstacles to their attendance. Providing childcare and helping with transport were seen as ways of helping parents attend.

Most key informants were in favour of the national radio campaign continuing on a regular basis. At a local level it was felt important to continue efforts to publicise the course through a range of means. Advertising in the community through pamphlets was seen as important, but so also was speaking to community and professional groups. This had to be an ongoing activity as many of the community organisations had relatively high staff turnover.

Some providers would like the Ministry of Justice to provide funds to providers for local advertising. Where providers were able to actively promote the programme in their community it was felt there was better uptake.

Key informants noted that for parents most in need of the PTS course their first point of contact was with Work and Income (WINZ) or Inland Revenue (IRD). While PTS promotional materials are placed in WINZ offices and a useful informational CD has been produced by Inland Revenue (Dealing with Separation: supporting your children), it was felt by some that parents contacting these agencies could be more actively encouraged to attend the course.

Promotion of the programme was also seen as an issue for Māori providers who were not resourced to promote the programme or to develop specialised resources for this purpose. The programme tended to be promoted through existing service and whānau networks by word of mouth (the 'kumara vine'). However, the need for resources to promote the programme to whānau and at public gatherings was seen as important by Māori providers.

Only a few suggestions were made for additional issues to be covered in the course. Those who commented were more likely to mention changing the emphasis of the current material. For example one Family Court key informant felt more emphasis should be given to the impact of parental conflict on children. Another provider made the observation that:

*The course makes parents think differently about the separation. They think more
about the child and their role as parents to the children. . . What it doesn't do so well is
deal with how parents feel about one another and that is really complicated. [Provider]*

Key informants had mixed views on the need for the Ministry of Justice to fund an equivalent children's programme. While most saw the potential benefit, and favourably cited existing programmes, it was felt that a lot more thought was needed to develop an appropriate programme. Some noted that children do not necessarily want to attend programmes and others commented that they thought a peer support group would better suit children.

4.8 Summary

Since the introduction of the PTS course almost 4,500 parents have attended a course run by one of the contracted providers throughout New Zealand. The course is being attended by all ethnic groups in approximate proportion to their representation in the national population. Parents from all areas of New Zealand appear to have accessed the course. More women than men have attended the programme and parents attending have on average been in their mid-thirties. Most of these parents are separated, and over 40 percent have been so for at least a year. Parents attending the course had often had previous contact with the Family Court, for both counselling and to make applications.

Providers from throughout New Zealand responded to an evaluation survey. This provided information on how the providers delivered the programme, the extent to which they coordinated services, how they enrolled parents and efforts they made to avoid programme drop-out. Additional information from parents was used to identify how parents found out about the course and to identify factors that might limit attendance. Since the timing of the course was a difficulty for some parents they were asked which day and time they would prefer. Most of those with a preference wanted weekday evening courses spread over two sessions.

Parent and provider information was used to rate the supporting materials used during the course (eg, DVD, handouts). Parents' comments indicated that the Child DVD had a strong impact on participants. While both providers and parents rated these materials highly there was less satisfaction with the course activities.

Finally, key informants made suggestions for improvements in the programme delivery. While highly supportive of the programme they were concerned that more parents found out about the course and were encouraged to attend. They made suggestions for continued advertising of the programme.

5 Parents prior to attending a Parenting Through Separation course

This chapter uses the responses from the pre-programme survey to establish the needs and expectations of parents prior to attending the PTS course. The characteristics of the parents who completed a pre-programme survey are presented and these are compared to the national sample of participants. Parents' hopes from the PTS course are described and their current (pre-course) levels of conflict, parental cooperation, knowledge of separation issues and satisfaction with care arrangements are presented. Finally parents reported on the current behaviour of one of their children. In Chapter 6 these later pre-course measures will be compared to the same measures at follow-up, four to six months after the course.

5.1 Characteristics of parent sample and current childcare arrangements

Table 5.1 presents information on the characteristics of the 119 parents who completed the pre-programme surveys. Comparison with data from the Ministry of Justice registration and evaluation forms indicated there were few differences between those who completed the initial survey and other parents who attended a course during the same period. For example, more women than men responded to the pre-programme survey, although the proportions closely match those for the total participant sample (Table 4.1). Parents who responded to the survey ranged in age from 21 to 53 years, with most parents being in the 30 to 40 year age group. The main difference with the profile of all PTS participants was that the surveyed sample had a higher proportion of New Zealand European ethnicity (87 percent compared with 67 percent amongst all PTS participants).¹⁵

It is also possible to assess if the surveyed parents differed, on their post-course evaluations (Table 4.15 and 6.4), from other parents who attended the course. The only difference was that those parents who completed the initial survey were less likely to say the course helped them to talk with their children.¹⁶ However this difference was not large and surveyed parents still tended to strongly agree that the course helped them talk with their children. These results suggest the surveyed parents had very similar impressions of the PTS course, compared to those who were not surveyed.

¹⁵ The survey proportion is closer to that for the ethnicity of all parents who agreed to further contact by the evaluators on the post-course evaluation form (NZE 78%, Māori 16%, Pacific 5%, and other 1%).

¹⁶ Mann-Whitney U = 19562.5, p=.016. Mean surveyed = 1.95, Mean non-surveyed = 1.70.

Table 5.1: Characteristics of parents responding to pre-programme survey – number and percent

| | | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Sex (n=119) | Female | 72 | 60 |
| | Male | 47 | 39 |
| Age (n=119) | 20–30 years | 20 | 17 |
| | 30–40 years | 49 | 41 |
| | 40–50 years | 44 | 37 |
| | over 50 years | 6 | 5 |
| Ethnic Group (n=119) | New Zealand European | 104 | 87 |
| | Māori | 8 | 7 |
| | Pacific | 3 | 2 |
| | Other | 4 | 3 |
| Separated (n=119) | Separated (never married) | 37 | 31 |
| | Separated (married) | 65 | 55 |
| | Divorced | 6 | 5 |
| | Never lived together | 3 | 2 |
| | Living together | 8 | 7 |
| Time separated (n=107) | less than 3 months | 26 | 24 |
| | 3 to 6 months | 25 | 23 |
| | 7 to 12 months | 27 | 25 |
| | over 12 months | 29 | 27 |

The majority of the parents (93 percent) were currently living apart from their children's other parent, although three parents had never cohabited with the other parent. Those who were separated had been so for between one month and nine years, with an average of 13 months. There were fewer long-term separated parents in the sample than the total sample of PTS parents, although the figures are closer to those attending in 2008, when fewer longer-term separated parents attended than in 2006 and 2007 (<3 months 24 percent, 3–6 months 21 percent, 7–12 months 16 percent, 12 plus months 39 percent).

A goal of the PTS programme is to help parents make plans for the care of their children and to help them to maintain contact with both parents and their extended family. In order to establish the situation prior to the course parents who responded to the survey and who were separated were asked about the current arrangements for the care of their children (Table 5.2). There were slightly more male children and children ranged in age from under one to 18 years of age (with an average age of seven years).

**Table 5.2: Demographics of children and current care arrangements
– parents’ pre-programme survey, numbers and percent**

| | | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Number of Children (n=107, missing=4) | One | 47 | 44 |
| | Two | 43 | 40 |
| | Three | 12 | 11 |
| | Four | 4 | 4 |
| | Five | 1 | 1 |
| Sex children (n=189, missing=1) | Male | 101 | 53 |
| | Female | 88 | 47 |
| Current agreement care (n=111) | No | 38 | 34 |
| | Yes – unwritten agreement | 24 | 22 |
| | Yes – written agreement | 26 | 23 |
| | Yes – court orders | 23 | 21 |
| How agreement was reached (n=73) | Informally | 33 | 45 |
| | Counsellor | 7 | 10 |
| | Lawyer | 21 | 29 |
| | Mediator | 6 | 8 |
| | Court orders | 23 | 32 |

Just over a third of the parents who responded to the initial survey and who were separated did not yet have a current care agreement for their children. Similar proportions had an unwritten agreement, a written agreement or an agreement that was based on court orders. Those parents who had an agreement were asked to identify how they reached this agreement.¹⁷ Almost half of those with an agreement reported that this had been reached informally between the parents. Those with unwritten agreements (83 percent) were more likely to cite informal discussion between parents compared to those with a written agreement (50 percent). Almost a third reported having the assistance of a lawyer in reaching agreement. As might be expected, almost half (48 percent) of those having court orders indicated that a lawyer had helped them to reach agreement. About one in ten of the parents with an agreement mentioned help from a mediator or a counsellor. Those with a written agreement were more likely to cite assistance from a mediator (23 percent compared to 0 percent unwritten agreement) or a lawyer (35 percent compared to 4 percent unwritten agreement).

Parents were also asked if they had any unresolved applications in the Family Court. One in four of the parents reported having unresolved applications. As shown in Table 5.3, those with current agreements based on court orders were more likely to have unresolved applications before the court. It is likely that the current arrangements based on Family Court orders were interim orders with the applications yet to be finally resolved. Just over a third of

¹⁷ It was possible for parents to identify multiple sources of assistance in reaching agreement.

those with a written agreement or no current agreement reported having unresolved applications still before the court.

Table 5.3: Unresolved Family Court applications by current care agreement – parents’ pre-programme survey (n=106)

| Current care agreement | Unresolved applications in the Family Court | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent |
| Yes – court orders | 16 | 73 |
| Yes – written agreement | 10 | 39 |
| Yes – unwritten agreement | 2 | 8 |
| No agreement | 13 | 38 |

Parents were also asked to indicate how they shared the actual day-to-day care for each of their children. The majority of the children (62 percent) were reported as being mainly in the day-to-day care of their mother¹⁸ while a quarter were in the joint care of both parents. Eight percent were mainly in the day-to-day care of their father and the arrangements for the remaining five percent were not settled. Only one child was reported as spending significant amounts of time each month in the care of a non-parent (maternal grandparents).

There is no New Zealand national data on post separation parenting arrangements¹⁹, however if New Zealand arrangements are assumed to follow those in Australian then the current sample may have a relatively high rate of joint parenting. Australian research (Smyth and Maloney, 2008) has found that less than 10 percent of children are in the joint care of both parents after separation, with over 80 percent being in the main day-to-day care of their mother. It is possible that the current results reflect the tendency for more joint parenting soon after separation and that over time children tend to live more with one, rather than both, parents (Smyth and Maloney, 2008).

Many children were having regular contact with their extended family. As Table 5.4 shows, a third of the children were having contact with their mother’s family more than once a week. Contact with their father’s family was less frequent, with two-thirds having contact once a month or less often.

Table 5.4: Frequency of contact with mothers’ and fathers’ extended families – percent, parents’ pre-programme survey (n=104)

| | Mothers extended family | Fathers extended family |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| More than once a week | 34 | 15 |
| Once a week | 12 | 8 |
| Every second week | 12 | 10 |
| Once a month | 10 | 23 |
| Once every three months | 17 | 23 |
| Does not see them | 15 | 21 |

¹⁸ Ten parents (six mothers and four fathers) reported that children in the day-to-day care of the mother did not currently have regular contact with their father. One father with the main care of his children indicated their mother did not have regular contact.

¹⁹ There is some data of child care arrangements post-marriage dissolution (Lee, 1990). However the data comes from 1988 and excludes those who separate without formally dissolving the relationship or who were never married. Smyth and Maloney (2008) cite national survey data that include all separated couples.

Previous research suggests that it is important that children are told of the separation and consulted about the post-separation care arrangements. Just over a third (35 percent) of the parents who were separated reported that they had not discussed the care arrangements with their children. Thirty-seven percent said they had told the children what was going to happen, but had not asked for the children’s input. However twenty-eight percent of the parents reported that they had discussed the arrangements with the children and had asked them what they wanted. Mothers and fathers were equally likely to report that they had talked to, or consulted with, the children about the post-separation care arrangements.

The likelihood that parents had talked to the children depended on the age of the children. While over half the parents with an oldest child aged over 10 years said they had asked the children what they would like in terms of care arrangements, none of the parents with an eldest child aged under six years had done so. However even if the child was older, parents did not necessarily talk to them about the separation. One in six parents reported that prior to the PTS course they had not talked to the children about the arrangements, even though the eldest child was over six years old.

5.2 What parents want from the Parenting Through Separation course

Parents were asked what they hoped to gain from attending the PTS course. Open-ended responses were coded and the main hopes identified are shown in Table 5.5 (multiple responses are possible).

Table 5.5: Parent hopes from the Parenting Through Separation course – percentage parents mentioning issues pre-programme (n=119)

| | Number | Percent |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------|---------|
| How to help children with the separation | 43 | 36 |
| Improve relationship with ex-partner | 18 | 15 |
| General comments (non-specific) | 17 | 14 |
| How to talk to child | 17 | 14 |
| Post-separation parenting arrangements | 16 | 13 |
| Being a better parent | 15 | 13 |
| Help with personal issues around the separation | 11 | 9 |
| Getting the child’s perspective on separation | 6 | 5 |
| Legal issues | 4 | 3 |
| Finding out about support services | 4 | 3 |
| Improving their relationship with their child | 3 | 3 |
| Effect of separation on child | 2 | 2 |

Parent’s hopes from the PTS course are illustrated by the following comments. Most often mentioned were parents wanting to find out how to help their children cope with the separation:

*Assistance with learning how to help my children cope with the changed environment.
Strategies to help them cope with the fact their father refuses to see them.*

More understanding towards what my child needs in the near future from me and his mother, help towards making things work with me and the child's mother without all the fighting/disagreements.

A better understanding of what I can do to make things easier for my son.

One in six parents wanted help to improve their relationship with their ex-partner:

Clarification about what I can do to ease the tension between my ex- and I.

To be able to get along with my ex- and his family without arguing. So communication skills.

Ways of dealing with ex-partner due to his anger and abuse since separation.

Parents wanted help on how to talk to their children about the separation:

How to communicate with my son better. How to let him know why he doesn't see his father.

Find ways to explain to my three year old about the separation.

How to talk to my children about being separated from their father, without feeling like I am pressuring them.

Post-separation parenting arrangements were a concern for some parents:

An understanding of why the children are not allowed to contact me.

An understanding of how other separated couples have arranged contact with parent who doesn't have day-to-day care. Hopefully ideas on how to do our parenting agreement so we both agree.

For some parents there was the hope that the course would help them to be a better parent to their children:

Any ideas to make me a better parent.

More information about being a better parent.

For me to be a good mother to my children, which I believe I am.

Finally, self care and personal adjustment issues were a focus for one in ten of the parents:

How to prepare myself for times ahead, eg, my partner getting a new partner.

Positive ways of dealing with the anger and stress so it doesn't impact so much on my child.

These comments show these parents had a concern with the adjustment and wellbeing of their children at a time of stress. They wanted assistance to help their children, to be able to

talk to them, to make the best care arrangements and to get on with the other parent. These concerns parallel the aims of the PTS course, although concerns with personal adjustment and improving the relationship with the other parent may require alternative, more focused, interventions, such as counselling.

5.3 Parent and child needs after separation

In order to establish the degree of parental conflict and cooperation prior to the course parents were asked to respond to a series of questions about their, and their children's, needs in relation to the separation (see Appendix 2 for descriptive statistics of individual items and scale scores). The first set of questions asked about the frequency with which they engaged in certain behaviours related to the separation.

Questions concerning similar issues were then used to construct a score that indicated the extent to which parents –

- put children in the middle of conflict – higher score indicates more conflict
- engaged in general parental conflict – higher score indicates more conflict
- engaged in positive parenting – higher score indicates more positive parenting
- engaged in joint parenting – higher score indicates more joint parenting.

In addition there was a single item asking about use of low contact strategies (eg, through a neutral third party, telephone, writing) (higher score indicates more use of low contact strategies).

A second set of questions asked parents to indicate the extent to which they agreed with a series of statements related to the separation. These questions were used to create the following scales –

- level of satisfaction with day-to-day care, contact and support – higher score indicates higher satisfaction
- level of knowledge related to separation issues – higher score indicates greater knowledge
- level of adjustment in relation to the separation/divorce – higher score indicates better adjustment.

There were additional items about relationships, the importance of children's wellbeing in considering care arrangements and hope for the future (higher score indicates better relationships, more importance placed in child's best interests and greater hope for future).

Table 5.6 presents the descriptive statistics for the above measures. While scores for the child and parent needs could range from almost never (1) to almost always (4) it is clear that parents are reporting relatively few occasions in which children are being put in the middle of conflict between parents. Parents are also reporting on average they are frequently engaging in positive parenting behaviours with their children. These findings suggest there is relatively little room for improvement with respect to these behaviours and therefore little

room for the course to impact on the frequency of these behaviours. However, as later parents comments show, the course can reinforce positive parenting behaviours and provide reassurance to parents that they are doing the right things. The scores on general conflict and joint parenting²⁰ indicate that there is more variation in these behaviours amongst parents, and more room for change.

Table 5.6: Summary scores on parent measures of parent and child needs prior to PTS course

| Parent and child needs ¹ | Mean (sd) | Number |
|------------------------------------------|------------|--------|
| Conflict – children caught in the middle | 1.7 (0.49) | 116 |
| General parental conflict | 2.5 (0.76) | 115 |
| Positive parenting statements | 3.4 (0.53) | 116 |
| Joint parenting | 2.4 (0.87) | 114 |
| Low contact between parents | 2.9 (1.1) | 98 |

¹ The scale goes from 1 = almost never to 4 = almost always.

The scores on the issues of separation could range from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5). Parents indicated that on average they had a good knowledge of separation issues and they were satisfied with care arrangements for their children (Table 5.7). However parents were in less agreement with statements that they and their children were adjusting well to the separation.

Parents who completed the survey appear to be very positive about their relationship with their children and their children's relationship with their other parent. Parents strongly agree that their children's best interests are the most important consideration when making care arrangements and are confident that they will agree with their ex-partner on these arrangements in the future. The high levels of agreement to these statements by parents prior to attending the course indicate that in some areas the course presentations are likely to be reinforcing knowledge and attitudes, rather than contributing new knowledge.

Table 5.7: Parents' summary scores on issues of separation prior to PTS course

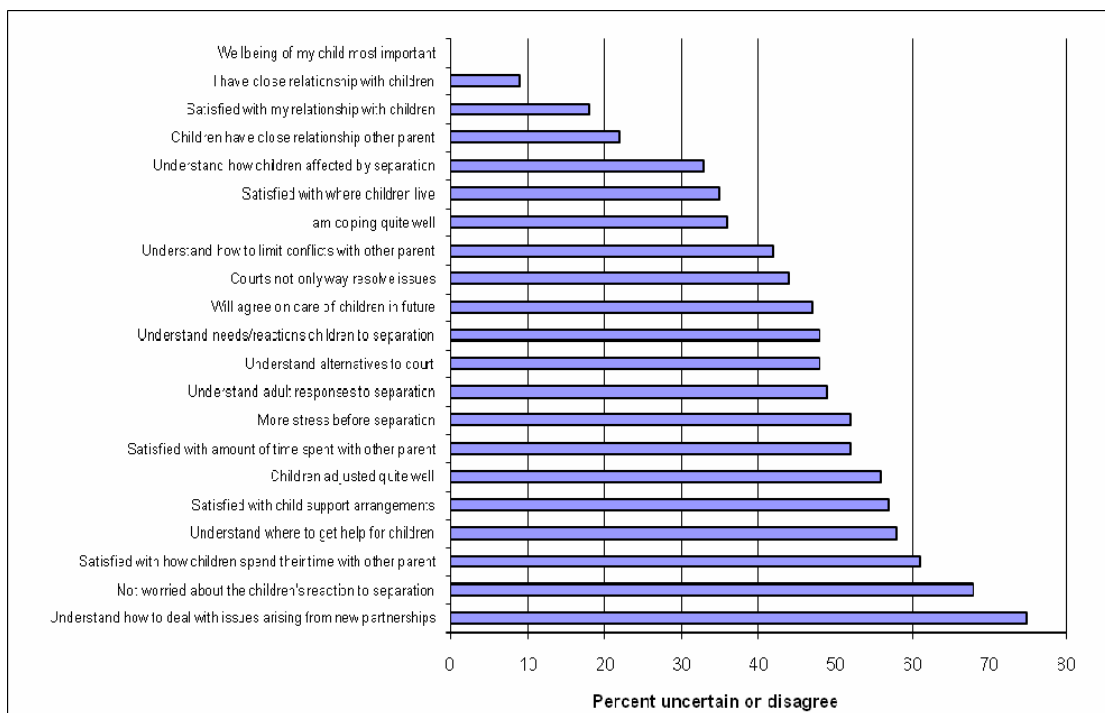
| | Mean (sd) | Number |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------|
| Issues of separation¹ | | |
| Level of satisfaction with care, contact and support | 3.2 (1.1) | 109 |
| Levels of knowledge related to separation issues | 3.3 (0.67) | 116 |
| Level of adjustment in relation to the separation/divorce | 2.8 (0.93) | 116 |
| Other individual items¹ | | |
| I have a close relationship with my children | 4.6 (0.9) | 116 |
| I am satisfied with my relationship with my children | 4.1 (1.3) | 115 |
| My children have a close relationship with their other parent | 4.1 (1.2) | 116 |
| The most important consideration when making care arrangements is the wellbeing of my child | 4.9 (0.3) | 116 |
| I am confident that in the future we will agree on the care of the children | 3.6 (1.2) | 116 |

¹ The scale goes from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

²⁰ Joint parenting, such as agreement between parents on rules and standards of behaviour for children, is generally desirable. However there may be circumstances, such as domestic violence, where this is not possible.

Despite the relatively high levels of satisfaction reported above, it is possible to identify from these questions the issues that are of most concern to parents. Figure 5.1 presents the percentage of parents who are uncertain or who disagree about each of the positive statements regarding aspects of their separation. This figure helps identify those issues that parents are most concerned about prior to their attending the PTS course.

Figure 5.1: Percentage of parents who are uncertain or who disagree with each statement about separation prior to attending PTS



Three-quarters of the parents felt they did not understand how to deal positively with issues which arise when they re-partner or the other parent re-partners. Over-two thirds (68 percent) of the parents were concerned about their children's reaction to the separation/divorce and 56 percent were uncertain or disagreed with the statement that their children had adjusted 'quite well' to the separation. Parents were concerned about how their children spent their time with the other parent (61 percent) and the amount of time they spent with the other parent (52 percent). Over half the parents (58 percent) were uncertain where to get help, if necessary, for their children in dealing with the separation/divorce. Finally approximately half the parents reported experiencing more stress now than before separating (52 percent agree) or felt they had a good understanding of adult responses to separation/divorce (49 percent). These results provide an indication that issues associated with parents re-partnering, children's adjustment and contact with the other parent, knowledge of support services and adult adjustment were important to over half the parents prior to the PTS course.

5.4 Child behaviour after separation

Parents were asked to complete the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) for one of their children who was at least four years old. The SDQ asks parents to rate the extent to which a series of positive and negative behaviours is true of their child (eg, 'often loses temper', 'generally well behaved'). Responses are grouped into five subscales (conduct problems, emotional problems, peer problems, hyperactivity problems and prosocial behaviour) and a total difficulties score (the sum of the four problem behaviour scales).

The guidelines for scoring the parents' version of the SDQ also provide guidance for interpreting the scores on the subscales and the total difficulties score. The SDQ subscale and total scores are coded into three bands – termed 'normal', 'borderline' and 'abnormal' by the scoring guide. Approximately 10 percent of a community sample will score in the 'abnormal' band on any given scale and 10 percent will score in the 'borderline' band. It needs to be noted that these are in comparison to a community sample and the SDQ is most often used as a screening tool, rather than a diagnostic tool (Goodman, Meltzer and Bailey, 1998).

The percentage of children falling in the three bands for each subscale, and the total difficulties score, are presented in Table 5.8. Given that 10 percent of children in a community sample would be expected to score in the 'abnormal' band, it is clear that on the conduct problem subscale, the emotional problems subscale, the peer problems subscale and the total difficulties subscale the current sample has twice as many in that band than might be expected in a community sample. These findings are in keeping with previous research that has shown children experiencing their parents' separation have approximately twice the rate of problem behaviour, compared to children living with both parents (Pryor and Rodgers, 2001).

Table 5.8: Percentage of children whose behaviour is rated problematic on pre-programme parents survey – Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (parent version) (n=100)

| | Normal | Borderline | Abnormal |
|----------------------------|--------|------------|----------|
| SDQ Conduct problem | 56 | 17 | 27 |
| SDQ Emotional problem | 63 | 12 | 25 |
| SDQ Peer problems | 68 | 7 | 25 |
| SDQ Hyperactivity problems | 76 | 10 | 14 |
| SDQ Total difficulties | 67 | 8 | 25 |
| SDQ Pro-social behaviour | 78 | 11 | 11 |

These results suggest that children whose parents have separated have a higher incidence of behaviour problems and that these behaviours have led parents to be concerned about their children's adjustment to their separation. This concern is reflected in the results of the previous section, where parents wanted help to understand how children adjust to separation and information of possible support services. As we discuss later, however, parents' perceptions rather than actual child behaviour may be important here.

5.5 Summary

This chapter has described the situation of a sample of parents who intend to attend a PTS course. A third of the parents did not have a care agreement for their children and a quarter had unresolved applications before the Family Court. On the other hand almost half of the parents had an agreement that had not required Family Court orders. These figures indicate a diverse group of parents who are at different stages of negotiating post-separation parenting agreements.

Shared or joint parenting was more common than might be expected amongst this group of parents. Most children were having regular contact with both parents and their extended family, although for a small group contact with the 'non-resident' parent was rare. Younger children tend not to have been spoken to about the separation and it is possible parents were waiting to attend the course before attempting to talk with their children. Parents had indicated they hoped the course would help them talk to their children about the separation. Over a third hoped the course would show them how to help their children to cope with the separation. These expectations clearly match the goals of the course and are no doubt the reasons parents had sought out a PTS course.

Finally, a series of questions was asked of parents regarding the current arrangements and their and their children's adjustment. These questions identified the main issues parents were unsure of and indicated where the PTS course can be of most benefit. The main concern of parents was with the reaction of their children to the separation and how the parent should manage any new relationships they might enter into. Parents' concern with child adjustment was reflected in the rate of 'abnormal' scores on a standard measure of child behaviour (the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire), which was twice that expected in a community sample. The next chapter assesses whether parents' expectations and needs were met by the PTS course and if issues had improved for them at follow-up.

6 Impact of the Parenting Through Separation course

This chapter assesses the impact of the PTS course on parents, and to a lesser extent, children. Data is presented from a number of different sources in order to assess programme suitability and impact from different perspectives: the programme providers, key informants and parents. Most of the parents who completed a survey prior to the course also supplied information on how they were four to six months after attending a PTS course. Parents were asked to what extent the course had met their expectations and they again completed the measures of parent and child needs, issues of separation and child behaviour. This data is analysed to determine if there had been significant changes in childcare arrangements and adjustment, knowledge and behaviour over this period.

6.1 Providers' and key informants' views on the suitability of the course

Providers are perhaps in the best position to assess how suitable the course is for different groups of parents. The providers who responded to the survey felt that the course was suitable for most groups of parents, although in some cases they had reservations (Table 6.1). In particular six providers felt that the course was not suitable for parents who had English as a second language. Although four providers thought it was not suitable for parents with multiple disadvantages (eg, low income, poor education, health problems), 18 thought it was very suitable for these parents.

Table 6.1: PTS provider ratings of the suitability of the programme for various groups of parents – number of providers

| | Not suitable | Reasonably suitable | Very suitable |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Parents with English as a second language | 6 | 22 | 6 |
| Parents with multiple disadvantages | 4 | 12 | 18 |
| Perpetrators of domestic violence | 3 | 15 | 16 |
| Parents with low education | 3 | 17 | 16 |
| Low socioeconomic status parent | 2 | 15 | 17 |
| Disabled parents | 2 | 12 | 16 |
| Māori parents | 1 | 17 | 14 |
| Victims of domestic violence | 0 | 19 | 16 |
| Pacific parents | 0 | 16 | 11 |

Few providers had concerns about the suitability of the programme for those who were either the victims of domestic violence or who had perpetrated such violence. Since parents did not attend the course together it was felt that safety of parents was not a major concern. In most areas, providers took precautions to ensure that parents did not attend the same session, eg, by asking those enquiring for their partner's name. In some areas providers reported that parents were reluctant to give home contact details in case their partner learnt they intended attending the course, especially if they were yet to separate.

Key informants were also asked about the suitability of the programme for specific parent groups and generally their comments mirrored the above findings. They thought the programme suitable for almost all groups of parents. Some commented that those with low educational qualifications could struggle to understand some of the material.

I suppose the only qualification I would put on it is those that struggle to learn, it might be a pain in the neck for the facilitator of the programme. [Judge]

On the other hand others felt that well-educated professionals might find the handouts pitched at a level they might find condescending. One key informant commented that these parents were more likely to have done their own research and to find that the course offered little new information.

Key informants also thought that parents with English as a second language might find the course challenging. Some key informants thought the course was less suitable for those with mental health and addiction issues.

They don't have the cognitive ability to understand the material. They are so focused on themselves and can be disruptive to the group. [Family Court staff]

Those with drug and alcohol and mental health problems might find it difficult to take in the material. [Judge]

A few key informants had concerns about perpetrators of domestic violence attending the programme. However these key informants also noted the requirement that parents attend separate courses acted as a protection for domestic violence victims.

Providers who responded to the survey were asked whether they felt there was a 'best' time, before or after separation, for parents to attend the course.

- A third (n=12) felt there was no 'best time' and that parents benefited irrespective of whether or not they were separated or how long they had been separated.
- Twelve providers felt that attending the course before they separated, and up to six months (six providers) or up to 24 months (four providers) post-separation was the most beneficial time.
- Six providers felt that within six months of separating was best and one felt that anytime within 24 months was best.
- Four providers felt that the six to 24 month period after separation was best.

Providers feel that parents who attend the course prior to separation and within two years of separation are likely to benefit the most. None thought that those separated for over two years would be those *most* likely to benefit from the course, although they might still find the course useful. Some parents also commented that they felt the course best suited those who had just separated, rather than those who had been separated for a few years.

The sensitive nature of parental separation can potentially result in parents being upset by the discussions and the material presented in the course. Only one provider reported that

parents often (at least one person every one to two courses) reacted in a way that called for immediate action (eg, conflict between participants, distress). Another six providers said that this happened occasionally (once every three to four courses). Fourteen had rarely had negative reactions from parents and 18 had never had this happen. It was reported that when difficulties arose during a course being run with two facilitators it was usually possible for the parent to have time out from the course, supported by the second facilitator. This was not possible if one facilitator was running the course and parents would have to have time out from the course on their own. It was very rare for parents to be asked to leave. Facilitators were careful to outline the expectations for participant conduct prior to the first session, in order to avoid difficulties.

It was relatively common for providers to make onward referrals to other professionals. Almost half (44 percent) of the providers reported that they often (at least one person every one to two courses) referred parents to other professionals for help and support. Almost as many (38 percent) referred parents once every three to four courses. Just under a fifth of the providers reported never or hardly ever referring parents for help or support. Table 6.2 presents the types of referral made by providers. Almost three-quarters of providers had made referrals for parents with relationship issues, mainly to counsellors or health professionals. Two-thirds had referred parents for help and support concerning child behavioural adjustment and legal issues. Almost as many had been referred for help with parenting skills and over 40 percent of providers had referred parents for assistance with violence or anger problems. Rather fewer, but between a third and a quarter of providers had referred parents to professionals for help with a range of other issues.

Table 6.2: Types of onward referrals made by PTS providers – numbers and percent of providers, multiple responses possible (n=39)

| | Number | Percent |
|---------------------------------------|--------|---------|
| Relationship issues | 29 | 74 |
| Child behaviour adjustment | 27 | 69 |
| Legal issues | 27 | 69 |
| Parenting skills | 26 | 67 |
| Personal adjustment to the separation | 24 | 62 |
| Violence/anger | 17 | 44 |
| Financial issues | 15 | 38 |
| Mental health issues | 13 | 33 |
| Alcohol and drug | 10 | 26 |

Finally, some providers commented that they were aware that parents occasionally arranged their own support groups after the course. At least one provider was investigating having a follow-up group for parents who wished to meet again and some providers allowed parents to contact them for follow-up. The wish for ongoing support amongst parents was also expressed by a few parents on the post-course evaluation forms.

6.2 Key informants' and providers' views of the Parenting Through Separation course impact

The PTS programme has a number of explicit goals (see Chapter 3 for more detail on these). In their survey providers were asked to rate the extent to which they thought parents' knowledge, skills and adjustment improved as a result of attending the course. Table 6.3 presents the number of providers noting no, some or significant improvement, as well as the number of providers who felt they did not know enough to make a judgement. It needs to be noted that these ratings are based on providers' observations and they do not generally have follow-up contact with parents. As a result it is easier for providers to judge improvement in knowledge compared to actual changes in relationships, and this may explain part of the variation in the ratings of improvement. This is also reflected in the number of providers indicating they did not know about improvement in contact with extended family (n=10) or in parents' relationships (n=9), compared to only one provider saying they did not know if parents knowledge of the effects of separation improved.

Where they could make a judgement, most providers noted that parents made significant improvements in their knowledge of the effects of separation on children and in their knowledge of support services, two of the main goals of the PTS programme. Over half the providers saw significant improvements in terms of children's reduced exposure to parental conflict, better parent-child relationships and parents improved communication with their children. All these factors are likely to lead to improved adjustment to the separation in children and adults.

Table 6.3: PTS providers' ratings of improvement in parents' adjustment after attending the PTS course – number of providers

| | No improvement | Some improvement | Significant improvement | DK |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------------|----|
| Parents' knowledge of the effects of separation on children | 0 | 7 | 30 | 1 |
| Knowledge of support services available | 0 | 7 | 28 | 2 |
| Children's reduced exposure to parental conflict | 0 | 13 | 19 | 5 |
| Consideration child's best interest | 0 | 15 | 20 | 3 |
| Quality of the parent-child relationship | 0 | 14 | 18 | 5 |
| Parents' communication with children | 0 | 14 | 17 | 6 |
| Parents' support of child relationship with other parent | 1 | 14 | 14 | 7 |
| Parents' willingness to avoid Family Court | 1 | 18 | 15 | 3 |
| Parents make their own parenting plans | 0 | 18 | 14 | 6 |
| Parents communicate better | 0 | 20 | 12 | 5 |
| Contact with extended family | 1 | 17 | 9 | 10 |
| Relationship between parents | 1 | 20 | 7 | 9 |

Key informants found it difficult to make a judgement of the extent to which parents' knowledge increased on specific issues. However all were very positive about the course and the general improvements they had observed in parents' relationships with one another and their children. Some parents made dramatic changes when they refocused from a sole consideration of their own needs to a recognition that their child's needs and best interests were equally, if not more, important.

Men are often surprised at the impact of the course. They don't want to go but come out of it saying that it had a big impact on their thinking. They are more focused on what they need to do for the children. [Family Court staff]

Family Court key informants had noticed that some parents were more willing to settle outstanding applications by agreement after attending the PTS course. Family Court judges commented that parents who attended the course were often more willing to settle applications and were more child focused.

I think it does help [with the court work]. It gives them an understanding of processes to start with. The message of co-parenting gets across to them. [Judge]

They have some awareness already of what our concerns are . . . The main advantage is to help them see things from the children's perspective. [Judge]

However it is difficult to isolate the impact of one programme on the willingness of parents to settle when there are a range of initiatives and programmes in place to assist parents (eg, Family Court counselling and mediation). For example the Parent Hearings Pilot at six courts has made use of the PTS course as part of an approach to improve management and resolution of cases in the Family Court. Other courts have used local initiatives to encourage parents to come to agreement prior to a hearing before a judge.

It was possible that the PTS had unintended consequences, both positive and negative, and key informants were asked if they had noticed any of these. Very few negative consequences were noted:

Some parents attend the course and then try to do it all themselves, neglecting the role of their extended family. [Pacific provider]

Early on parents sometimes turned up at the same course. [Provider]

Staff can sometimes find it wearying to be doing something for nothing. That was early on and it is not a problem now. [Provider – explaining the impact of initially low referrals on staff morale]

6.3 Parent post-course evaluations

All parents who complete the course are asked to complete a short evaluation. Parents' ratings of agreement with a series of statements regarding the programme are presented in Table 6.4. Parents reported finding the programme interesting and just over half strongly agreed that they would recommend it to friends. Ninety-five percent agreed with the

statement that it helped them understand how separation affected their children. For almost as many this was going to lead to them developing a parenting plan. The programme appears to be relatively less successful in helping parents communicate with their ex-partner, although over two-thirds of parents (70 percent) reported that it helped.

Table 6.4: Parents' ratings of the programme – percentages agreeing with statement (maximum n=3956)

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree or strongly disagree |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| I would tell friends to go to a Ministry of Justice information programme for parents | 58 | 37 | 5 | 2 |
| The programme was interesting | 52 | 44 | 4 | 1 |
| The programme helped me understand how separation affects children | 47 | 47 | 5 | 2 |
| I am going to try to work out a parenting plan for the care of my children | 44 | 40 | 14 | 3 |
| I learned new ways to keep my children out of my arguments/fights with my (ex) partner | 37 | 46 | 15 | 3 |
| The programme will help me talk with my children | 34 | 50 | 13 | 3 |
| The programme helped me to understand how the Family Court works | 30 | 55 | 13 | 2 |
| The programme will help me talk with my (ex) partner | 26 | 44 | 23 | 6 |

Men were slightly, but significantly less likely, to agree with many of the statements in Table 6.4. Compared to mothers they were less likely to report that the course helped them to understand how the Family Court worked, to understand how separation affected children, talk to ex-partner, to say they would recommend the programme to others and to say they found the course interesting. It needs to be noted that the actual difference in rates of agreement between men and women were relatively small and that despite these differences the substantial majority of men agreed with these statements.

Those who had separated were significantly less likely to agree that the programme helped them to talk to their children (33 percent strongly agreed compared to 42 percent of those still together), how to talk to their ex-partner (25 percent strongly agreed compared to 32 percent of those still together), how the Family Court works (30 percent strongly agreed compared to 34 percent of those still together), or that they were going to work out a parenting plan (43 percent strongly agreed compared to 58 percent of those still together). This could be because these issues are more relevant to separated parents and therefore they are more likely to assess these aspects critically. Despite this difference the majority of separated parents agreed with the above statements.

Those who had been separated for longer were significantly less likely to agree with the statements (except that the course was interesting), compared to those who had been separated for a shorter period of time. For example, 31 percent of those separated less than three months strongly agreed that the course would help them talk with their ex-partner,

compared with the 22 percent of those separated over 12 months who strongly agreed with the statement. Although the correlations between agreement with statements and time separated were statistically significant they were relatively weak.²¹ It is likely that the content of the course is less relevant to those who have had to cope with the separation over a longer period.

All statements (except recommending the programme) in Table 6.4 were likely to be more strongly endorsed by Pacific parents, compared to the other main ethnic groups (NZE, Māori and Asian). Asian parents were less likely to agree that the course was interesting or to recommend the programme to others.

6.4 Parent survey sample – childcare arrangements at follow-up

Ninety-eight of the parents who had completed an initial survey had attended a PTS course and were eligible for follow-up by the end of the evaluation (December 2008). Eighty-one of these parents returned a follow-up survey (83 percent of those who had attended a course or 68 percent of parents who completed the initial survey).²² The data from the initial pre-course survey was matched to the information from the follow-up survey. This provided a comparison of how things were prior to the course (eg, care arrangements, satisfaction with these arrangements, and parental conflict), with how these issues had changed four to six months after the course.

One of the hoped-for gains from the programme is for parents to reach agreement on the post-separation care of their children. Comparing the care arrangements of the children prior to the course with the arrangements in place at follow-up indicates some improvement. Eleven parents, who did not have agreed arrangements in place initially, had agreed to arrangements at follow-up, with three of the agreements being made in the Family Court. However eight of the parents who initially had an agreement reported that this agreement was no longer in place. Another twelve parents remained in agreement but the nature of the agreement had changed, for example five of those with a written agreement had had this translated into court orders. Twenty-five (55 percent of the 45 with an agreement initially) had maintained the same type of agreement, although the details may have changed (see below) and 18 of the parents still did not have an agreement for the care of the children at follow-up.

Over half the parents (53 percent) had been to the Family Court since attending the PTS course. Most had been to the court for counselling (22 percent), but ten parents had been to the court for a new application. These new applications were for parenting orders, or

²¹ Kendall tau B correlations between time separated and understand effect on child ($r=.051$, $p<.001$), help talk to child ($r=.083$, $p<.001$), help talk with ex-partner ($r=.12$, $p<.001$), understand how Family Court works ($r=.07$, $p<.001$), will work out parenting plan ($r=.14$, $p<.001$), keep child out of fights ($r=.07$, $p<.001$) and recommend programme ($r=.04$, $p<.05$).

²² There was no difference in completion rates by sex, age group, ethnicity or relationship status (eg, separated or living together). There was also no difference in return rates by scores on the initial measures of separation issues and parent and child needs or on the child total difficulties measure.

variations on existing orders. Parents had also been back to the court to settle existing applications by agreement or to withdraw existing applications.

Table 6.5: Type of Family Court contact post-PTS course – percent, parents follow-up survey, multiple responses possible (n=76)

| | Percent |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Counselling | 22 |
| New Family Court application | 13 |
| Other hearing before a judge (eg, existing application ongoing) | 12 |
| Settled application by agreement | 11 |
| Mediation | 3 |
| Withdrew an application | 1 |

Additional analysis was undertaken by the Ministry of Justice to determine the extent to which people who had attended the PTS programme later made applications to the Family Court. A sample of 4310 people from the database of people who had attended PTS between May 2006 to February 2008 was used to match on name with all people making applications to the Family Court. This revealed that within six months of parents completing both PTS sessions, or within six months of completing one session if this was the only session attended, 308 applications (7 percent) were made to the Family Court by people (with matching names) who had attended PTS.²³ Most of these applications related to parenting orders, variations to parenting orders, or counselling. Some parents made multiple applications.

While Table 6.5 provides evidence that care arrangements are still being actively negotiated between parents after the course, the parents were asked if the details of the day-to-day care of the children had changed since the course. Forty percent of parents reported that the arrangements had changed since attending the course. The majority, 17 of the 31 parents, reported that the day-to-day contact had increased.

We are currently working on building the contact time up with our daughter and her father.

Ex-partner has one more overnight each week.

I had no access for six months and my ex-wife said I had to do the course before I could see or even talk to my children.

Our son found he missed his dad too much so we are going to trial 50/50 care.

We have agreed to every second weekend – at time of course we were very negative with each other.

Another six parents indicated that the details of contact had changed, although not the amount.

²³ The Ministry of Justice analysis suggests a lower rate of post-course applications to the Family Court than the evaluation survey sample. This may in part be due to the method of matching names from the database, which could have resulted in undermatching due to the misspelling of parents' names.

Changed due to other parent (father) starting fulltime employment. Changed from daytime contact during the week, to evening.

Through mediation with court appointed person, we were able to map out what we both wanted and formalise the arrangement from being random to being set days every week and more specific arrangements for school holidays/Christmas/birthdays etc.

Finally five parents indicated that contact with a parent had been reduced. In one case this was due to the father moving overseas (although maintaining regular phone contact).

My ex-partner moved to [another country] so he doesn't have contact with the children other than talking on the phone once a week.

However in other cases the reduction was due to the difficulty in maintaining shared care, or ongoing parental conflict.

Before course we shared custody but proved too difficult in regards to living arrangements. Rarely seen Nana (His).

I have had less time with my daughter. My ex has alienated [daughter] from me as much as possible. This includes all my extended family except one aunt and uncle.

As can be seen from the above quotes, some of these changes were the result of practical concerns, but many changes were the result of parents getting on better and their concern for their children's best interests. A few parents referred directly to the impact of the PTS course.

The PTS course made me understand.

Because I have been to the PTS course my ex- is happier with my having contact.

The course may not contribute directly to changes in day-to-day care arrangements, but it may do so through its impact on parents' consideration of their children's best interests in making these arrangements and reduced parental conflict.

Rearranged schedule to suit children better.

We both decided that it was in her best interests to see her dad and that it was about what's best for her not us. Also we have been getting on instead of fighting all the time. Not so volatile between us.

Just under 40 percent (39 percent) of those parents who had changed their child's day-to-day care indicated they had used the parenting plan booklet to help them make the new arrangements.

Although I didn't sit down with my ex and discuss my thoughts it enabled me to see what I wanted and what I was thinking.

Very. Wish I had access to it 6 years ago. Advise a friend to use it. He now has an "out of court" agreement for shared care.

Extremely, although both parents need to read and put it into use.

Found it useful for working out contact and used the weekly planner for her.

Another 13 parents who had not changed their day-to-day care arrangements had however used, or attempted to use, the parenting plan booklet in the past. Five parents noted that although they personally found the booklet useful, their ex-partner was not cooperating.

I found it very good. But my ex refused to use it hence we have had to go through the courts.

Found the booklet very helpful – but other parent refuses to communicate to base a plan on the outlines in the booklet.

A further goal of the PTS programme is to increase contact with extended family of both parents. The findings here are generally positive:

- fifteen parents reported an increase in contact with either parent's extended family (seven with their extended family, six with ex-partner's extended family and two with both)
- four parents reported decreased contact with extended family (two with their extended family and two with their ex-partner's extended family)
- four reported that contact has been reduced with one parent's extended family, while increasing with the other parent's extended family
- fifty-three reported no change in contact with extended family.

In eight cases parents reported that contact had reduced with at least one parent's extended family. In two cases the reduced contact was because of conflict, but the remainder had reduced because extended family had moved away from the area or their circumstances had changed.

Where contact had increased this was often due to more settled relationships between parents.

Emotion has cooled and safety issues have been addressed.

Good for children to get support from wider group of people – also good for parent to get extra support from people.

Problems being resolved so we as parents are starting to work together, hence our child sees my family more frequently because it's easier to plan to see our extended family.

In one case the parent attributed the increased contact with extended family to attending the PTS course, but did not elaborate – *'Because I attended the PTS course'*.

6.5 Parent survey sample – impact of the Parenting Through Separation course on parents’ knowledge

A main goal of the programme is to increase parents’ knowledge of the effects of separation on children. The great majority of the surveyed parents (82 percent) reported that the course had increased their knowledge of the effects of separation on children. The following comments illustrate the range of benefits parents reported gaining from the PTS course they attended.

It made me more aware of how he processes and understands what he sees going on around him.

I got to learn about how your child is thinking even at a very young age – there was a lot of fighting between me and his mother and he would even cry when one of us were feeling low so we’ve started to improve that.

Provided a better understanding of how they might be feeling and how they feel about me.

Understanding the potential effects on the children and changing the focus from what is suits me or their dad to what is best for them. It is all about keeping them happy.

It taught me how staying calm can resolve adult issues without bringing kids into it, and go with a plan.

Always keep the relationship separate from being a parent. Maintaining a friendship shows maturity.

About their loyalties to each parent and how they need support from each parent and positive talk about each parent when the other isn’t there.

Of those parents who said the course had not increased their knowledge, the main reason was they already knew the effects (9 of the 14 who said it did not increase their knowledge).

It helped in a way. I knew what was right anyway it just confirmed it.

I had understanding of negative/positive effects already.

The PTS course also aims to help parents to communicate with their children regarding the separation. Parents were again asked at follow-up if ‘Since the course have you talked to any of the children about who they will live with and how often they will see their other parent?’ Sixteen parents had not talked to their children as they thought they were too young to understand. Generally these children were three years old or younger. Of the remainder, just under a quarter (21 percent) had not talked to their children about the separation since attending the course, although most of these parents had talked to their children prior to attending the course. Just under half (46 percent) of the parents had told the children what was happening, but had not asked for their views. The remaining third had talked to the children and asked their children for their views on the care arrangements. Overall,

79 percent reported talking to their older children about the separation since the course, compared with 65 percent in the pre-course survey.

Parents were asked if the PTS course had helped them to talk to their children regarding the separation and care arrangements. Of those with older children, the majority (77 percent) said that the course had helped them in this respect.

It helped me understand children need to be told even when only 3. That mummy lives in different places but loves our child so much.

Yes made me feel more courageous. Less afraid of what they might say.

Enabled me to be more persistent and give the boys words that they could use to describe their thoughts.

I learnt to explain things without blaming anybody so that she doesn't feel she has to take sides in the future.

Parents' comments indicated that the course had provided them with age appropriate terms to describe what was happening. The course had helped them understand the perspective of their child and enabled them to reassure their children the separation was not the child's fault and that both parents still loved them.

Of the 14 parents who did not think the course helped them to talk to their children, four explained this was because they already had the knowledge provided by the course.

I have always talked to her and found it easy to do so.

I have always talked to my children about what's going on so there was no change.

Four of those who said the course did not help were negative about the course they attended.

I don't think that we have been taught how to talk to them.

I couldn't get much useful information.

I wasn't impressed with the course, most was common knowledge.

6.6 Parent survey sample – parents' views of the Parenting Through Separation course

Parents had been asked in the pre-course survey what they had hoped to get from the course and these results were presented in section 5.2. In the follow-up survey parents were asked if these needs had been met by the course they attended. Over three-quarters (84 percent) of the parents said the course had met their information needs, with 13 parents (17 percent) still having specific information needs after the course. Some of these parents had very specific needs that the course could not be expected to meet.

Just information on dealing with children who have lost a step parent who they saw as a parent.

Legal options and advice.

No mention of how to deal with past relationships and because of mental illness/ psychological issues needed to cover tools for dealing with this.

On the other hand a few parents felt the course did not provide them with relevant information or provided the wrong type of information given their circumstances.

Structure. We became off task all the time and not a lot of information was covered. We were just sent home with handouts to look at.

I thought the course presented far too an optimistic view – the reality is it is very stressful, confrontational, and brutal going through the Family Court.

Ways of talking. Communicating with the children following the separation eg, examples, what's helpful etc.

Good course, but not really targeted for the age group of my children.

Didn't learn much, also I was far younger than most in my class, also I had been separated from my partner way longer by over 10 months.

Although most parents felt their information needs were met, 38 percent indicated that they thought there were additional issues that could be covered by the course. The comments indicated that parents wanted more on Family Court process (five parents), how to deal with parental conflict (three parents), legal issues (four parents), contact and parenting plans (four parents), step parenting (three parents), and adult adjustment to separation (two parents). Individual parents had concerns about sources of financial support, wanted material on the positives of separation, information on specific types of support (eg, the church), or on specific issues associated with contact (eg, mental illness in non-resident parent).

More about conflict between each parent.

How to deal with new partners getting involved in my daughter's life.

Issue dealing with lawyers and court system reality. What to expect from a good lawyer. My rights when dealing with a lawyer for child.

Information about the most common parenting plans for different ages.

I thought it could have highlighted positives of separation – for both children and parents. It's not all a bad thing. Positive helps!

Separation through issues of domestic violence/abuse. Looking at possible behavioural and emotional issues.

Most of these comments reflect a wish for more information on topics already covered in the course rather than anything 'new'.

Parents were asked to comment on how well their course was run. Sixty-seven commented that their course was well run, while 12 made comments that indicated they felt the presentations could have been improved. One parent commented favourably on one of the facilitators but thought the other had not done so well. Examples of those who commented favourably were:

Yes, well run, plenty of opportunity to talk with others as well.

Yes she was very good with what she had to inform us on.

Was very good, didn't go too fast and always asked if we were ok, kept us in every discussion.

Those expressing reservations about facilitation felt the presentation style required more work, for example:

They were good but the scripted presentation was very dry.

Facilitators could be more interactive "Spoke at us" a lot.

The facilitator just read the words of our sheets/handouts. She was not good. (Although seems like a nice person).

No. It was just a big gossip session really.

Facilitator was lovely, but something was lacking in presentation. It wasn't vibrant. However, there were only 2 attendees at the course.

Another two parents wanted the facilitator to move through the material more quickly:

It was a bit slow in terms of pace.

I felt the information could have been covered in faster time.

Parents made a variety of suggestions for improvement. Five parents were concerned that one or two people dominated conversation and wanted the facilitator to more actively manage this. Two parents commented that the facilitator needed to be better at presenting the information, not to appear to be reading from a script. Related to this was the comment from five parents that they wanted more opportunity for discussion and question time.

Earlier in this report the post-course evaluations of the programme materials were presented (Table 4.15). These ratings were made at the end of the course and were largely very positive. Comparison with information obtained at follow-up (between three to six months after the course) shows that parents still have a largely positive view of the programme materials, venue and group setting. Only one parent made negative comments about the family DVD, although five parents said they had not viewed it. The parent who had

reservations about the family DVD was also concerned with the other programme materials, feeling that they presented too optimistic a picture of parental separation. However this view was in the minority, with most parents making positive comments:

Great very informative and so many different views.

Good, different ideas and seeing people handling situations smoothly.

Eye-opening with how parents get on well or don't but still can work together for their children.

Parents were very positive about the child DVD with no one expressing a negative view, although ten had not watched it, mainly because they felt their children were too young. Many of the parents commented on how powerful the child DVD was:

Very heart breaking.

The children loved watching it. It helped them to open up about things.

Was heart wrenching but very informative. I learnt a lot from a child's perspective.

Made me more aware of how my children are feeling.

On the whole parents were also very positive about the course handouts, with 75 parents making positive comments. One parent thought there were too many handouts and another parent thought they could have been more comprehensive. Parents were also generally appreciative of the venue in which the course was held. However some parents made comments about the lack of heating, poor signposting, problems with car parking, and the smallness of the room:

Nice – but could have been warmer!

Ok – very close quarters so was not able to get away from those who were angry.

Needed more comfortable seating, tea, coffee, biscuits and a nicer environment.

Appalling – too small, musty, stuffy, very old and cramped, not enough personal space in the room and not enough room for visual material to be well displayed. Needed room 3 times larger.

Parents appreciated a good venue:

Great, yummy supper! Convenient location.

Great – friendly atmosphere with resources everywhere and accessible. Suited the nature of the programme. Child-focused programme at a child-focused organisation.

One of the programme goals is to increase parents' knowledge of services to support and assist families. Just over a third (38 percent) of parents indicated that attending the programme had increased their knowledge of these services. The most commonly cited new

services were those offered by the Family Court, including counselling and mediation. Others mentioned services for children and supervised contact services. An additional 11 parents commented that they did not learn about any new services because they had already done their own research to identify relevant services.

None. I was already aware of services with previous access issues.

I already knew some of the services when I attended another parenting course, so I didn't get new ones I got from this course.

A measure of the positive experience of the parents on the PTS course is their willingness to recommend the PTS course to other parents who are separating or considering separating. Only five of the parents (6 percent) said they would not recommend the course to others. Reasons given included:

Unless you were a father with limited access or a mother with a vendetta against the father I don't think there would be anything to be gained. If you can't put your kids first I don't think any course will work.

Because from my experience nothing has gone the way this course has said. I am disappointed and frustrated.

It is common sense, more a refresher but I would be positive and encouraging of someone wanting to attend but the recommendation wouldn't come from me.

It mostly was commonsense. I didn't get enough out of it to recommend for someone in my situation.

The majority of parents (75 of the 81) said they would recommend the course to others. Some parents did so even though their own situation was difficult (eg, conflict with the other parent). Examples of comments from parents who said they would recommend are:

Helps very much to keep a focus on the children, provides strategies for any trouble-solving, and identifies resources.

Knowledge is good. The course is not the "be-all, end-all" but it is certainly a good thing to do, but one must do more.

Makes you stop and think. You get to see how others are doing it. The parenting plan booklet. Good opportunity to make friends and get support.

Clear, helpful information for benefit of child(ren); and to help parents avoid hurting children and each other.

It gives tools (like the parenting plan booklet) to try sort things out or run more smoothly and both parents get the same information (if both attend the course).

Parents were asked if the course had changed the way they communicated with their ex-partner. Over half the parents (58 percent) indicated that attending the course had made a positive contribution to the way they communicated with their ex-partner.

As a result of attending PTS we maintain a focus on our son and our behaviour and decision-making is based around the effects on him (Our son).

I have had my eyes opened to many more non-confrontational ways to communicate.

Made me think about it more and helped me communicate more positively.

Parents reported making an effort to keep their children from witnessing conflict when it might possibly arise:

I make sure my eldest daughter is not around if I need to tell my husband about her or if we end up having a disagreement.

I have made more of an effort to avoid communicating through our son, and instead communicate directly.

For some parents the concern with the impact of conflict on their child had led them to limit their contact with their ex-partner:

The less the better. Avoiding conflict is the best for our children.

Communication takes place via polite txt messages to move away from communicating in front of [Child] until anger dissipates.

Finally three parents commented that because their ex-partner had not attended, the course had not helped:

Unfortunately he has not done one and refuses to discuss seeing the children.

Parents were asked if as a result of attending the course they now cooperated more with their ex-partner regarding the day-to-day care of their children. Parents were rather less positive about the impact of the course on this aspect of their communication, with many noting that the arrangements had yet to be settled.

This has still to be sorted.

However over a quarter (28 percent) of the parents were more positive about the impact of the course:

The programme is a silent reminder to me to maintain patience with my ex-partner regarding day-to-day care and contact.

We are both more flexible and understanding.

Lots more co-operative but on big things, not so much on day-to-day.

Some parent comments indicated they had picked up strategies to make arranging day-to-day care easier:

It's a lot more organised, made planning easier.

I avoid direct contact and email him my schedule so he knows what is coming up. Then he is prepared when I ask him to help or be involved.

Have suggested third party handovers as he is unable to be respectful when he comes over onto our property. This seems to be working better.

Once again some parents commented that their ex-partner had not attended the course:

Yes, a little, but because he is not interested in attending the course or doing any of the things I suggest from the course, it is difficult.

It appears there are still major barriers to parents cooperating on the issue of day-to-day care. Whether the PTS course can do more to address this issue needs consideration, but given the relatively early stage of the separation for many parents it may take time to come to settled arrangements and cooperative parenting.

6.7 Changes in parent and child needs and issues of separation at follow-up

The previous section provides an assessment of the course based on parents' responses to open-ended questions. This section uses parents' responses to the standard measures relating to parent and child needs and issues associated with the separation. Repeating these measures at follow-up enabled a comparison of an individual's score prior to the course with that at follow-up, four to six months after the course. The descriptive statistics for these measures at follow-up are presented in Tables 6.6 and 6.7 along with the results of statistical tests of the difference between the initial score and the follow-up score.

Table 6.6: Parents' follow-up scores on measures of parent and child needs and statistical comparison with pre-programme scores

| Parent and child needs ¹ | Mean (sd) | Significance | Number |
|------------------------------------------|-----------|----------------|--------|
| Conflict – children caught in the middle | 1.5 (.47) | t=2.46, p=.016 | 79 |
| General parental conflict | 2.2 (.75) | t=4.05, p=.000 | 79 |
| Parenting statements | 3.4 (.59) | ns. | 80 |
| Joint parenting | 2.5 (.81) | ns. | 75 |
| Low contact between parents | 3.2 (1.1) | ns. | 63 |

¹ Scale goes from 1 = almost never to 4 = almost always

Of the parent and child needs, the only statistically significant differences were for the measures of parental conflict involving putting children in the middle and of general parental conflict. Parents reported significantly lower levels of parental conflict at follow-up compared to the levels prior to attending the PTS course. While parents also reported on average more joint parenting, this difference did not reach statistical significance. It is likely that the initially high levels of joint parenting, left little room for improvement between the initial survey and follow-up.

This explanation is also likely to apply to the scores on the other individual items (Table 6.7) which, while remaining high, did not significantly improve. However, as shown in Table 6.7, parents reported improvements in the three measures relating to issues of separation. At follow-up parents were significantly more likely to agree with statements indicating that they were satisfied with care, contact and support, that they knew about separation-related issues and that they and their children had adjusted better to the separation.

Table 6.7: Parents' follow-up scores on measures of issues of separation and statistical comparison with pre-programme scores

| | Mean (sd) | Significance | Number |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------------|--------|
| Issues of separation ¹ | | | |
| Level of satisfaction with care, contact and support | 3.5 (1.2) | t= -2.43, p=.017 | 72 |
| Levels of knowledge related to separation issues | 3.9 (.60) | t= -9.4, p=.000 | 79 |
| Level of adjustment in relation to the separation/divorce | 3.6 (.86) | t= -6.2, p=.000 | 79 |
| Other individual items ¹ | | | |
| I have a close relationship with my children. | 4.4 (1.3) | ns. | 79 |
| I am satisfied with my relationship with my children. | 4.2 (1.3) | ns. | 78 |
| My children have a close relationship with the other parent. | 4.1 (1.1) | ns. | 79 |
| Most important consideration is wellbeing child. | 4.9 (0.3) | ns. | 79 |
| In future we will agree on the care of the children. | 3.5 (1.3) | ns. | 79 |

¹ 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

These results clearly indicate there has been a significant increase in parents' satisfaction with childcare arrangements, increased knowledge of separation issues, a reduction in parental conflict and an improvement in the adjustment of parents and their children. These improvements may be due to the knowledge and skills gained from the PTS course, but they may also simply reflect the natural improvement in adjustment with time. We are not able to test for this alternative explanation since we did not have access to a suitable comparison group (the issue of assessing programme impact is discussed more fully in the final chapter). However the observed improvements provide some tentative evidence for the benefit of the PTS course to parents.

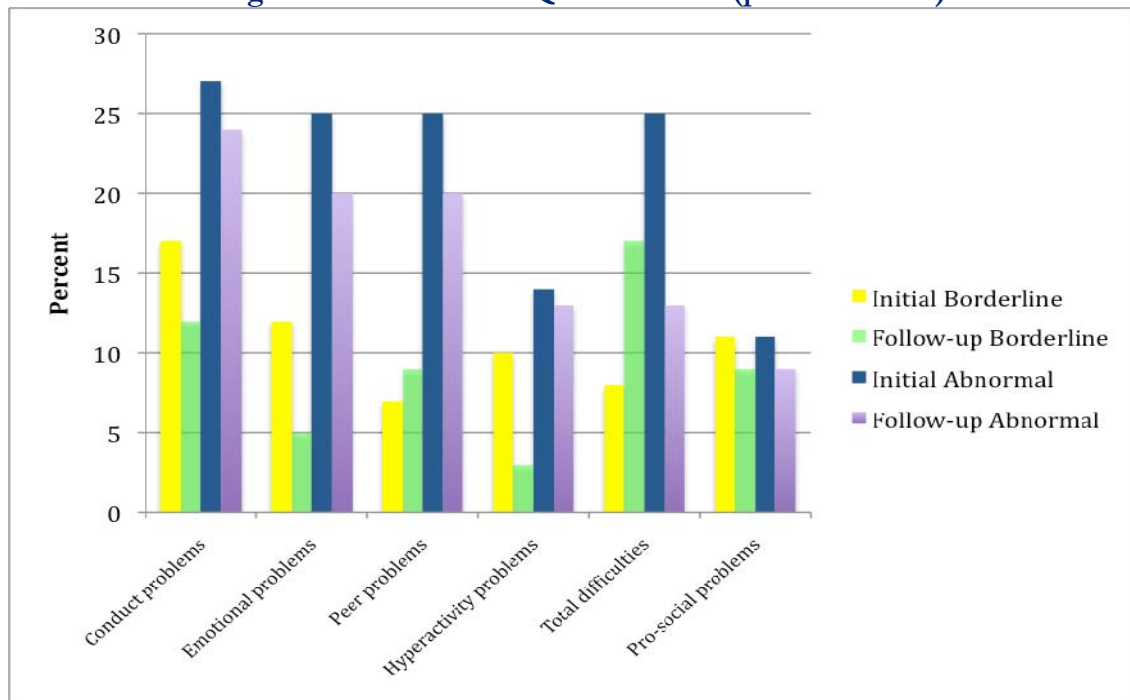
6.8 Changes in child behaviour at follow-up

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire was also completed again at follow-up for the same child. The percentage of children at follow-up rated as scoring in the 'borderline' or 'abnormal' range is presented in Figure 6.1, along with the percentages for the full sample of parents at initial survey. Parents reported that the children displayed less difficult behaviour at follow-up, with 13 percent of the children in the 'abnormal' range on the total difficulties score compared to 21 percent at the initial survey. A lower percentage of children scored in the 'abnormal' range at follow-up on all the SDQ questionnaire subscales.

A more sensitive statistical test of the change in children's behaviour is achieved by comparing the scores of individual children at initial survey and follow-up. This test shows that there was a statistically significant reduction in the total difficulties score between the

initial survey and at follow-up ($t=2.9$, $df=67$; $p=.005$).²⁴ In terms of individual scale scores the conduct ($t=3.6$, $df=67$; $p=.001$) and emotional ($t=2.1$, $df=67$; $p=.038$) problems scores were significantly lower at follow-up.

Figure 6.1: Percentage of children whose behaviour is rated borderline or abnormal at follow-up compared to initial pre-course survey – Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (parent version)



These results provide some evidence that children were displaying less difficult behaviour after their parents had attended the PTS course, compared to their behaviour prior to the course. There are a number of possible explanations for this change. Firstly, the improvement in behaviour may be the result of improved parenting by parents brought about by the knowledge gained at the PTS course. Secondly, the improvement may be a result of the passage of time since the separation, with children adjusting to their parent's separation. Finally, the change may reflect the parents' perception of their children's behaviour, rather than a change in the actual behaviour. That is, as a result of the knowledge parents obtain from attending the course they may be less likely to rate children's behaviour as 'difficult'. They might be said to be more understanding of their children's behaviour. Parents may now rate similar behaviour as reflecting the child's adjustment to the separation rather than as an enduring characteristic of the child. These alternate explanations will be discussed in the next chapter.

²⁴ Similar findings were achieved using an equivalent non-parametric test (Wilcoxon signed ranks test).

6.9 Summary

This chapter used information from key informants, providers and parents to assess the suitability and impact of the PTS programme and whether parents' needs were met. Providers and key informants considered the PTS course suitable for a wide range of parents, although they had some reservations about the suitability for those with English as a second language. Most providers felt that the course best suited those who had just separated, or were considering separating. While a few parents became upset during the course providers felt able to cope with this situation and where appropriate they were making onward referrals.

In terms of the achievement of the goals of the PTS programme, providers felt the programme had helped parents in almost all areas targeted by the programme. They were least confident about the ability of the programme to improve the couple relationship, although some providers felt they could not judge the impact of some aspects of the programme. Key informants also reported they were unable to judge the impact of the programme as they did not have ongoing contact with the participants. However, some Family Court staff had observed impacts in terms of a greater willingness to settle matters or a greater focus on childrens best interests.

Generally, parents rated the course highly. When parents completed the evaluation form after the course they rated the programme as having helped them improve the way they would manage the issues around the separation and the care of their children. They reported that they would recommend the programme to others and they found it interesting. Although rating the programme as helping them to talk to their ex-partner, this aspect of the programme was rated relatively less successful than the other goals. This finding mirrors that from providers, who thought the programme was least successful in improving the couple relationship.

The follow-up survey of parents (four to six months post-course) provided information on the extent to which parents felt they had benefited from attending the course. In line with programme goals it appeared that children were having more contact with parents and with extended family since the course. However many of the care agreements were still not settled and some parents were still involved in applications before the Family Court. Responses to open-ended questions indicated that the majority of the parents felt the course had increased their knowledge of the effects of separation on children, helped them talk to their children, and had met their information needs (although some wanted more information on covered topics). Over half felt the course helped them communicate with their ex-partner although only a quarter felt it helped them with cooperating on issues concerning the day-to-day care of their children.

Relatively few parents said they learnt of new support services, but this was mainly because they had a good knowledge of such services already. Parents' comments about the way the course was run and the supporting materials (eg, DVDs) supported the high post-course evaluations. At follow-up parents reported that the course had been well run and made

positive comments about the course materials, especially the DVDs and handouts. Parents appreciated a comfortable venue and the provision of refreshments.

Finally, by repeating measures of parent and child needs, issues of separation and child behaviour it was possible to establish if statistically significant changes had occurred in these measures at follow-up compared to prior to the course. There was significantly less putting children in the middle of parental conflict and in general parental conflict, both of which are goals of the PTS course. Parents were also significantly more satisfied with care, contact and support, reported greater knowledge of separation issues and better adjustment to the separation/divorce. Parents also rated their child's behaviour as less problematic at follow-up. All these changes provide evidence for the effectiveness of the PTS programme, although natural improvement over time cannot be ruled out as an alternative, or contributory, explanation.

7 Summary and conclusions

This evaluation collected information from a range of key stakeholders, including pre-programme and follow-up information from a sample of parents who had attended a PTS course. It also used information from overseas and New Zealand programmes to assess the focus and content of the programme. This chapter summarises the findings from an analysis of this information and draws together the various views of the programme to make conclusions as to the programme's effectiveness.

7.1 Parenting Through Separation and 'best practice' for parent education programmes

The Parenting Through Separation programme has clear goals and a child-focus. It is detailed in a programme manual for facilitators, which ensures providers are clear as to programme contents. The content of the programme closely matches that of other similar programmes and of guidelines developed for parent education programmes.

Overall, the contents of the programme are up to date and comprehensive, and relate to the aims and objectives of the course. It is important to convey the messages in ways that are easily accessible and absorbed by participants. The material covers an impressively large number of topics, and reflects current research-based understanding of the separation process. For example, it is emphasised that there is not one arrangement that works for all families; parents are encouraged to try arrangements until they find the one that works for them (see 'Putting the Kids First' Families Commission publication (Robertson, Pryor and Moss, 2008)). Parents also indicated that a major concern was repartnering and associated issues for children. This is now addressed in a fact sheet, as are tips for grandparents.

As recommended by overseas programmes the PTS programme uses a range of resources, including presentations, booklets, DVDs and activities. There was almost universal agreement amongst providers, key informants and parents that the programme materials were of good standard. The material in the DVDs is compelling and was highly rated by all informants. It is also notable that both providers and participants rated the activities included in the sessions less highly than other aspects of the programme. Parents liked the discussions, especially where they provided suggestions for managing separation issues.

The programme operates within a relatively tight timeframe, with only four hours available. This is in contrast to some other programmes elsewhere and more intensive programmes where numerous group and some individual sessions are involved (eg, the New Beginnings Programme (Wolchik, et al, 2002)). The amount of material covered is considerable, and it may be too much for participants to absorb in only four hours, although having two sessions reduces information overload. Although written materials and a DVD are provided, it is likely that some of the material in the sessions is not given sufficient time and attention. Some parents wanted more information on topics covered in the course. The trade-off here is between lengthening the course to cover topics in more depth and the danger that this would discourage parents from attending. Parents who are separating may find it difficult to get the

time to attend a more lengthy course. Overseas programmes typically provide a booklet for parents covering all of the course content and this might be considered for the PTS programme.

7.2 Programme uptake

It is clear from the comments from key informants and programme providers that the uptake for the PTS course is lower than had been expected. In just over two years almost 4,500 parents had attended a PTS course throughout New Zealand. While this is a significant number of parents it is a small proportion of the estimated 25,000 parents who separate in any one year in New Zealand. The relatively low uptake of the course has had a negative impact on many of the providers, with some of those contracted to run the course never having done so and others struggling financially to keep running the course with low numbers of participants.

However despite the relatively low numbers there is a good representation of mothers and fathers²⁵ attending, of different ethnic groups and of parents from all regions of New Zealand. Providers have been appointed in all areas of New Zealand and although the lack of referrals has reduced course availability in some areas, parents are able to find a course within a reasonable travelling distance. The main way in which parents are hearing about the course is from a counsellor or the Family Court, with smaller numbers hearing about it from friends and family or a lawyer. Advertising does appear to be reaching parents, with newspaper and magazine advertisements or articles being cited most often. In contrast fewer parents reported first hearing about it from the radio, although providers and some key informants thought this was an important source of referrals. Radio advertising on local Māori and Pacific stations may be an important way of reaching these groups of parents.

The data suggests that there is no one dominant source of information for parents and that the course should continue to be advertised through multiple means. While national advertising is important, local community advertising is effective in informing parents, and those in contact with parents, about local PTS courses. In some areas the Family Court has been very active in referring parents and this seems to have helped keep up attendance rates. However not all parents have contact with the Family Court and some parents can be put off a course that is identified closely with the courts and the Ministry of Justice. Encouraging and resourcing providers to advertise may help parents see that the course is for all separating parents, and not just those going through the court.

While Family Court key informants were very supportive of the programme, there is currently no mandatory referral process in place for those approaching the court. In some courts it is strongly recommended to parents that they attend the course prior to any hearings, but they cannot be forced to attend. There were mixed views on whether parents should be made to attend, with some key informants concerned that reluctant parents may be disruptive, for example, perpetrators of domestic violence. On the other hand examples were cited where reluctant parents had made significant progress in settling their case after attending a course.

²⁵ The greater proportion of mothers attending, compared to fathers, is a problem common to most, if not all, parenting programmes (Kerslake-Hendricks and Balakrishnan, 2005).

In the United States most parent education programmes are mandatory²⁶ for couples filing for 'divorce, separation, child custody and /or visitation' (Pollet and Lombreglia, 2008). Evaluations of these programmes have shown them to be effective and some have described their mandatory nature as 'mandating an opportunity'. Surveys of attending parents have found that they also believe the programme should be mandatory (eg, University of Vermont Coping with Separation and Divorce Parenting Seminar, 2006). While parents who have been mandated to attend are often unhappy initially, there is evidence that they have high levels of satisfaction with the course after attending (Cookston, et al, 2002).

Mandated attendance has also been seen as a way of ensuring parents attend the course early in the separation process. It also appears that benefits are greater for those who have recently separated, compared to those who have been separated for some time (Kramer and Gordon, 1997). It is interesting that in this evaluation PTS participants sometimes commented that they thought the course was most suited to those early in the separation process. Programme providers also viewed recently separated parents as being most likely to benefit from attending.

Non-attendance by those enrolled is an issue for most providers. The main obstacle to parents attending the course was seen by providers to be a lack of childcare. Some suggested that uptake would be higher if the programme provided childcare for parents attending. United States research has also found that one of the main recommendations professionals make for improving parent education programmes is the provision of childcare while parents attend the course (Pollet and Lombreglia, 2008). Other obstacles included transport difficulties and the time and day the course was held. Some parents were also seen as being put off by having to wait for a course and during the evaluation a number of planned courses were not held due to insufficient numbers. The remaining parents had to wait for the next course. Enabling the course to be run with fewer than five parents may help avoid this situation and all providers surveyed were aware of this possibility.

Providers have developed a range of strategies to ensure parents attend, including contact by letter and phone calls. In some areas providers are also visiting parents in their homes. Non-attendance by some parents is a common problem for programmes such as this and any approach that increases participation needs to be part of routine practice. Some providers are also making efforts to inform ex-partners of parents attending the course. They were not sure how successful these efforts had been as the ex-partner may have attended a programme run by another provider.

Many providers were also willing to allow parents to bring supporters to the course. Support people usually came to the first session, rather than the second session, when parents were more comfortable with attending on their own. Having supporters was more of an issue for Māori and Pacific parents, who often wanted to bring whānau support, while NZ European parents often brought a new partner. While in favour of parents bringing supporters, there were potential problems noted and providers were concerned that the balance of the group might be altered. Key informants and providers were generally in favour of extending funding for supporters.

²⁶ Attendance may be legally mandated or may be required by local court rules.

In summary, it appears that uptake of the programme is lower than initially expected, despite efforts by the Ministry of Justice, the Family Court and the providers to advertise the programme. Key informants felt these efforts needed to continue and some suggested that funding be put aside to assist providers to advertise in their local community. It takes time for programmes to establish themselves and for the community generally to become aware of them. The programme has been running for just over two years and it is likely that as more parents attend there will be greater general knowledge of PTS in the community. There may also be a greater willingness on the part of parents to attend a course, especially when they understand that it is for all separating parents. It does, however, have to be accepted that some parents are able to negotiate post-separation parenting between themselves and that they probably have little need for the PTS course. Recent research suggests these parents can access information if they need it, use counselling to help them settle agreements and are happy with the arrangements they have and with the adjustment of their children (Robertson, Pryor and Moss, 2008).

7.3 Programme delivery

Most providers and key informants reported that the programme was being run as outlined in the manual. Any variations tended to involve different methods of presentation, with some facilitators putting the material on Powerpoint to assist with delivery. Māori and Pacific providers were more likely to report variations in programme delivery, although not in content. They included culturally appropriate introductions and protocols and had developed metaphors to explain the course content in ways they found resonated more with parents. Some suggested that it would be beneficial to providers if these could be further developed and disseminated amongst PTS providers.

Overseas research has found the skill level of the facilitator is an important predictor of improved co-parenting (Pollet and Lombreglia, 2008). In the United States it has been recommended by one set of guidelines (New York State Parent Education Advisory Board, 2003) that facilitators have a graduate degree or equivalent experience in a mental health discipline, parent education, or family life science. It is also recommended that facilitators have previous experience of presenting to, or conducting, adult education groups. PTS facilitators often had relevant social work or counselling qualifications and experience as a social worker or counsellor. It was unclear how relevant this experience was to PTS facilitation (eg, whether or not it included child development, family work or adult education), although given that the main providers' core work was in this area it is likely that those working for these organisations had relevant experience.

Those in the larger organisations received regular ongoing training and support from their organisation. On the other hand smaller organisations had fewer resources (financial and staffing) for ongoing training. There are a number of training and support issues that need addressing. Firstly, there was seen to be the need for follow-up training for those providers who had lost their trained facilitators and no longer had anyone to run the course. Secondly, many facilitators would like to have a regular exchange of information, such as a seminar, where they could learn from one another and exchange ideas, or where they could have specialist presentations. One review of parent education programmes recommends yearly

training for facilitators (Supreme Court of Virginia, 2000). Thirdly, a regular exchange of information between providers and facilitators may help maintain consistency in programme delivery and content, and if necessary assist with the refinement of the programme.

Parents were generally very positive about the skills of the facilitators. The few who had concerns commented that the presentation seemed routine or that it was a bit slow. It appeared from parents' comments that they valued the opportunity to discuss issues with other parents. This provided them with a sense that there were others in the same situation as they were and gave parents the opportunity to exchange ideas. This time for discussion is obviously an important element of the course, but one that could be curtailed if there is too much material to cover in the time available.

Parents were also very appreciative of efforts to run the course in an attractive venue. The venue needs to be suitably heated, accessible, large enough for the number of parents attending and have suitable parking available. Tea and coffee helped the parents relax and provided the opportunity for parents to talk informally to one another. During evaluation visits it appeared that some venues were not easily accessed by those in a wheelchair, although there may have been alternative courses in venues with disability access.

Some parents expressed an interest in having a follow-up session. In part this reflected the value they got from their discussions with other parents and it is not uncommon for parents to arrange their own post-programme support groups. In at least one area a follow-up session is being trialled. Some providers also allowed parents to contact them after the course if they wanted to further discuss aspects of the programme.

7.4 Programme delivery by different providers

The relatively high rate of satisfaction with the programme and the low numbers of parents participating in each course make it difficult to evaluate individual PTS courses. As described above, there is relatively little variation in course content between providers although they do vary somewhat in presentation style. Those using a different style of presentation tended to be providers dealing mainly with Māori and Pacific parents. The parents in the evaluation sample were also highly positive about the courses they attended; courses that were run by a range of providers throughout the country.

Comments by key informants suggest that given the clear outline of the course content the main variation between courses is in the skills of the facilitators. Very few parents expressed dissatisfaction with facilitations: 90 percent of all parents thought the presentations were good. There was no indication from the information collected during the evaluation that any course was being poorly run. However it needs to be noted that, like any skill, if facilitators are not able to run the course on a regular basis then their facilitation skills may suffer.

A related issue is staff turnover. The bigger organisations had the ability to replace facilitators who left with similarly qualified and experienced facilitators, and to train them in the programme. This was more problematic for the smaller organisations and there may be a need to assist these organisations with the training of new facilitators. As more of the smaller

providers were Māori or Pacific providers it is of concern that some are no longer delivering the course.

7.5 Programme impact

Parents' evaluations of the PTS programme at the completion of the course were very positive. Over 90 percent agreed with statements that the course helped them understand how separation affects children and almost as many thought the course would help them work out a parenting plan, would help reduce conflict with their ex-partner and helped them talk to their children. The one area in which parents reported the course did not help them as much was in helping them to talk to their ex-partner, although 70 percent agreed it would help them. Evaluations of similar parent education programmes have also found that the one area which parents rate relatively poorly is help with communicating or 'understanding' the other parent (eg, University of Vermont Coping with Separation and Divorce Parenting Seminar, 2006).

In the initial pre-course survey, parents had indicated a range of information needs. The main one, for over a third, was information on how to help their children with the separation. Other information needs identified by parents (approximately 15 percent for each) were help with their relationship with their ex-partner, talking to their children, and working out post-separation parenting. At follow-up the majority of these parents reported that the course had provided them with the information they needed, including helping them talk to their children about the separation. Where they had not gained knowledge they usually reported this was because they were already aware of the information presented. Given the range of backgrounds of the parents attending this is not surprising. As some of the key informants commented, the better educated parents had often done considerable research on the issues prior to attending the course. However, parents often commented positively that the course reinforced and reassured them that they were doing things right.

The PTS course is an educational programme with specific goals. However parents undergoing separation come with a diverse range of needs, not all of which are addressed by the course. It is important that where providers identify needs that cannot be met by the course or parents ask for assistance, they are referred to the appropriate support agency. Providers frequently referred parents onward to a range of services for assistance with relationship issues, children's adjustment, legal help, help with parenting skills and help with personal adjustment. Parents themselves reported that attending the course had made them aware of some services, notably counselling and mediation.

Very few providers and key informants identified groups of parents who they thought would not benefit from attending a PTS course. Parents with English as a second language were most often cited as a group who would potentially struggle to understand the course material. Those with multiple disadvantages and with mental health and addiction problems were also considered less likely to benefit from the course, since they were often overwhelmed with their own needs. Although these groups of parents were mentioned as potentially benefiting less they were still seen as being helped by the course. Facilitators commented that they were able to adjust their delivery of the programme depending on the needs of the parents

attending. Some providers were able to establish these needs prior to the course, either by having prior contact with the parents or by meeting with them beforehand.

While parents' information needs are being met by the course the evaluation was also able to assess the extent to which the course had an impact on parents' reports of their, and their children's, behaviours. By using measures of parental conflict, parenting behaviours, childcare arrangements, knowledge of separation issues and adjustment to separation the evaluation has evidence that suggests the course is having a positive impact on parents and children's behaviours.

Earlier in this section it was noted that, relative to other areas targeted by the course, parents were less satisfied immediately after the course with the help the course gave them to talk with their ex-partner. Providers also thought that this area was one of the least likely to improve after the course. Given often entrenched conflict it may take more significant couple work (eg, counselling) to change these negative communication patterns. The course may contribute to couples keeping children away from the conflict or help parents to learn to minimise opportunities for conflict.

However it is important to note that at follow-up there was a significant reduction in reported parental conflict. There were also significant increases in parents' satisfaction with childcare arrangements, in knowledge of issues related to separation and an increase in parents and children's adjustment in relation to separation. Parents also reported significantly lower levels of behavioural difficulties in their children, as measured on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire. While there were not significant changes on the measures of parenting behaviours, these were already reported to be very positive prior to attending the course. There was less potential for the course to make an impact in these areas.

Previous research has also found that attendance at a parenting education course leads to improvement in parents' knowledge of separation issues, reductions in conflict and increases in cooperative parenting (Gillard and Seymour, 2005; Bacon and McKenzie, 2004; Sieppert et al, 1999). However most of these studies have not included control groups, with a recent review suggesting that including control groups reduces overall programme impacts (Goodman, et al, 2004). Gillard and Seymour (2005) reported that at three months follow-up children were reported by their parents as having significantly less hyperactive behaviour. Although we did not find a significant difference in levels of hyperactive behaviour, the results of this evaluation are in line with these previous studies and provide evidence that suggests that the current PTS course is assisting parents through their separation.

It is important to note here that the design of the current evaluation, and of the above earlier evaluations, does not allow for the exclusion of the possibility that the improvements were due to natural improvement over time. That is, children's and parents' adjustment may improve as they move on from the stress of the separation. It was not possible to include a control group in this evaluation and so the possibility remains that improvements would have occurred without attendance at the PTS course. However, the follow-up period here was relatively short (three to six months) and most studies suggest that adjustment occurs for most separated parents and children by two years post-separation (Pryor and Rodgers,

2001). It also needs to be noted that many of the parents had attended or were attending counselling and that the impact of the counselling will confound the assessment of the impact of the PTS programme.²⁷

The reported improvement in children's behaviour could also be explained by a change in their parents' perceptions of the behaviour, rather than the behaviour itself. That is, having attended the course parents are able to place their children's behaviour in the context of that which is 'normal' for children experiencing separation. As a result they are less likely to regard the difficult behaviour as an enduring characteristic of their child. To test whether this is the explanation for the change in parent-rated behaviour would require an independent assessment of that behaviour. However whether the change in behaviour is real or a result of parents' changed perceptions the outcome is still highly desirable. Parents are less likely to be in conflict with children and to worry about their behaviour if they are able to place it in context and to understand the types of behaviours commonly exhibited by children whose parents have recently separated.

Children's day-to-day contact with parents had also increased and children were also having more contact with their extended family. Although most parents did not always attribute these changes directly to attending the PTS course their comments indicate that improved relationships and recognition of the importance of contact were partly driving these changes. These changes in contact with parents and extended family are notable, given that it is a common experience for children after their parents' separation to have reduced or no contact with these family members. Whether or not the PTS course contributed to this, it is a positive finding in this group of parents.

It is also possible for a course such as PTS to bring about unintended consequences; however, key informants were unable to identify any significant positive or negative unintended consequences. One did comment that the lack of referrals initially had impacted on staff morale, with staff feeling they were not getting sufficient remuneration for the work they were putting in. Some providers, though, had noticed an increase in referrals for their services, which they viewed positively.

7.6 Conclusion

Almost all participants and informants in this evaluation agreed that there is a need for a parent education programme for separating parents. The evidence presented here indicates that the Parenting Through Separation course is fulfilling the majority of its aims and objectives, by increasing parents' knowledge of issues around separation and by helping them to minimise the impact of separation on their children. It also indicates measurable improvements in several aspects of parents' reported behaviour and understanding, and in their children's distress and behaviour problems. Although the design of this evaluation was not able to rule out the effects of time on these changes, we can probably conclude that it made a positive contribution to the process of separating 'well', including being able to talk to

²⁷ There was not sufficient information on the use of counselling to fully analyse its impact on these measures. However initial analysis suggested that improvements on the measures held for both those who had been to counselling since the course and those who had not.

their children about the separation. Many of the reported changes are in factors that are known to contribute to the wellbeing of children whose parents separate.

As with many services, PTS faces ongoing challenges in encouraging parents to take part in the course. There are no easy answers to this and ongoing multiple ways of bringing it to people's attention are to be encouraged. It is evident from this evaluation that parents and their children will benefit from participation, and that PTS fulfils its objectives to educate parents, increase and maintain children's connections with both parents and extended family, and to minimise the negative effects of parental separation on children.

Glossary

| | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Aroha | love |
| Hapū | sub-tribe |
| Iwi | tribe |
| Karakia | prayer-chant |
| Kaitiakitanga | exercise of guardianship |
| Kawa | the set of protocols by which a Māori iwi or tribe govern themselves |
| Manaakitanga | hospitality, welcoming people in and making them feel at home |
| Mihimihi | greeting |
| Pepeha | figure of speech, proverb |
| Rangi and Papatuanuku | in Māori mythology the primal couple Ranginui and Papatuanuku appear in a creation myth explaining the origin of the world |
| Reo | the Māori language |
| Rohe | boundary of tribal area, district |
| Tamariki | children |
| Tiaki whakapapa | keep or guard the whakapapa |
| Tikanga | custom |
| Tuakana/teina relationships | older brother/younger brother (of boy) |
| Whānau | family group |
| Whakawhānau ngatanga | establishing relationships in a Māori context |
| Waiata | song |
| Whakapapa | genealogical table; cultural identity |

References

- Arbuthnot, J., Kramer, K. and Gordon, D (1997) Patterns of relitigation following divorce education. *Family and Conciliation Courts Review*, 35(3): 269–279.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006) Children living apart from one parent. Retrieved 28.1.07, 2007, from www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@nsf/7d12b0f6763c78caca257061001cc588/5a3e290eb5b1ca2571b0001032d8!
- Bacon, B. and McKenzie, B. (2004) Parent education after separation/divorce: Impact of the level of parental conflict on outcomes, *Family Court Review*, 42(1): 85–98.
- Blaisure, K. R. and Geasler, M. J. (2000) The divorce education intervention, *Family and Conciliation Courts Review*, 38: 501–513.
- Braver, S. L., Salem, P., Pearson, J. and DeLuse, S.R. (1996) The Content of Divorce Education Programs. *Family and Conciliation Courts Review*, 4(1), 41–59.
- Cookston, J.T., Braver, S.L., Sandler, I. and Genalo, M.T. (2002) Prospects for expanded parent education services for divorcing families with children, *Family Court Review*, 40(2): 190–203.
- Geasler, M.J. and Blaisure, K.R. (1999) 1998 nationwide survey of court-connected divorce education programs. *Family and Conciliation Courts Review* 37: 36–63.
- Gillard, L. and Seymour, F. (2005) *Children in the middle: A parent education programme for parents*. Department of Psychology, University of Auckland; Auckland.
- Goodman, M., Bonds, D., Sandler, T. and Braver, S. (2004) Parent psychoeducational programs and reducing the negative effects of interparental conflict following divorce, *Family Court Review*, 42(2): 263–279.
- Goodman R, Meltzer H, and Bailey, V. (1998) The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire: A pilot study on the validity of the self-report version. *European Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 7, 125–130.
- Gordon, D. and Arbuthnot, J. (2008) *Children in the Middle: Divorce education for parents*, <http://www.divorce-education.com/CIM.pdf>, last accessed 12/3/2009.
- Kelly, J.B. (2006) Children's living arrangements following separation and divorce: Insights from empirical and clinical research, *Family Process*, 46(1): 35–52.
- Kerslake-Hendricks, A. and Balakrishnan, R. (2005) *Review of parenting programmes*, Wellington: NZ Families Commission.

Kramer, K.M., Arbuthnot, J., Gordon, D., Rousis, N.J., Hoza, J. (1998) Effects of skill-based versus information-based divorce education programs on domestic violence and parental communication. *Family and Conciliation Courts Review*, 36(1): 9–31.

Lee, A. (1990) *A survey of parents who have obtained a dissolution*, Wellington: Department of Justice.

McGee, C. (2008) *Separation and Divorce: Helping parents to help children*, London: RESOLUTION.

McKenzie, B. and Guberman, I. (1996) *For the Sake of the Children: A Parent Education Program for Separating and Divorcing Parents*. Final Report, Child and Family Services Research Group, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba.

National Centre for State Courts (2004) Custody and Support Parent Education Programs: State Links, www.ncsconline.org/WC/Publications/KIS_CustodParentedStates.pdf, last accessed 12/3/2009.

New York State Parent Education Advisory Board (2003) *Proposed guidelines, standards and requirements for parent education programmes*, New York: Report of the New York State Parent Education Advisory Board, October 2003.

New Zealand Families Commission (2007) *Moving on: Changes in a year in family living arrangements*. Wellington: New Zealand Families Commission.

New Zealand Law Commission (2003) *Dispute resolution in the Family Court*, Wellington: NZ Law Commission.

Pollet, S.L. and Lombreglia, M. (2008) A nationwide survey of mandatory parent education, *Family Court Review*, 46(2): 375–394.

Pryor, J. and Rodgers, B. (2001) *Children in Changing Families: Life after parental separation*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Rigg, A. (2009). Young People's Perception of Families and Experiences of Family Structure Change, Unpublished PhD thesis, Wellington: Victoria University of Wellington.

Robertson, J.P., Pryor, J. & Moss, J. (2008) *Putting the Children First: Caring for children after separation*, Wellington: NZ Families Commission.

Sieppert, J.D., Lybarger, D.S., Bertrand, L.D. and Hornick, J.P. (1999) An evaluation of Alberta's parenting after separation seminars. Alberta: Alberta Children's Services.

Smyth, B. and Maloney, L. (2008) Changes in patterns of post-separation parenting over time: A brief review. *Journal of Family Studies*, 14(1): 7–22.

Statistics New Zealand (2007). *2001 Census data, 2001 Census: Families and Households highlights*. Retrieved 28.1.07, from www.stats.govt.nz/census/2001-census-data/2001-families-households/highlights.htm

Supreme Court of Virginia (2000) *Model parent education curriculum and a study of related custody and visitation issues*. A report to the Governor and the general assembly of Virginia.

University of Minnesota (2006) *Parents Forever: Education for Families in Divorce Transition*. <http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/familydevelopment/DE8451.html>, last accessed 2/4/2009.

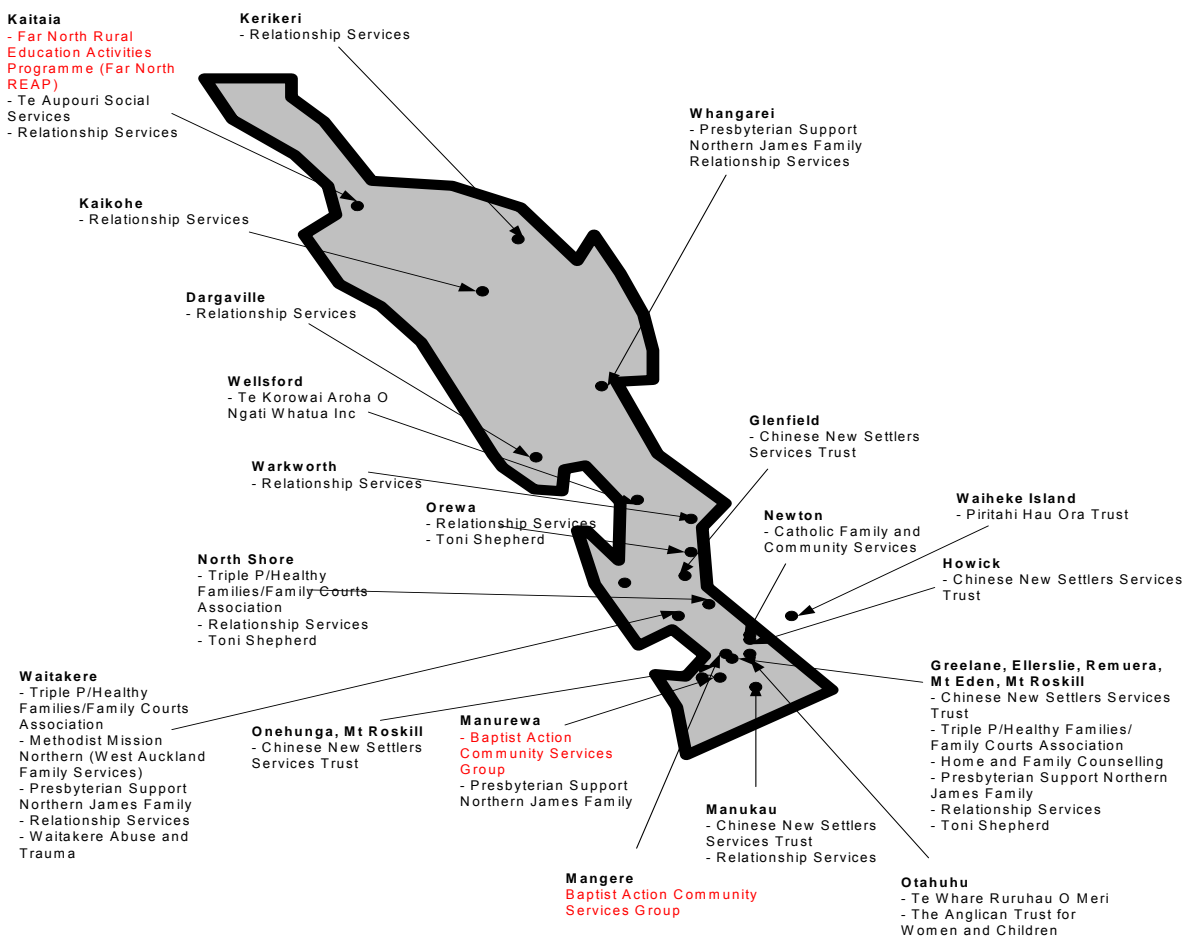
University of Vermont Coping with Separation and Divorce Parenting Seminar, (2006) *UVM extension and Vermont Family Court coping with separation and divorce: a parenting seminar evaluation – February 2007*, http://www.uvm.edu/~uvmext/programs/4h/youth/downloads/cope_evaluation_feb07.pdf, last accessed 2/4/2009.

Wolchik, S. A., Sandler, I. N., Millsap, R. E., Plummer, B. A., Greene, S. M., Anderson, E. R., Dawson-McClure, S.R., Hipke, K. and Haine, R.A. (2002) Six-year follow-up of preventive interventions for children of divorce: A randomized controlled trial. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 288(15): 1874–1881.

Appendix 1 Programme providers in each region²⁸

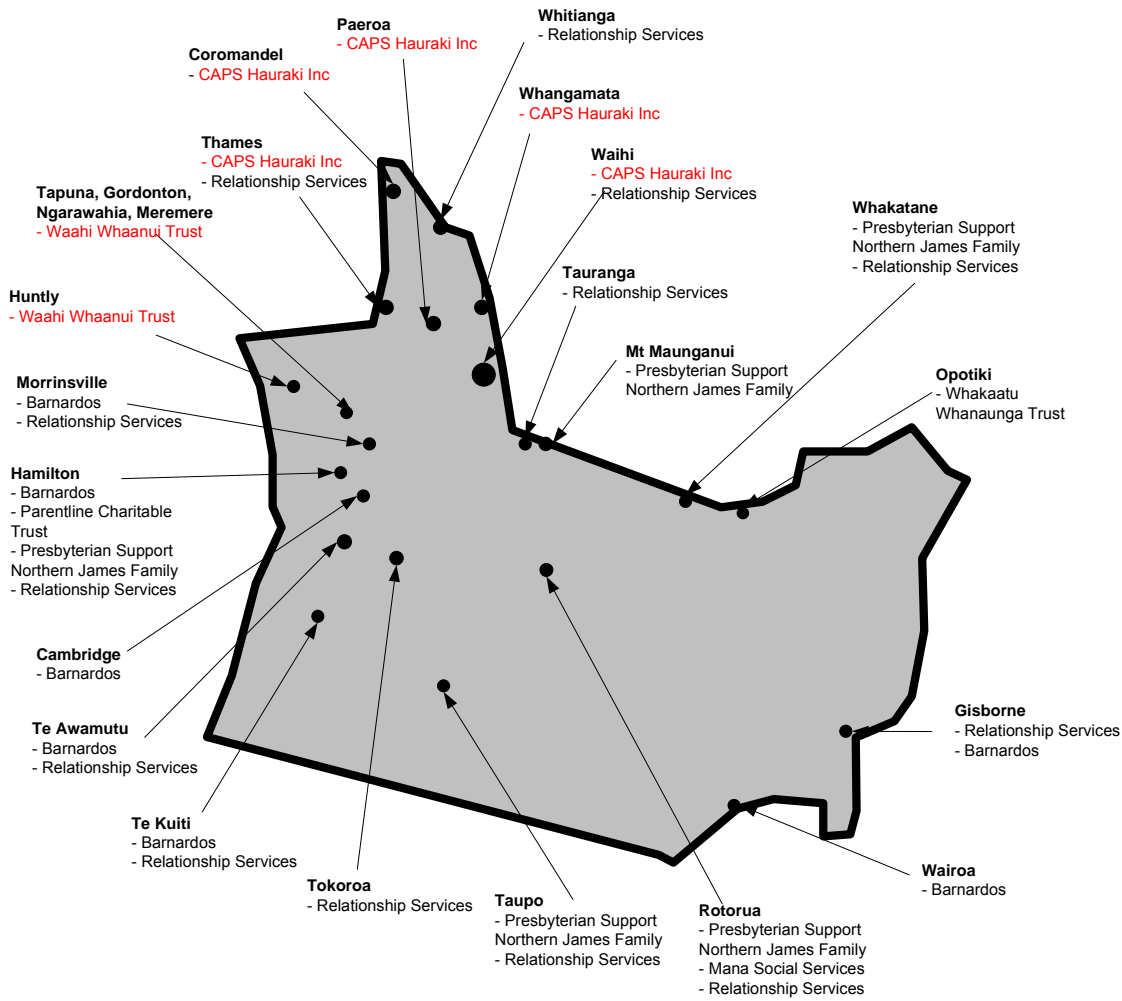
Source – Ministry of Justice June 2008.

Parenting through Separation Programme Availability Northern Region

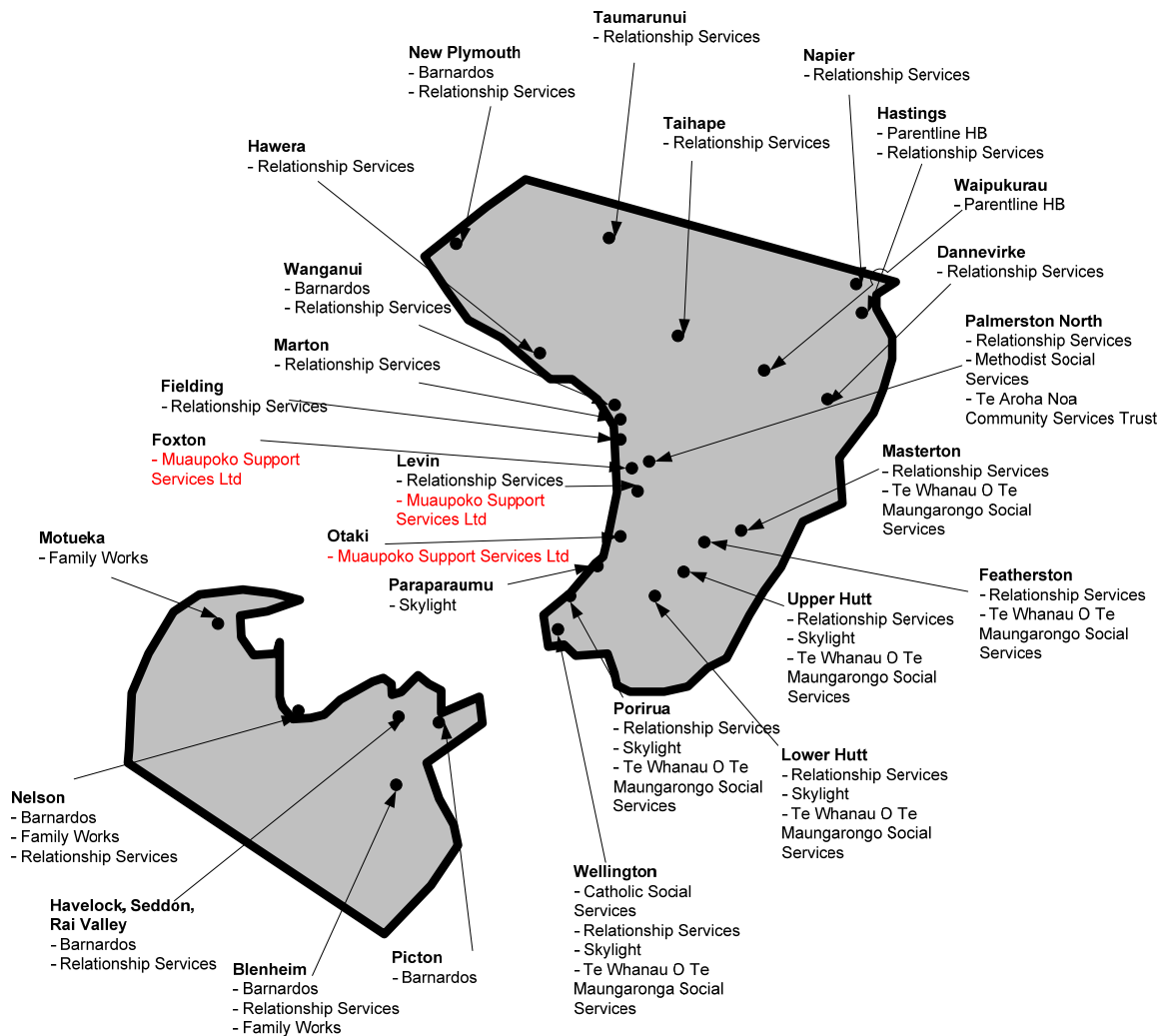


²⁸ These providers did not appear to be active at this time – Far North Rural Education Activities Programme (Far North REAP), Baptist Action Community Services Group (Manurewa and Māngere), CAPS Hauraki Inc, Waahi Whaanui Trust, and Muaupoko Support Services Ltd.

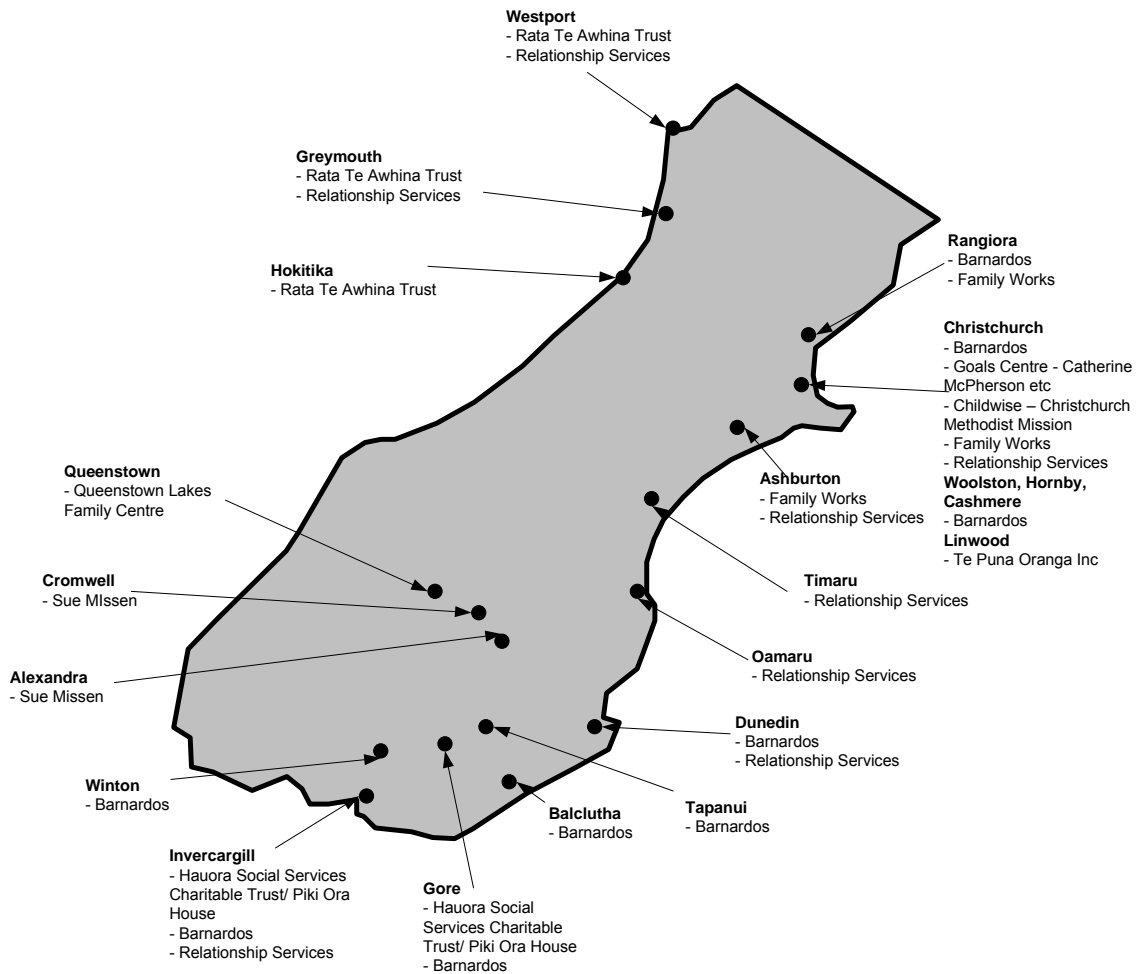
Parenting through Separation Programme Availability Waikato Region



Parenting through Separation Programme Availability Central Region



Parenting through Separation Programme Availability Southern Region



Appendix 2 Descriptive statistics on measures of parent adjustment at initial pre-programme survey

Parent and child needs

Note - rating of agreement on 4 point scale where 1=almost never and 4=almost always

| | Mean (sd) | Percent much of time or almost always |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------------|
| <u>Conflict</u> | | |
| <i>Conflict – Children Caught in the Middle</i> | | |
| The children get caught in the middle of conflicts. | 1.9 (0.86) | 19 |
| Gifts to the children are a problem. | 1.4 (0.81) | 8 |
| We argue in front of the children. | 1.7 (0.89) | 15 |
| I try to keep the other parent from seeing the children. | 1.1 (0.45) | 2 |
| The other parent tries to keep the children from seeing me. | 1.7 (1.1) | 21 |
| The other parent says things to the children about me. | 2.2 (1.1) | 34 |
| I say things to the children about the other parent. | 1.2 (0.5) | 2 |
| The other parent asks the children for personal information about me. | 1.9 (0.93) | 20 |
| I ask the children for personal information about the other parent. | 1.2 (0.41) | 0 |
| <i>General Parental Conflict</i> | | |
| When discussing things we end up fighting. | 2.6 (1.1) | 49 |
| I feel angry toward the other parent. | 2.6 (0.98) | 48 |
| My children's other parent feels angry toward me. | 3.0 (1.0) | 65 |
| Conflict between us occurs during pick-ups and drop-offs of my children. | 1.8 (0.98) | 19 |
| <u>Parenting Statements</u> | | |
| I encourage the children to have a good relationship with the other parent. | 3.6 (0.78) | 90 |
| I try to avoid involving the children in any disagreements. | 3.6 (0.90) | 88 |
| I encourage the children to talk about their feelings and reactions. | 2.8 (1.05) | 54 |
| I tell the children that the separation/divorce was not their fault. | 3.3 (1.01) | 78 |
| I ask my children to pass messages to the other parent. | 1.2 (0.46) | 2 |
| I let my children know that I understand they love their other parent. | 3.4 (1.00) | 81 |
| <u>Joint Parenting and Low Contact Statements</u> | | |
| <i>Joint Parenting</i> | | |
| I back up my children's other parent as a parent. | 3.1 (1.00) | 73 |
| We agree on discipline for the children. | 2.5 (1.18) | 46 |
| We talk together about issues which affect our children. | 2.4 (1.15) | 45 |
| The other parent backs me up as a parent. | 2.3 (1.14) | 39 |
| We work together to coordinate rules like bedtimes. | 2.1 (1.09) | 34 |
| <i>Low Contact Between Parents</i> | | |
| I use low contact alternatives in communicating with the other parent. | 2.9 (1.09) | 62 |

Issues of separation

Note - rating of agreement on 5 point scale where 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree

| | Mean (sd) | Percent disagree or uncertain |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|
| <u>Level of Satisfaction with Care, Contact and Support</u> | | |
| I am satisfied with our present arrangements for where children live. | 3.6 (1.5) | 35 |
| I am satisfied with our present arrangements for child support. | 3.0 (1.4) | 57 |
| I am satisfied with how the children spend their time with the other parent. | 3.1 (1.2) | 61 |
| I am satisfied with the amount of time the children spend with their other parent. | 3.2 (1.5) | 52 |
| <u>Levels of Knowledge Related to Separation Issues</u> | | |
| I have a good understanding of where to get any help my children may need in dealing with the separation/divorce. | 3.2 (1.2) | 58 |
| I have a good understanding of how to deal positively with issues which arise when a new partner is involved with me or the other parent. | 2.9 (1.2) | 75 |
| I have a good understanding of alternatives to court action in resolving disputes around living arrangements, access and child support. | 3.4 (1.2) | 48 |
| I have a good understanding of the needs and reactions of children to separation/divorce. | 3.4 (1.1) | 48 |
| The courts are likely to be the only way to resolve issues around custody, access, and financial support. | 3.1 (1.5) | 44 (agree) |
| I have a good understanding of how to limit or reduce conflicts with the other parent. | 3.5 (1.1) | 42 |
| I have a good understanding of adult responses to separation/divorce. | 3.5 (1.0) | 49 |
| I have a good understanding of how children are affected by conflict between separating/divorcing parents. | 3.8 (1.1) | 33 |
| <u>Level of Adjustment in Relation to the Separation/Divorce</u> | | |
| I am experiencing more stress now than I was before our separation/divorce. | 3.2 (1.6) | 52 (agree) |
| All things considered I am coping quite well with my separation/divorce. | 3.6 (1.2) | 36 |
| I am worried about the children's reaction to the separation/divorce. | 3.8 (1.2) | 68 (agree) |
| Our children have adjusted quite well to our separation/divorce. | 3.2 (1.1) | 56 |
| <u>Other items</u> | | |
| I have a close relationship with my children. | 4.6 (0.9) | 9 |
| I am satisfied with my relationship with my children. | 4.1 (1.3) | 18 |
| My children have a close relationship with their other parent. | 4.9 (0.3) | 22 |
| The most important consideration when making care arrangements is the wellbeing of my child. | 4.1 (1.2) | 0 |
| I am confident that in the future we will agree on the care of the children. | 3.6 (1.2) | 47 |

Appendix 3 Participant information sheets and consent forms

Parents' cover letter – initial survey

Dear Parent

We understand that you recently enquired about attending the Parenting Through Separation Programme.

The Roy McKenzie Centre for the Study of Families, at Victoria University, is currently carrying out an independent evaluation of the programme for the Ministry of Justice, who fund it. **We would like to ask you to help us with this evaluation as it is important we talk to parents** who wish to attend the programme.

An evaluation of this programme will help us understand what works best for parents, and identify aspects of it that can be improved.

The programme provider you contacted has sent this information out to you and at this stage we do not have any of your details. The enclosed Information sheet gives more details on the evaluation and on confidentiality. If you choose to take part in the evaluation, the programme provider will not know you have agreed to take part, and they will not have access to any of the information. Your survey and consent form are sent back to us in Wellington.

This first short survey is to find out how things are for you before you go on the Parenting Through Separation course. The survey should only take about 10 minutes to complete. We would then like to talk to you again after you have been on the course, to see how it has changed things for you. We would like you to provide contact details, so we can give you a call and talk to you after you have finished the course. We will also send you a volunteer gift for your time. Please provide contact details on the consent form as we keep these forms separate from the survey. Do not put your name or address on the survey.

Even if you are not sure about attending the programme we would still like to hear from you, as it is important that we get everyone's views.

Please send back the completed survey and consent form in the pre-paid envelope, if you are happy to be involved.

Many thanks for your help.

Dr Jeremy Robertson and Dr Jan Pryor

Parents' information sheet – initial survey

Evaluation of the Parenting Through Separation Programme

Dear Parent

You recently enquired about attending the Parenting Through Separation Programme. The Roy McKenzie Centre for the Study of Families, at Victoria University, is currently carrying out an evaluation of the programme for the Ministry of Justice, who fund it. The evaluation involves talking to programme participants (and a small group of children), those who run the programmes, and those who work with families who are separating (eg, lawyers, counsellors and Judges).

We want to understand what works best in the programme, things that can be improved and what impact the programme has had on the way parents make arrangements for their children after they have separated. This information will be very useful to programme providers to help them further develop the programme. Your participation would be valuable in helping to improve the programme for parents who use it in the future.

The evaluation will be the basis for a report to the Ministry of Justice and may also be used in articles and presentations at conferences. However, names will not be used in any of the reports and, where quotes are used in reports, no one will be able to identify who made them. We will also be happy to provide you with a summary of findings at the end of the study.

We would like to talk to you about the Parenting Through Separation Programme and it would help us if we could have information from you at three points in time. Firstly we would like to survey parents before they have attended the programme so we can see what they expected or wanted from the programme and to get their initial impressions. We would then like to talk to you after the programme and three months later, to see what had changed for you as a result of attending the programme. We will ask a few questions about you and your family (eg, how many children you have and their ages) and then ask you about the programme, including; how you found out about the programme, what you hoped for from the programme, what you learnt from the programme, things you thought the programme could do better or areas that were missing from the programme, how the programme influenced your approach to separation, and whether you would recommend it to others.

Participation in the research project is entirely voluntary. You can decide to not answer any question and can withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. If you were to experience any distress as a result of taking part in this study the researcher will be able to support you to find a qualified counsellor to talk to, if this was something that would be helpful.

Other important things to know

- The initial short survey will take about 10 minutes to fill in.
- The follow-up interviews will take approximately 20 minutes. Most interviews will take place over the phone at a time that suits (with no cost to you). If you wish, we will try to arrange a face-to-face interview. If you prefer an interviewer from your culture, we will also try to arrange that.
- You may stop the interview and withdraw from the research up to two months after your interview without reason and any information you have provided will be destroyed.
- Your comments will be recorded by the interviewer on a questionnaire form.

- The information you supply will be kept confidential to the research team and will not be given to anyone else. The only exception to this is if the interviewer was concerned that there was a significant risk regarding your or another's safety. This would mean that the interviewer would normally discuss the issue with you and an appropriate professional, if this was required.
- Your name will not be used in any reports and, where quotes are used in reports, no one will be able to identify who made them.
- Your name will not be recorded on the survey or questionnaire (we will use an identifying number instead). Your name and contact details will be securely stored in a separate file and these will be destroyed at the end of the study in February 2009.
- The questionnaire will be stored in a locked cabinet and destroyed after 6 years. Only the researchers will have access to the questionnaire.
- A small volunteer gift will be made for your time. You can choose to receive a Warehouse voucher or a petrol voucher.
- Victoria University Human Ethics Committee has approved this project.

You can take part in this evaluation by simply -

- 1. Filling in the survey**
- 2. Filling out the consent form, including your contact details.**
- 3. Posting the survey and consent forms to the evaluators in the pre-paid envelope.**

We will –

- 1. Send a small volunteer gift to your contact address.**
- 2. Contact you after you have been on the programme.**

If you would like to know more before you decide to take part, then you are welcome to get in touch with either of us by phone or email.

Many thanks for your help.

Jeremy Robertson and Jan Pryor

Contact Details

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dr Jeremy Robertson Phone: 04 463 6831 Email: jeremy.robertson@vuw.ac.nz | Associate Professor Jan Pryor Phone: 04 463 7428 Email: jan.pryor@vuw.ac.nz |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Roy McKenzie Centre for the Study of Families, Victoria University, PO Box 600, Wellington

Parents' consent form – initial survey

Evaluation of the Parenting Through Separation Programme

This consent form will be securely stored for six years after which time it will be destroyed. It will only be accessible to the research team.

Consent form for programme participant

I agree to take part in the evaluation of the **Parenting Through Separation programme**.

- I have read and understood the information sheet about the research. I know that if I have any further questions then I can contact Jeremy Robertson or Jan Pryor.
- I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary.
- I understand that I may stop the interview and withdraw from the research up to two months after my interview without reason and any information I have provided will be returned to me or destroyed.
- I understand that the information I provide will be kept confidential and no one will have access to it, other than the researchers.
- The questionnaire form will not have my name or address attached and will be kept in a locked cabinet. My contact details will be kept separate from the questionnaire form and will be destroyed at the end of the study. The nameless questionnaire form will be destroyed after six years.
- I understand that the published research reports will contain quotes but they will not identify who made the quote.

I would like a summary of the research findings Yes No

As a volunteer gift I would like a Warehouse voucher Petrol voucher

Signature.....

Name (please print First name, Last name).....

Address
.....

Phone contact(s)

Date

Contact Details

Dr Jeremy Robertson

Phone: 04 463 6831

Email: jeremy.robertson@vuw.ac.nz

Associate Professor Jan Pryor

Phone: 04 463 7428

Email: jan.Pryor@vuw.ac.nz

Roy McKenzie Centre for the Study of Families, Victoria University, PO Box 600, Wellington

Parent information sheet for child participation

As well as interviewing parents, we are also interested in talking to children aged between 9 and 16 years in order to understand how their parents' participation in the programme helps them adjust to their parents' separation. We are asking for your consent to our asking your child if they would like to be told about the evaluation so they could then decide if they want to take part. Their involvement would involve an interview with one of the senior researchers, both of whom have a great deal of experience in interviewing children about sensitive subjects. If you agree, we would talk to your child at a time and place that suits them.

The interview would take up to an hour, although this depends on how much children want to talk. It will collect information about their relationships with both their parents, the ways in which they have been told about their parents' separation, whether their parents showed them the children's DVD from the programme, their behaviour and feelings about the separation, and their perceptions of their family changes.

Although the interviews involve questions about separation we find children typically find these interviews to be positive and helpful. However, in the unlikely event that your child becomes upset or distressed, or a problem is revealed, the interviewer will give your child support. If there continues to be discomfort you will be advised and provided with details of an appropriate referral source if requested. Your child can stop answering at any time without having to give an explanation and can decline to answer any of the questions.

The child's participation will be on the same basis as for parents. That is it will be

- Voluntary.
- Your child may withdraw from the research up to two months after their interview without reason and any information they have provided will be destroyed.
- The information your child provides will be kept confidential and no one will have access to it, other than the researchers. However if the interviewer was concerned that there was a significant risk regarding your child or another's safety it is their obligation to inform someone. This would mean that they would discuss the issue with your child, yourself and an appropriate professional if this is required.
- If your child agrees, the interview will be recorded and transcribed. The original recording will then be destroyed at the end of the research in February 2009.
- The interview transcript will not have your child's name or address attached and will be kept in a locked cabinet. Your child's contact details will be kept separate from the interview transcript and will be destroyed at the end of the study in February 2009.
- The published research reports may contain quotes but it will not be possible to identify who made the quote.

Parent consent form for child participation

Evaluation of the Parenting Through Separation Programme

This consent form will be securely stored for six years after which time it will be destroyed. It will only be accessible to the research team.

Consent form for parent of child

I agree that the **Parenting Through Separation programme** evaluators may ask my child if they will agree to take part in the evaluation.

- I have read and understood the information sheet about the research. I know that if I have any further questions then I can contact Jeremy Robertson or Jan Pryor.
- I understand that my child's participation in this study is entirely voluntary.
- I understand that my child may stop the interview and withdraw from the research up to two months after their interview without reason and any information they have provided will be or destroyed.
- I understand that the information my child provides will be kept confidential and no one will have access to it, other than the researchers.
- The interview transcript will not have my child's name or address attached and will be kept in a locked cabinet. My child's contact details will be kept separate from the interview transcript and will be destroyed at the end of the study.
- I understand that the published research reports will contain quotes but they will not identify who made the quote.

Consent

- *I have discussed this research with my child (name) and I consent to the researchers talking to my child about taking part in this research.*

Legal Relationship with the child (Delete the lines that do not apply in the following)

- *I am the natural or adoptive parent of the child named and/ or*
- *I am the guardian of the child named or*
- *I am not a parent or guardian of the child and my relationship to the child is*
.....

Signature.....

Name (please print First name, Last name).....

Date.....

Contact Details

Dr Jeremy Robertson

Phone: 04 463 6831

Email: jeremy.robertson@vuw.ac.nz

Roy McKenzie Centre for the Study of Families, Victoria University, PO Box 600, Wellington

Associate Professor Jan Pryor

Phone: 04 463 7428

Email: jan.Pryor@vuw.ac.nz

Child consent form²⁹

CHILDREN'S INTERVIEW

Why do we want to talk to you?

There are a lot of children whose parents separate, and we know that it is not easy for them. We would like to talk to you about how it is for you, so that we can understand better what helps kids when this happens to them. Your Mum or Dad has said that we can ask you if you would like to talk to us about what it is like for you having parents who have separated.

Who are we?

Your Mum or your Dad (or maybe both) are going to a course that helps parents to know how to make it easier for children when they separate. The Ministry of Justice, that runs the course, has asked Jeremy Robertson and Jan Pryor at Victoria University to talk to parents and children about how the course works. You can ask Jan or Jeremy any questions you like, by phoning 463 7428 or 463 6831. If you get a voice message, leave your name and number and they will phone you back. Or you could e-mail them at jan.pryor@vuw.ac.nz or Jeremy.Robertson@vuw.ac.nz.

If you take part what will you be asked to do?






You can decide if you want to take part in the study. If you agree, Jan or Jeremy will contact you and make a time to talk to you. He or she will ask you questions about your family and yourself, and how you feel about things to do with your family. The two of you will talk for about one hour. If you agree, we would like to tape the interview, but it is up to you. We will also ask you to talk to us again, after the course is finished, so that we can see if your feelings and thoughts have changed. If any of the questions bother you, you can stop answering, and if you want you can talk to someone you trust about how you are feeling. Or, you can talk to Jan or Jeremy about your feelings. Phone or e-mail them if you want to do that.

Who will know about the things I tell you?

The only person who will know what you say is the person who interviews you and another person working on the study, and they will not tell anyone else. Your name will not be on the questionnaire, and what you say will be mixed up with everyone else's answers. So even if your exact words are quoted, no-one will know you said them. There is no way that anyone else will ever know what you said. All the information we get from all the children who take part will go into a report, but the report will not use any names of children who take part.

If you want, we will send you a summary of the research when it is finished.

Tick the boxes if the words are true:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I know all about the project |  <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I know I can leave the discussion at any time |  <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I know my talk will be taped |  <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I know what will happen to my talk |  <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I would like a summary of the research findings |  <input type="checkbox"/> |

²⁹ Note the format of this form was different from that displayed above.

Key informant Information Sheet

Evaluation of the Parenting Through Separation Programme

The Roy McKenzie Centre for the Study of Families, at Victoria University, is carrying out an evaluation of the Parenting Through Separation Programme for the Ministry of Justice, who fund the programme. The evaluation involves talking to programme participants (and a small group of children), those who run the programmes, and those who work with families who are separating (eg, lawyers, counsellors and Judges).

We want to understand what works best in the programme, things that can be improved and what impact the programme has had on the way parents make arrangements for their children after they have separated. This information will be very useful to programme providers to help them further develop the programme.

The evaluation will be the basis for a report to the Ministry of Justice and may also be used in articles and presentations at conferences. Names will not be used in any of the reports and, where quotes are used in reports, no one will be able to identify who made them. We will be happy to provide you with a summary of findings at the end of the study.

We would like to talk to people who have involvement with the Parenting Through Separation Programme (eg, programme providers and Family Court Staff) or who have contact with programme participants as part of their work (eg, Lawyers and community groups). We would like to talk about your role in relation to the programme, your knowledge of the programme and its development, your views on the programme content and materials, how well the programme is being implemented, your views on the need for the programme and its achievements, strengths and weaknesses of the programme, any unintended impacts of the programme and your views on the future development of the programme.

Participation in the research project is entirely voluntary. You can decide to not answer any question and can withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

Other important things to know

- The interview will take approximately 45 minutes and will take place at a time and place to suit you.
- The interview may be written on a questionnaire.
- You may stop the interview and withdraw from the research up to two months after your interview without reason and any information you have provided will be destroyed.
- The information you supply will be kept confidential to the research team and will not be given to anyone else. Your name will not be used in any reports and, where quotes are used in reports, no one will be able to identify who made them.
- Your name will not be recorded on the questionnaire (we will use an identifying number instead). Your name and contact details will be securely stored in a separate file and will be destroyed at the end of the study in February 2009.
- The questionnaire will be stored in a locked cabinet and destroyed after 6 years. Only the researchers will have access to the questionnaire.
- Victoria University Human Ethics Committee has approved this project.

A researcher will contact you to check if you are interested in taking part in the evaluation. They will be able to arrange the details for the interview at that time. If you would like to know more before you decide, then you are welcome to talk to the interviewer before the interview, or get in touch with either of the following by phone or email:

Contact Details

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dr Jeremy Robertson | Associate Professor Jan Pryor |
| Phone: 04 463 6831 | Phone: 04 463 7428 |
| Email: jeremy.robertson@vuw.ac.nz | Email: jan.pryor@vuw.ac.nz |
| Roy McKenzie Centre for the Study of Families, Victoria University, PO Box 600, Wellington | |

Key informant consent form

Evaluation of the Parenting Through Separation Programme

This consent form will be securely stored for six years after which time it will be destroyed. It will only be accessible to the research team.

Consent form for key informants

I agree to take part in the evaluation of the **Parenting Through Separation programme**.

- I have read and understood the information sheet about the research. I know that if I have any further questions then I can contact Jeremy Robertson or Jan Pryor.
- I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary.
- I understand that I may stop the interview and withdraw from the research up to two months after my interview without reason and any information I have provided will be returned to me or destroyed.
- I understand that the information I provide will be kept confidential and no one will have access to it, other than the researchers.
- The interview will not have my name or address attached and will be kept in a locked cabinet. My contact details will be kept separate from the interview transcript and will be destroyed at the end of the study.
- I understand that the published research reports will contain quotes but they will not identify who made the quote.

I would like a summary of the research findings Yes No

Signature.....

Name (please print First name, Last name).....

Date.....

Contact Details

Dr Jeremy Robertson

Phone: 04 463 6831

Email: jeremy.robertson@vuw.ac.nz

Roy McKenzie Centre for the Study of Families, Victoria University, PO Box 600, Wellington

Associate Professor Jan Pryor

Phone: 04 463 7428

Email: jan.Pryor@vuw.ac.nz

Programme Providers' Survey Information Sheet

Evaluation of the Parenting Through Separation Programme

The Roy McKenzie Centre for the Study of Families, at Victoria University, is carrying out an evaluation of the Parenting Through Separation Programme for the Ministry of Justice, who fund the programme. The evaluation involves talking to programme participants (and a small group of children), those who run the programmes, and those who work with families who are separating (eg, lawyers, counsellors and Judges).

We want to understand what works best in the programme, things that can be improved and what impact the programme has had on the way parents make arrangements for their children after they have separated. We hope that this information will be very useful to programme providers to help them further develop the programme.

The evaluation will be the basis for a report to the Ministry of Justice and may also be used in articles and presentations at conferences. Names will not be used in any of the reports and, where quotes are used in reports, no one will be able to identify who made them. We will provide all programme providers with a summary of the findings at the end of the study.

The attached questionnaire asks about programme development, referral processes, current programme procedures, programme content, documentation and materials, details of staffing (eg, qualifications and experience), staff training and support, onward referrals, and suggestions for future development of the programme. If you wish to take part please complete the questionnaire and return it to the evaluators using the reply paid envelope.

Please answer the questionnaire even if your organisation has not run the Parenting Through Separation course (questions 1-12, 18, 21-23, 46, 47, and 54 are still relevant to your organisation).

Participation in the research project is entirely voluntary. You can decide to not answer any question and can withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

Other important things to know

- All those returning a form will be anonymous. Your name is not recorded on the questionnaire and we will not know who filled in the questionnaire.
- The questionnaire will be stored in a locked cabinet and destroyed after 6 years. Only the researchers will have access to the questionnaire.
- Victoria University Human Ethics Committee has approved this project.

If you would like to know more about the evaluation before you decide, then you are welcome to get in touch with either of the following by phone or email:

Contact Details

Dr Jeremy Robertson

Phone: 04 463 6831

Email: jeremy.robertson@vuw.ac.nz

Roy McKenzie Centre for the Study of Families, Victoria University, PO Box 600, Wellington

Associate Professor Jan Pryor

Phone: 04 463 7428

Email: jan.pryor@vuw.ac.nz

Appendix 4 Surveys and interview schedules

Pre-programme parents' survey

Parenting Through Separation Survey for Parents

Your responses to these questions will help us to better understand the experiences of those people attending this programme, and help improve the programme in the future. If you are not yet separated, answer all questions that apply. Thank you for your help.

IMPORTANT – this information is for the evaluators only. It will not be shown to anyone else.

1. What kind of relationship do you currently have with the other parent of your child/children?
 - Separated (never married)
 - Separated (married)
 - Divorced
 - Living together (Go to question 8)
 - Never lived together

2. If you are separated from your child's other parent, how long have you been separated?
_____ Years _____ Months

3. Do you currently have an agreement or court order setting out your children's care and contact with their parents (what used to be called custody and access)?
 - Yes – Verbal parenting agreement (no court orders)
 - Yes – Written parenting agreement or parenting plan (no court orders)
 - Yes – Court orders
 - No (If no, go to question 4)

Is this a full agreement or do you agree only on some parts of your children's care and contact?

 - Partial agreement
 - Full agreement

How did you reach this agreement? Check all that apply.

 - Informal agreement between parents
 - Through a counsellor
 - Through a mediator
 - Through a lawyer
 - Court order
 - Other If other, please specify: _____

4. Do you currently have unresolved applications in the Family Court?
 - Yes
 - No

5. Please indicate the sex, age, day-to-day care (eg, custody), and living arrangements for each of your children. Enter the average number of days each month (out of 30 days) that the child lives with, or is in contact with, each parent (count as having contact even if it is for part of the day or night). If they also live with another person (eg, their grandparent) list this as 'other'. If you have more than four children, list these below the table.

| Child | Sex (M or F) | Age (Years) | Who has day-to-day care? | | | | Average Days or part days Every Month Living With or Access to: | | |
|-------|-----------------|----------------|--------------------------|--------|-------|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-------|
| | | | Mother | Father | Joint | Not Yet Resolved | Mother | Father | Other |
| 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | | | | | |

6. How often do the children see their mothers and fathers extended family (eg, grandparents, cousins, etc)?

Mother's family

- More than once a week
- Once a week
- Every second week
- Once a month
- Once every three months or less often
- Does not see them

Father's family

- More than once a week
- Once a week
- Every second week
- Once a month
- Once every three months or less often
- Does not see them

7. Have you talked to any of the children about these arrangements?

- Yes, told them what was happening
- Yes, asked them what they would like
- No

8. What are you hoping to get from the Parenting Through Separation course?

9. What services do you know about that support and assist families to resolve disputes?

Parent and Child Needs

The following questions help to give us a better understanding of the situation of parents and children following a separation. For each question circle the response that best reflects your current experiences or feelings. If the statement cannot possibly apply to your situation, circle a "5" to indicate that the statement is not applicable.

| Statement | Almost never | Some of the time | Much of the time | Almost always | NA |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|----|
| My children get caught in the middle of conflicts between me and their other parent. [10] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Gifts to my children are a problem between me and their other parent. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| My children's other parent and I argue in front of the children. [12] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I try to keep my children's other parent from seeing the children. [13] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| My children's other parent tries to keep the children from seeing me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| When the children's other parent and I discuss things we end up arguing or fighting. [15] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I encourage the children to have a good relationship with their other parent. [16] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I back up my children's other parent as a parent. [17] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| My children's other parent and I agree on discipline for the children. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| My children's other parent says things about me to the children that I don't want them to hear. [19] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I say things to the children about their other parent that he/she wouldn't want them to hear. [20] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I try to avoid involving the children in any disagreements or conflicts between me and their other parent. [21] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I feel angry toward my children's other parent. [22] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| My children's other parent feels angry toward me. [23] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I encourage the children to talk about their feelings and reactions to the separation/divorce. [24] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I tell the children that the separation/divorce was not their fault. [25] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I ask my children to pass messages from me to their other parent. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I let my children know that I understand that they love their other parent. [27] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| My children's other parent and I talk together about issues which affect our children. [28] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| My children's other parent backs me up as a parent. [29] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| My children's other parent and I work together to coordinate rules like bedtimes. [30] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| Statements cont'd | Almost never | Some of the time | Much of the time | Almost always | NA |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|----|
| My children's other parent asks the children for personal information about me. [31] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I ask the children for personal information about the other parent. [32] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Conflict between me and the other parent occurs during pick-ups and drop-offs of my children. [33] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I use low contact alternatives in communicating with the other parent (eg., a neutral third party, telephone, writing). [34] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Issues of Separation

The following questions help us better understand the issues you face in relation to the separation. For each question circle the response that best reflects your agreement with the statement provided.

| Statement | Strongly Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Uncertain | Somewhat Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------|----------------|----------------|
| I am satisfied with the amount of time the children spend with their other parent. [35] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have a good understanding of how children are affected by conflict between separating/divorcing parents. [36] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I am satisfied with how the children spend their time with the other parent. [37] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have a good understanding of adult responses to separation/divorce. [38] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Our children have adjusted quite well to our separation/divorce. [39] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| All things considered I am coping quite well with my separation/divorce. [40] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have a close relationship with my children. [41] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I am satisfied with my relationship with my children. [42] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| My children have a close relationship with their other parent. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The most important consideration when making care arrangements is the wellbeing of my child. [44] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I am confident that in the future we will agree on the care of the children. [45] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have a good understanding of how to limit or reduce conflicts with the other parent. [46] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The courts are likely to be the only way to resolve issues around custody, access, and financial support. [47] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| Statements cont'd | Strongly Disagree | Disagree Somewhat | Uncertain | Agree Somewhat | Strongly Agree |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------|----------------|----------------|
| I have a good understanding of the needs and reactions of children to separation/divorce. [48] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I am experiencing more stress now than I was before our separation/divorce. [49] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I am satisfied with our present arrangements for child support. [50] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have a good understanding of alternatives to court action in resolving disputes around living arrangements, access and child support. [51] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I am satisfied with our present arrangements for where children live. [52] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I am worried about the children's reaction to the separation/divorce. [53] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have a good understanding of how to deal positively with issues which arise when a new partner is involved with me or the other parent. [54] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have a good understanding of where to get any help my children may need in dealing with the separation/divorce. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

General Information About You

56. What is your date of birth? _____ (Month/Day/Year)
57. What is your gender?
 Male
 Female
58. Which ethnic groups do you belong to? Mark as many as apply to you
 New Zealand European Tongan Indian
 Māori Chinese Niuean
 Samoan Cook Island Māori
 Other (please state) _____
59. What is your highest educational qualification? (for overseas qualifications enter equivalent)
 No Qualification
 Fifth Form certificate in one or more subjects, or National Certificate level 1
 Sixth Form certificate in one or more subjects, or National Certificate level 2
 NZ University entrance, NZ Higher School Certificate or Higher Leaving certificate
 NZ A or B Bursary, Scholarship, or National Certificate Level 3
 University degree

Please add any additional comments you might have about the issues of separation/divorce in the space provided below.

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

We would like to know if attending the course leads to children adjusting better to their parent's separation.

Please answer the following questions about your child. If you have more than one child, chose to answer it for one of your children, preferably one who is 4 years of age or older. Enter their first name below so you remember which of your children you are referring to.

For each item, please mark the box for Not True, Somewhat True or Certainly True. It would help us if you answered all items as best you can even if you are not absolutely certain. Please give your answers on the basis of your child or young person's behaviour over the last six months.

Your child/young persons first name

Male / Female

Childs age

| | Not True | Somewhat True | Certainly True |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Considerate of other people's feelings | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Often complains of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Shares readily with other children/young people, for example toys, food, games, CDs | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Often loses temper | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Rather solitary, prefers to play/be alone rather than with other children/young people | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Generally well behaved, usually does what adults request | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Many worries or often seems worried | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Constantly fidgeting or squirming | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Has at least one good friend | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Often fights with other children/young people or bullies them | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Often unhappy, depressed or tearful | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Generally liked by other children/young people | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Easily distracted, concentration wanders | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Nervous (or clingy) in new situations, easily loses confidence | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Kind to younger children/young people | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Often lies or cheats | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Picked on or bullied by other children/young people | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Often volunteers to help others (parents, teachers, other children) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Thinks things out before acting | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Steals from home, school or elsewhere | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Gets along better with adults than with other children/young people | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Many fears, easily scared | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Good attention span, sees chores or homework through to the end | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Do you have any other comments or concerns about your child or young person?

Thank you for answering these questions. Your responses will be very helpful to us in evaluating how well the programme works for parents.

Parents' post-programme follow-up survey

Parenting Through Separation

Parent Survey – After the Course

Please help us with our evaluation of the Parenting Through Separation course by completing this survey. These questions ask about the Parenting Through Separation course you attended. Some of the questions are the same as those in the first survey, but we want to know how things are for you now, so please answer them again. Your responses to these questions will help us to better understand the experiences of those people attending this programme, and help improve the programme in the future. If you are not yet separated, answer all questions that apply.

IMPORTANT – this information is for the evaluators only. It will not be shown to anyone else.

Thank you for your help.

Current care arrangements for your children

1. What kind of relationship do you currently have with the other parent of your child/children?
 - Male
 - Separated (never married)
 - Separated (married)
 - Divorced
 - Living together (Go to question 7)
 - Never lived together

2. If you are separated from your child's other parent, how long have you been separated?
_____ Years _____ Months

3. Do you currently have an agreement or court order setting out your children's care and contact with their parents (what used to be called custody and access)?
 - Yes – Informal verbal parenting agreement (no court orders)
 - Yes – Written parenting agreement or parenting plan (no court orders)
 - Yes – Court orders
 - No (If no, go to question 4)

Is this a full agreement or do you agree only on some parts of your children's care and contact?

 - Partial agreement
 - Full agreement

How did you reach this agreement? (Please tick all that apply)

- Informal agreement – we agreed it together
- Through a counselor
- Through a mediator
- Through a lawyer
- Court order
- Through a whānau worker
- Other If other, please specify: _____

4. Since attending the Parenting Through Separation course have you been back to the Family Court for any of the following? (Please tick all that apply)

- To get counseling
- To file a new application (State type/s) _____
- To withdraw an application
- To settle an existing application by agreement
- For a mediation conference on an existing application
- For a hearing before a Judge

5. Please indicate the sex, age, day-to-day care (eg, custody), and living arrangements for each of your children. Enter the average number of days each month (out of 30 days) that the child lives with, or is in contact with, each parent (count as having contact even if it is for part of the day or night). If they also live with another person (eg, their grandparent) list this as 'other'.
If you have more than four children, list these below the table.

| Childname | Sex (M or F) | Age (Years) | Who has day-to-day care? | | | | Average Days or part days Every Month Living With or having Access to: | | |
|-----------|-----------------|----------------|--------------------------|--------------|-------|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| | | | You | Other Parent | Joint | Not Yet Resolved | You | Other Parent | Other Carer |
| 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | | | | | |

Have these arrangements for day-to-day care and contact changed since the PTS course?

- No**
- Yes (please state how they have changed below)**

How have they changed? (please comment about the role of extended family or whānau in the care of your children if appropriate)

Why have they changed?

6. Have you used the parenting plan booklet to help you make the arrangements for the children?
- No
 - Yes (describe below)

How helpful did you find the booklet?

7. Over the last two months, how often do the children see your and their other parent's extended family (eg, grandparents, cousins, etc)?

Your family

- More than once a week
- Once a week
- Every second week
- Once a month
- Once every three months or less often
- Does not see them

Other parent's family

- More than once a week
- Once a week
- Every second week
- Once a month
- Once every three months or less often
- Does not see them

Has the children's frequency of contact with extended family changed since you attended the PTS course?

Your family

- More with my family**
- Less with my family**
- No change**

Other parent's family

- More with other parent's family**
- Less with other parent's family**
- No change**

Why has the frequency of contact changed?

8. Did attending the PTS course increase your knowledge of the possible effects of separation on your children?

- No – please describe why not? _____
- Yes (please describe below)

In what way/s did the PTS course increase your knowledge of the possible effects of separation on your children?

9. Since the course have you talked to any of the children about who they will live with and how often they will see their other parent?

- Yes, told them what was happening
- Yes, asked them what they would like
- Yes, both asked them what they would like and told them what was happening
- No (Why not _____

Did attending the PTS course help you to talk to your children?

- No (please describe why it didn't help

- Yes (please describe how the PTS course helped

How you found a Parenting Through Separation course and how you selected a course to attend

10. Did you have any problems finding a Parenting Through Separation course in your area?

- No
- Yes (describe below)

What problems did you have in finding a Parenting Through Separation course in your area?

11. Did you have a preference for a specific Parenting Through Separation provider?

- No
- Yes I preferred _____ (describe why below)
- Māori service provider (describe why below)
- Pacific service provider (describe why below)

If yes, why did you prefer this provider?

Were you able to attend a course by this provider?

- No (describe below)
- Yes

If no, why were you unable to attend a course run by your preferred provider?

12. Did you have any problems enrolling for a Parenting Through Separation course?

- No
- Yes (describe below)

What problems did you have enrolling in a Parenting Through Separation course?

13. How long did you have to wait between enquiring about the Parenting Through Separation course and attending the first session?

If there was a delay, what difficulties did this delay create for you?

14. Which of the following were obstacles or barriers to your attending the Parenting Through Separation course? (Please tick all that apply)

- No obstacles or barriers
- Getting transport to the course
- Having to wait for a course
- Finding childcare
- Finding a course nearby
- Concerns about privacy
- Concerns about relevance
- Finding a course held on the right day
- Finding a course held at the right time of day
- Getting leave or time away from work
- Finding a course that met your cultural needs
- Finding a course in your preferred language
- Your ex-partners possible negative reaction
- Other (please describe) _____

15. In terms of the day and time the course was held, which of the following would you have preferred (Please tick all that apply)

- No preference (anytime or day)
- A weekend course during the day (before 6pm)
- A weekend course in the evening (after 6pm)
- A weekday course during the day (before 6pm)
- A weekday course in the evening (after 6pm)
- Other (please describe) _____

16. In terms of the sessions offered, which of the following would you have preferred (Please tick all that apply)

- No preference
- Four 1 hour sessions (total of 4 hours)
- Two 2 hour sessions (total of 4 hours)
- One four hour long session
- Other (please describe) _____

Now I would like to go over the questions we asked you in the earlier survey. This will tell us if things have changed for you since you filled in the first survey.

The following questions help to give us a better understanding of the situation of parents and children following a separation. For each question use the following scale to enter the response that best reflects your experiences or feelings. If the statement cannot possibly apply to your situation, enter a “7” to indicate that the statement is not applicable.

Almost Never **Some of the Time** **Much of the Time** **Almost Always** **NA**
1 **2** **3** **4** **7**

| Statement | Now |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| My children get caught in the middle of conflicts between me and their other parent. [10] | [] |
| Gifts to my children are a problem between me and their other parent. | [] |
| My children get caught between my family/whānau and the other parents family/whānau | [] |
| My children's other parent and I argue in front of the children. [12] | [] |
| I try to keep my children's other parent from seeing the children. | [] |
| My children's other parent tries to keep the children from seeing me. | [] |
| When the children's other parent and I discuss things we end up arguing or fighting. [15] | [] |
| I encourage the children to have a good relationship with their other parent. | [] |
| I encourage the children to have a good relationship with their other parents extended family/whānau | [] |
| I back up my children's other parent as a parent. [17] | [] |
| My children's other parent and I agree on discipline for the children. | [] |
| My children's other parent says things about me to the children that I don't want them to hear. | [] |
| I say things to the children about their other parent that he/she wouldn't want them to hear. [20] | [] |
| I try to avoid involving the children in any disagreements or conflicts between me and their other parent. | [] |
| I feel angry toward my children's other parent. | [] |
| My children's other parent feels angry toward me. | [] |
| I encourage the children to talk about their feelings and reactions to the separation/divorce. [24] | [] |
| I tell the children that the separation/divorce was not their fault. | [] |
| I ask my children to pass messages from me to their other parent. | [] |
| I let my children know that I understand that they love their other parent. [27] | [] |
| My children's other parent and I talk together about issues which affect our children. | [] |
| My children's other parent backs me up as a parent. | [] |
| My children's other parent and I work together to coordinate rules like bedtimes. [30] | [] |
| My children's other parent asks the children for personal information about me. | [] |
| I ask the children for personal information about the other parent. | [] |
| Conflict between me and the other parent occurs during pick-ups and drop-offs of my children. | [] |
| I use low contact alternatives in communicating with the other parent (eg., a neutral third party, telephone, e-mail, texting, writing). [34] | [] |

Issues of Separation Now

The following questions help us better understand the issues you currently face in relation to the separation. For each question enter the number from the following scale that best reflects your agreement with the statement provided.

Strongly Disagree **Somewhat Disagree** **Uncertain** **Somewhat Agree** **Strongly Agree**
1 **2** **3** **4** **5**

| Statement | Now |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| I am satisfied with the amount of time the children spend with their other parent. [35] | [] |
| I am satisfied with the amount of time the children spend with the Whānau or extended family of their other parent | [] |
| I have a good understanding of how children are affected by conflict between separating/divorcing parents. [36] | [] |
| I am satisfied with how the children spend their time with the other parent. | [] |
| I have a good understanding of adult responses to separation/divorce. | [] |
| Our children have adjusted quite well to our separation/divorce. | [] |
| All things considered I am coping quite well with my separation/divorce. [40] | [] |
| All things considered my ex-partner is coping quite well with our separation/divorce. | [] |
| I have a close relationship with my children. [41] | [] |
| I am satisfied with my relationship with my children. | [] |
| My children have a close relationship with their other parent. | [] |
| The most important consideration when making care arrangements is the wellbeing of my child. | [] |
| I am confident that in the future we will agree on the care of the children. [45] | [] |
| I have a good understanding of how to limit or reduce conflicts with the other parent. | [] |
| The courts are likely to be the only way to resolve issues around custody, access, and financial support. | [] |
| I have a good understanding of the needs and reactions of children to separation/divorce. | [] |
| I am experiencing more stress now than I was before our separation/divorce. [49] | [] |
| I am satisfied with our present arrangements for child support. | [] |
| I have a good understanding of alternatives to court action in resolving disputes around living arrangements, access and child support. | [] |
| I am satisfied with our present arrangements for where children live. | [] |
| I am worried about the children's reaction to the separation/divorce. | [] |
| I have a good understanding of how to deal positively with issues which arise when a new partner is involved with me or the other parent. [54] | [] |
| I have a good understanding of where to get any help my children may need in dealing with the separation/divorce. | [] |

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

I would now like to check how _____ is doing. You may remember answering a series of questions about his/her behavior in the first survey. We would like to know if attending the course leads to children adjusting better to their parent's separation.

For each item, please mark the box for Not True, Somewhat True or Certainly True. It would help us if you answered all items as best you can even if you are not absolutely certain. Please give your answers on the basis of your child or young person's behaviour over the last six months.

| | Not True | Somewhat True | Certainly True |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Considerate of other people's feelings | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Often complains of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Shares readily with other children/young people, for example toys, food, games, CDs | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Often loses temper | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Rather solitary, prefers to play/be alone rather than with other children/young people | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Generally well behaved, usually does what adults request | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Many worries or often seems worried | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Constantly fidgeting or squirming | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Has at least one good friend | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Often fights with other children/young people or bullies them | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Often unhappy, depressed or tearful | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Generally liked by other children/young people | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Easily distracted, concentration wanders | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Nervous (or clingy) in new situations, easily loses confidence | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Kind to younger children/young people | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Often lies or cheats | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Picked on or bullied by other children/young people | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Often volunteers to help others (parents, teachers, other children) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Thinks things out before acting | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Steals from home, school or elsewhere | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Gets along better with adults than with other children/young people | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Many fears, easily scared | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Good attention span, sees chores or homework through to the end | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Do you have any other comments or concerns about your child or young person?

The Course

67. You may remember that we asked you in the first survey about what you wanted from the course. Did the course provide you with the information you wanted?

- No (please describe what was missing below)
- Yes

What was missing from the course? For example, were there specific cultural processes that were not included such as whakawhānau ngatanga?

68. Now that you have been on the course, are there any additional issues that could have been covered in the Parenting Through Separation course?

- No
- Yes (please describe these below)

What additional issues could have been covered in the course?

69. How well was your Parenting Through Separation course run (eg, were the facilitators good at presenting information, encouraging discussion etc.)?

Were there things they could have done better? What were these?

70. What did you think of -
The Family/Parent DVD

The child DVD

The handouts

The venue

The group setting

The group activities

The presentations (if any)

71. As a result of attending the course, what new services did you learn about that support and assist families (adults and children) to resolve disputes? Please note if you have referred to or used any of these services?

72. Would you recommend the Parenting Through Separation course to other parents who are separating or who have separated?

- No
 Yes

Why / Why not?

73. In what way has attending the Parenting Through Separation course changed –

The way you communicate with your ex-partner?

Has it helped reduce conflict between you? How?

The way you communicate with extended family/whānau on your ex-partners' side?

The degree to which you cooperate with your ex-partner about the day-to-day care of the children?

The degree to which you cooperate with your ex partners extended family/ whānau about the day-to-day care of the children?

Please add any additional comments you might have about the Parenting Through Separation Course and issues of separation/divorce in the space provided below.

Thank you for answering these questions. Your responses will be very helpful to us in evaluating how well the programme works for parents.

Dr Jeremy Robertson – Roy McKenzie Centre for the Study of Families, Victoria University of Wellington, PO Box 600, Wellington. Phone 04 463 6831

Key informants' Interview

Parenting Through Separation

Your responses to these questions will help us to better understand how the Parenting Through Separation Programme is operating and its impact on parents and their children.

IMPORTANT – the information in this interview will not be shown to anyone else. Results will be reported in aggregate or as anonymous quotes.

Date _____ ID Number _____

Background

1. What type of organization do you belong to?

- Community organization
- Programme provider
- Family Court
- Legal firm
- Ministry of Justice National Office
- Māori community organization
- Iwi based programme provider
- Other (state) _____

2. What is your role within that organization?

- Family Court Judge
- Counselor, psychologist or therapist
- Family court co-ordinator
- Family court caseflow manager
- Programme provider
- Lawyer
- Ministry of Justice - Policy advisor
- Ministry of Justice - Operational staff
- Kaimahi Māori
- Kaiawhina
- Other (state) _____

3. How long have you been actively involved in the PTS programme, either in its operation, making referrals or in working with parents who have been on the programme?

4. How would you rate your organization's relationship with the local programme providers?
[OR if informant is programme provider – with MoJ operational staff]

| | | | | |
|-----------|------|----|------|-----------|
| Very Poor | Poor | OK | Good | Very Good |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

[Note those providers with whom there is a poor relationship and the reasons for this]

The PTS programme and its development

5. In your view is there a need for the Parenting Through Separation Programme (in your area)?

- No (please detail)
- Yes, for some separated parents (please detail)
- Yes, for all separated parents

6. Are you aware of any difficulties in setting up the Parenting Through Separation Programme (in your area)? For example, are there any specific cultural challenges and issues that you can identify in terms of setting up a programme in your area? Cultural challenges may include issues around the duration and timing of the programme, established networks, referrals, consultation, capacity to engage whānau.

7. What impact has the introduction of the PTS programme had on your agency/organization (eg, demand for your services)?

- Negative (please detail)
- No impact
- Positive (please detail)

If you are a Māori provider, how has the PTS programme impacted on the demand for your services (please comment fully)?

8. Is the PTS programme available to all parents in your area?

- Yes, in all areas
- In some areas only
- Not available in this area
- Don't know

[If not available in all areas] Why is the PTS programme not widely available in your area?

- Yes, in all areas
 - Lack of providers to run programme
 - Lack of a Māori provider to run the programme
 - Lack of a Pacific provider to run the programme
 - Lack of demand
 - Other similar programmes already available
 - Other (state) _____
-

9. Are there Māori PTS programme providers in your area?

- Yes, in all areas
- In some areas only
- Not available in this area
- Don't know

10. Are there Pacific PTS programme providers in your area?

- Yes, in all areas
- In some areas only
- Not available in this area
- Don't know

11. From your knowledge, what are the main reasons parents do not attend the PTS programme? (tick all those mentioned)

- They don't know about it
- Lack of programme for their cultural group
- No Māori PTS provider
- No Pacific PTS provider
- Transport difficulties
- Having to wait for a course
- Lack of childcare
- They have reconciled
- Privacy concerns
- Work hours (eg, shift work)
- Day course held
- Time course held
- Other (please specify) _____

12. Should attendance be made mandatory for parents filing care of children applications in the Family Court?

- No
- Yes, but not for domestic violence
- Yes, for all

[Probe for any cultural considerations around mandatory attendance /participation?]

13. Should the PTS programme funding be extended to include others (eg, support people)?

What are some of the cultural issues such as the role of extended whānau and/or older siblings as caregivers?

Referrals

14. Do you or your organization refer parents to the programme?

- No (describe why not below)
- Yes
- Not Applicable (eg, programme provider)

Why not

15. Are there any specific groups of parents you refer to the PTS programme? Why?

Do you refer Māori parents to Māori providers?

- No (describe why not below)
- Yes

Do you refer Pacific parents to Pacific providers?

- No (describe why not below)
- Yes

16. Are there any specific groups of parents you do not refer to the PTS programme? Why?

17. Are there any particular providers you do not refer to? Why not?

18. Will you refer parents to the programme in the future?

- No (Why not)
- Not sure
- Yes

19. Do you get referrals from the PTS programme?

- No
- Yes (What type and note if internal to your organisation)
- Not Applicable

[What type of referrals eg, Māori/pacific and note if internal to the organization]

The Programme delivery

20. To what extent are you familiar with the contents of the PTS programme (eg, what is covered in each session)?

- Not familiar with PTS course contents (skip to Q22)
- Have some general idea of PTS course contents
- Aware of details of PTS course contents

21. To what extent does the programme as delivered in your area comply with the training manual?

- Totally complies
- Complies in most respects
- Doesn't comply
- Don't know

22. What variations in programme delivery have you observed programme providers using, compared to that outlined in the training manual? For example, cultural variations in delivery (mihimihi, whānau ngatanga)?

How effective are these variations in programme delivery?

Have there been any changes to the programme to make it more effective for Māori? More effective for Pacific parents? (please describe these fully)

23. How would you rate the quality of various aspects of the programme -

| | Very Poor quality | Poor quality | Good quality | Very Good quality | Don't Know |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|------------|
| Handouts (eg, pamphlets) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| Parent DVD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| Child DVD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| Group discussion | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| Activities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| Facilitation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| Quality of facilities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| Accessibility of facilities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 7 |

24. In your area, how suitable in terms of both content and delivery is the PTS programme for the following groups of parents?

| | Not suitable | Some aspects suitable | Very suitable |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Māori parents | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Pacific parents | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Disabled parents | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Victims of domestic violence | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Those responsible for domestic violence | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Parents with English as their second language | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Parents without educational qualifications | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Parents with significant socio-economic difficulties | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Parents experiencing multiple adversities (eg, ill health, unemployment, housing problems) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Other _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Other _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |

For those rated 1 above – why is the PTS programme not suitable for this group of parents? [Probe for ‘delivery’ and ‘content’ unsuitability] eg, Short duration of the programme does not make it amenable to the inclusion of cultural processes such as whānau ngatanga, karakia etc.

25. Has the PTS programme achieved a balance between the issues that need to be covered and the course length that best suits parents? For example, is the programme long enough to cover all of the content? To enable cultural practices to be included?

26. Are there issues that should be dealt with by the PTS course which are not currently covered? For example any issues that should be dealt with by the PTS course such as the role of older siblings and extended whānau in parenting? The position of whangai (children who have been adopted into the whānau ?)

- No
 Yes (describe below)

What are the issues not currently being covered?

The Impact of the Programme

27. Which parents benefit the most from participation in the PTS course (eg, education level or cultural group)?

28. If possible could you rate the degree of improvement you have observed in parents who have attended the PTS course, on the following dimensions –

Don't know (eg, no follow-up contact with parents)

| | None | A little | A lot | DK |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|----------|-------|----|
| Parents' knowledge of the effects of separation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Parents' communication with their children | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Reductions in children's exposure to parental conflict | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Parents communicating more effectively with one another | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Less Domestic Violence | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Parents making their own parenting plans | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Parents' willingness to avoid using the Family Court | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Parents' consideration of their children's best interests when making arrangements for post separation parenting | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Parents' knowledge of the services available to support and assist them to resolve disputes | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Relationship between parent and their children | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Relationship between parent and their ex-partner | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Positive contact with extended family | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |

29. So overall, how effective do you think the programme is in achieving the above goals?

| Totally Ineffective | | | | Totally Effective |
|---------------------|---|---|---|-------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

30. What **unintended effects** of the programme have you noticed (ie, effects that are outside the goals of the programme)? These can be both positive and negative. Please describe any specific cultural effects?

Positive

Negative

Future development

31. What suggestions would you make for the future development of the programme

What actions could the following groups take to increase referrals to PTS?

Ministry of Justice _____

Programme providers _____

Local Family Court _____

IRD child support _____

WINZ _____

Community groups eg, iwi groups or Pacific church groups _____

Other groups _____

What actions could be taken to reduce dropouts (eg, those registered but who do not turn up) such as providing transport, accessing support to attend, more culturally appropriate providers, more cultural content in the PTS programme etc.

Improvements in programme materials

How could the programme materials be more culturally appropriate if you identify this as an issue?

Improvements in the running of the programme

How could the programme be run in a more culturally appropriate way for Māori parents?
For Pacific parents?

Better training and support

Increased support for programme providers

Are there specific support needs that Māori programme providers have?

Are there specific support needs that Pacific programme providers have?

Need for a similar programme for children/tamariki. [Please comment specifically about the need for a programme tailored for Māori children? For Pacific children?]

Other

Programme providers' survey

Parenting Through Separation Survey for Programme Providers

Your responses to these questions will help us to better understand the experiences of those people providing the Parenting Through Separation (PTS) programme, and help improve the programme in the future. Please tick or circle the appropriate response option.

IMPORTANT – the information in this interview is for the evaluators only. Survey results will be presented in aggregate or as anonymous quotes.

Background

1. What type of organization do you belong to?
 - National
 - Local community
 - Māori provider
 - Pacific provider
 - Whānau
 - Hapū
 - Iwi
 - Other (please state) _____

2. In which region of New Zealand are you located?
 - North of Auckland
 - Auckland region
 - Waikato and Bay of Plenty (including, Rotorua, Taupo and the Coromandel)
 - Central North Island (Taranaki to Gisborne, including Palmerston North)
 - Wellington region
 - Top of North island (including the West Coast)
 - Canterbury
 - Otago
 - Southland

3. Which of the following types of area does your local office cover? (Tick all that apply)
 - City
 - Town
 - Rural area
 - Rohe
 - Waka

4. If you are an iwi based provider, in which rohe are you located? (Te Taitokerau, Tairāwhiti etc)

5. Does your organization run other parenting courses in your area?

- No
- Yes (please specify the type of courses below)

6. How many other PTS providers are there in your area? [If no other providers skip to Q9]

Are there Māori PTS providers in your area?

- No
- Yes

Are there Pacific PTS providers are there in your area?

- No
- Yes

7. How often do you meet with other PTS providers in your area?

8. Do you coordinate your courses with the other PTS programme providers in your area?
(tick all that apply)

- No co-ordination
- Take turns to run courses (eg, month about)
- Run courses at different times/days (weekend vs. weekdays)
- Run joint courses
- Cover different areas within district
- Cover different groups of parents (state) _____
- Other (state) _____

Referrals

9. Have you done anything to advertise the PTS course locally?

- No
Why not _____
- Yes (please specify below)

What did you do to advertise the course generally?

How effective were your attempts to advertise the course generally?

How do you advertise the PTS course to Māori parents locally (eg, Māori radio, whānau networks, Māori print media)?

How effective were these methods for Māori parents/whānau ?

How do you advertise the PTS course to Pacific parents locally (eg, Pacific radio)?

How effective were these methods for Pacific parents?

10. What are your main sources of referral? (tick all that apply)

- Family Court
- 0800 number
- Clients of your service
- Local lawyers
- Citizens Advice Bureau/Community organizations
- Counselors
- Church groups
- Health professionals (eg, Doctors)
- Other Māori providers
- Māori professionals such as counselors (please be specific)

- Other Pacific providers
- Pacific professionals such as counselors (please be specific)

- Other (state)

11. What is your main client group? For example do you have a specific focus eg, Māori or Pacific parents, parents with disabilities?

Running the Programme

12. How many courses has your organization run in your area?
- None (explain why below)
 - 1-2 (explain why below)
 - 3-5(explain why below)
 - 6-10
 - More than 10
 - Don't know but more than one

[If you have run less than 6 courses]. Why has your organization run less than six courses?

[If you have not run a PTS course you only need to answer questions 18, 21-23, 46, 47, and 54]

13. If your organization has run a course, when (month and year) did your organization run its first PTS course?

14. Prior to the first session do you do any of the following? (tick all that apply)

- Send out a reminder/confirmation letter
- Send out programme pamphlets
- Send out a copy of the Child DVD
- Send out a copy of the Parent DVD
- Phone reminders
- Make Home visits
- Kōrero to the whānau
- Other (state) _____

15. What size of group do you usually plan for when you run a course?

- 5-7 parents
- 8-10 parents
- 10-15 parents
- More than 15 parents

16. In general what rate of non-attendance (ie, people who register but do not turn up) do you normally get with your courses?

- None – all turn up
- 1 or 2 don't turn up
- 3-4 don't turn up
- 5+ don't turn up

17. From your knowledge, what are the main reasons parents do not attend the course they register for? (tick all that apply)

- Don't know
- Transport difficulties
- Having to wait for a course
- Lack of childcare
- Privacy concerns
- Day on which the course is held
- Time on which the course is held
- Programme does not match their cultural needs (please be specific)

- Parents have reconciled
- Other (please specify) _____

18. Have you used the PTS course materials with parents in other contexts (eg, individually)?

- No
- Yes (please specify circumstances below)

19. How many times **in 2008** have you had to cancel a PTS course because of insufficient numbers?

Routinely

23. From your organizations perspective, is it financially viable to run a PTS course with less than 5 parents attending?

- No
- Yes
- Don't know

24. Do you make attempts to contact the parent's ex-partner, to let them know of the PTS programme?

- No
- Occasionally
- Routinely

If you contact ex-partners, how do you contact them?

What is usually the result of your attempts to contact the other parent?

25. How often do you get both parents in a couple attending separate PTS courses?

- Never
- Occasionally
- Routinely

26. How often do you receive requests from Māori parents to bring members of their extended whānau to the PTS courses as support people?

- Never
- Occasionally
- Routinely

How do you respond to these requests?

27. How often do you receive requests from Pacific parents to bring members of their extended family to the PTS courses as support people?

- Never
- Occasionally
- Routinely

How do you respond to these requests?

28. How often do other family members or support people attend the PTS course with a parent?

- Never
- Occasionally
- Routinely

Who are these other family members or support people?

29. Have you ever had both parents in a couple attend the same session?

- Never
- Yes – planned by parents
- Yes – by accident

How was this handled?

30. What proportion of course participants come to both sessions of a course?

- All
- Most
- About half
- Less than half
- NA – course run in one session

31. From your knowledge, what are the main reasons parents do not complete both sessions?

Programme content and delivery

32. How many facilitators typically run each course?

- One
- Two
- More than two

33. What variations do you have in your programme, compared to that outlined in the training manual and why have you introduced these variations? (eg, the use of mihi with Māori parents)

34. Are there any specific cultural practices covered by your PTS course?

- No
- Yes (please specify below)

What are these (eg, do you discuss the roles of the extended whānau /family in parenting? Do you discuss the role of older siblings as caregivers?)

35. In what language/s are you able to offer to run the PTS course?

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> English | <input type="checkbox"/> Tongan | <input type="checkbox"/> Indian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Māori | <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese | <input type="checkbox"/> Niuean |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Samoan | <input type="checkbox"/> Cook Island Māori | <input type="checkbox"/> Sign language |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state) _____ | | |

36. In what language/s have you run the PTS course?

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> English | <input type="checkbox"/> Tongan | <input type="checkbox"/> Indian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Māori | <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese | <input type="checkbox"/> Niuean |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Samoan | <input type="checkbox"/> Cook Island Māori | <input type="checkbox"/> Sign language |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state) _____ | | |

37. Are there sufficient resources available in the languages of the parents you work with on the course?

- No (detail what is needed below)
- Yes, but could be better (detail what is needed below)
- Yes, sufficient available in required languages

What is needed?

38. In terms of the material to be covered, is the length of the course -
- Not long enough (eg, does not allow enough time for networking, specific cultural practices) (why not) _____

 - About right
 - Too long (why) _____

39. How useful do you think the following aspects of the programme are? (Please rate usefulness by circling an option on the three point scale)

| | Not very useful | Reasonably useful | Very useful | Don't use |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------|-----------|
| Handouts (eg, pamphlets) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Parent DVD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Child DVD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Group discussion | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Activities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Presentations | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |

Staff, training and support

40. For each of your current facilitators could you please tell us how long they have run the PTS programme, any relevant previous or current experience and any relevant qualifications -

| Years running PTS | Courses facilitated in past year | Current/previous experience | Qualifications |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|
| EG, 2 | 6 | Family therapist | BA |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

41. What training do facilitators in your organization get (eg, when received, how regular, type)?
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

42. Is there any cultural training process? What does this involve (eg, Māori language and protocols)

43. Would you like more support from the Ministry of Justice?

- No
- Yes (specify what support is wanted)

44. What arrangements do you have for staff supervision (eg, regularity, who supervises)?

What arrangements do you have for staff to undergo cultural supervision? (eg, regularity and who supervises)

45. Do you have any procedures for monitoring programme performance? What are these?

Suitability of the programme

46. How suitable, in terms of content and delivery, is the PTS programme for parents from the following groups? (Please rate the suitability by circling an option on the three point scale)

| | Not suitable | Some aspects suitable | Very suitable |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Māori parents | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Pacific parents | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Disabled parents | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Victims of domestic violence | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Those responsible for domestic violence | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Parents with English as their second language | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Parents without educational qualifications | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Parents with significant socio-economic difficulties | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Parents experiencing multiple adversities (eg, ill health, unemployment, housing problems) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Other _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |

47. What aspects of the programme are not suitable for those groups rated 1 or 2 above? In what way does the programme need to change to accommodate these groups?

48. In terms of how long parents have been separated, when do you think is generally the best time for parents to attend the programme? (tick all that apply)

- There is no best time
- Before they separate
- Within 6 months of separating
- Between 6 months and 2 years after separating
- At least 2 years after they have separated
- Don't know

Onward referrals

49. Have you ever had parents attending the course who reacted in a way that called for immediate action (eg, conflict between parents, distress)?

- Never
- Hardly ever (once or twice)
- Occasionally (once every 3-4 courses)
- Often (at least one person every 1-2 courses)

What happened?

50. How often have you referred parents from the course to other professionals for help and support?
- Never
 - Hardly ever (once or twice)
 - Occasionally (once every 3-4 courses)
 - Often (at least one person every 1-2 courses)
51. What type of needs have these parents had? (tick all that apply)
- Violence/anger management
 - Relationship issues
 - Personal adjustment issues
 - Financial issues (eg, income support)
 - Child behaviour/adjustment issues
 - Parenting skills
 - Mental health issues
 - Alcohol and Drug issues
 - Legal issues
 - Other (state) _____
-

Impact of the PTS programme

52. Although you may have minimal contact with parents after the course, we would like you to make a general rating of the degree of improvement you have observed in parents on the following dimensions. (Please circle the appropriate response or circle 7 for don't know)

| | None | Some | Significant | Don't Know |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|-------------|------------|
| Parents' knowledge of the effects of separation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Parents' communication with their children | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Reductions in children's exposure to parental conflict | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Parents communicating more effectively with one another | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Parents making their own parenting plans | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Parents' willingness to avoid using the Family Court | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Parents' consideration of their children's best interests when making arrangements for post separation parenting | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Parents' knowledge of the services available to support and assist them to resolve disputes | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Relationship between parent and their children | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Relationship between parent and their ex-partner | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Contact with extended family | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Parent(s) supporting their child/ren in their relationship with the child's other parent | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |

For those rated as showing no or little improvement, why do you think that is?

53. What unintended effects or consequences has the programme had (eg, on parents or your organization)? These can be both positive and negative and are outcomes that are not directly related to the goals of the PTS programme. For example an increase in demand for your counseling services.

Positive

Negative

Future development

54. What suggestions would you make for the future development of the programme?

Attracting referrals generally and attracting referrals from Māori and Pacific parents.

Extending eligibility of participants eg, including extended whānau /family as supports?

Avoiding dropouts

Programme materials

Running of the programme

Cultural factors (eg, the cultural content and relevance of programme materials, and cultural practices in running the programme, such as karakia, mihi whakatau etc.)

Training and support (please consider the need for cultural training)

Support for programme providers

Other suggestions

Please add any additional comments you might have about the Parenting Through Separation Course in the space provided below.

Thank you for answering these questions. Your responses will be very helpful to us in evaluating how well the programme works for parents and providers.

Dr Jeremy Robertson – Roy McKenzie Centre for the Study of Families, Victoria University of Wellington, PO Box 600, Wellington. Phone 04 463 6831

Children's interview

Draft Interview Schedule for Children: Second Interview

We would like to talk to you again about your Mum and Dad's separation, now that they have been to a course for parents.

Preamble as per information sheet for children: confidential, don't have to answer questions, if upset can stop, find trusted person to talk with, etc)

How much time do you spend now with your Mum? With your Dad?

Do you like these arrangements or would you like to change them? If so, how?

Do you see your aunts and uncles and cousins, and grandparents, as much as when I talked to you last time?

Who do you talk to now about your parents' separation?

Has anyone talked to you about what arrangements are made for where you live now? [where you live and who and when you visit or , how much time you live with each of your parents]

If no, do you want them to do that? How much say would you like to have?

Does your Mum or Dad ever get upset when your Dad/Mum buy you presents?

Is your Mum/Dad happy when you go and see your Dad/Mum?

Does your Mum/Dad understand that you love your other parent?

Do your Mum and Dad agree on things like when you go out with friends, what time you go to bed, etc?

Does your Mum or Dad ask you to pass on messages to the other parent? IF so, what kinds of things do they ask you to tell them?

Does your Mum or Dad ask you questions about your other parent eg, what they are doing?

I would like to ask you about your feelings about your Mum and Dad. Young people often have many different feelings toward their mother and their father. Please answer these questions thinking about your own parents as you feel about them now.

| | Not at all or never 1 | Not very much or rarely 2 | Sometimes or somewhat 3 | Pretty often or pretty much 4 | Always or extremely 5 | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| | MOTHER | | | | FATHER | | | | | |
| Respect toward your | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Anger toward your | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Happy when you think about | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Love toward your | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Grateful for your | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Proud of your | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Caring toward your | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Confused or puzzled by your | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Disappointed or let down by your | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Comforted thinking about your | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Anxious or nervous about your | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Closeness toward your | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Upset when you think about your | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Appreciative of (thankful for) your | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Positive feelings toward your | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

In every family there are times when parents don't get along. We would like to know how you feel about your parents' arguments. Think about times when they are together.

| | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------|-------|
| I never see my parents arguing or disagreeing | True | Sort of true | False |
| My parents get really mad when they argue | True | Sort of true | False |
| They may not think I know it, but my parents argue or disagree a lot | True | Sort of true | False |
| My parents have pushed or shoved each other when they have an argument | True | Sort of true | False |
| When my parents have a disagreement, they discuss it quietly | True | Sort of true | False |
| My parents are often mean to each other even when I'm around | True | Sort of true | False |
| I often see my parents arguing | True | Sort of true | False |
| When my parents have an argument they say mean things to each other | True | Sort of true | False |
| My parents hardly ever argue | True | Sort of true | False |
| When my parents have an argument they yell a lot | True | Sort of true | False |

Yourself

Now I would like to ask you some questions about yourself. Below is a list of words that describe people; I would like you to tell me which ones are like you.

| | | |
|----------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Friendly | Trustworthy | Good with pets |
| Healthy | Reliable | Sense of humour |
| Helpful | Easy going | Kind |
| Careful | Independent | Lively |
| Lots of common sense | Good at sports | Confident |
| Outgoing | Popular | Affectionate |
| Lots of hobbies | Creative | Attractive |

Here are some statements that might or might not be true about you. Please tell me whether each statement is not true, somewhat true, or certainly true about you.

| | Not True | Somewhat True | Certainly True |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| I am considerate of other people's feelings | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I am restless and can't stay still for long | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I often have headaches, stomach aches, etc | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I share things with friends easily | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I often lose my temper | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I prefer to do things alone | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I am generally well behaved and do what adults want me to do | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I often worry about things | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I am helpful if someone is hurt or upset | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I fidget and squirm around a lot | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I have at least one good friend | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I often fight or bully other children/young people | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I am often unhappy or tearful | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Other children/young people like me | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I am easily distracted and my attention wanders | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I am nervous in new situations, and easily lose confidence | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I am kind to younger children | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I often cheat or lie | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Other children pick on me or bully me | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I often volunteer to help other people | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I think about things before I do them | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I steal things from home, school, and other places | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I get along better with adults than with other children/young people | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I have many fears and get scared easily | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I can pay attention easily, and finish things like homework | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Here are some questions about you and your Mum and Dad. I'd like you to tell me how much you agree or disagree with them.

| | Not true | A little true | Quite true | Mostly true | Completely true |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|---------------|------------|-------------|-----------------|
| I think it is at least partly my fault that my Mum and Dad separated | | | | | |
| My Mum has helped me with my sad feelings about them separating | | | | | |
| My Dad has helped me with my sad feelings about them separating | | | | | |
| I have a pretty good understanding of why my Mum and Dad separated | | | | | |
| Mum has tried to help me by spending a lot of time with me | | | | | |
| Dad has tried to help me by spending a lot of time with me | | | | | |
| My Mum has tried to help by talking to me about the separation | | | | | |
| My Dad has tried to help by talking to me about the separation | | | | | |
| Even though Mum and Dad have separated I know I am important to Mum | | | | | |
| Even though Mum and Dad have separated I know I am important to Dad | | | | | |

Finally, some more questions about your parents' separation.

Did you see the DVD that was with the Parenting Through Separation course your Mum and Dad did?

If yes, did you watch it by yourself or with your Mum or your Dad?

What was helpful about it?

What was not helpful about it?

Do you think your parents changed after going on the Parenting Through Separation Course?

If yes, how did they change?

Are there some good things now about them separating? If so, what?

How do you think things will be for you in the future?

Thank you for answering these questions. Remember, if any of them make you feel sad or unhappy, we can arrange for you to talk to someone you trust.

Appendix 5 Analytic approach

Data from the Registration and Evaluation forms was entered into an Excel spreadsheet by the Ministry of Justice and these spreadsheets were provided to the evaluators. Evaluators transferred the Excel data to SPSS³⁰ for analyses. Survey and interview data were entered directly into SPSS.

Data was checked and verified at a number of stages. For some data files, a small sample of the data was checked for the accuracy of the data entry. Once the data was imported into SPSS, the range of the variable was checked for out-of-bound or non-permitted values. Checks were also performed to ensure consistency within questionnaires and to ensure that related questions were coded appropriately.³¹ For parametric statistical tests, the distributions of the data were inspected to identify departures from normality. Where the distribution of a variable was judged to be problematic, a nonparametric test was used instead (for example, using a Spearman rather than a Pearson correlation).

The choice of the statistical tests used was dependent on the nature of the variable/s being investigated and the degree to which they meet the assumptions of the particular test (for example, with respect to the distribution of the responses on the variable). The main tests used in this report are the Chi-square test for analysing the relationship between two nominal variables and the paired t-test for analysing differences in mean scores on scales measuring parent adjustment.

A significance level of .05 was chosen, and all statistical tests are reported with the appropriate test statistic, degrees of freedom (where appropriate), and significance level. Although statistical testing was generally limited to pre-planned comparisons, there are still a relatively large number of such tests and this can result in some results being significant by chance. For example, with a .05 significance level it is likely that 5 out of 100 comparisons will be tested as significant even though there are no real differences. It also needs to be noted that because of the large number of parents in the registration/evaluation form database, it is possible to identify statistically significant differences which are in practice relatively minor in absolute size. To help with the interpretation of the practical significance of these differences the actual data is presented for the groups being compared.

Finally, the following general analytic and stylistic principles have been followed in the creation of the tables for this report.

- The data presented in the tables and figures excludes missing data. The total number of data units or records in the table and figures is indicated in its title where appropriate.

³⁰ SPSS is a commonly used software programme used for analysing quantitative research data.

³¹ For example, certain questions needed to be coded as 'not applicable' if the prior question had been answered 'no' and the instruction was to skip the following question.

- In tables, we present usually only percentages for the values of a variable though, on occasions, numbers are presented too. Sometimes, tables list a number of variables and in these cases the total in the title represents the maximum possible number of responses. If the number of responses to an item is considerably lower than this (because, for example, the respondent chose not to answer the question or the item was not applicable to them), then this is noted in a footnote.



Corp 398

ISBN 978-0-478-29069-1

newzealand.govt.nz