



BOTH PARENTS MATTER
CYMRU

Working **with fathers**

A guide for school professionals



This guide has been written to help you to engage more successfully with fathers. By fathers we mean biological fathers who live with their children as well as those who do not. We have also included some information about non resident mothers in this guide to help you to engage better with mums who live apart from their children.

The guide contains research evidence on the benefits to children of engaging fathers in their children's learning and schooling and the importance and impact of the involvement of both parents throughout a child's life.

Engaging family members who do not live with their children on a full time basis can often feel difficult, especially to staff within schools who may feel anxious about becoming involved in the private lives of families. As the research evidence shows, however, this engagement, with both parents and the wider family members, can make children feel supported, safe and secure within their changing family environment. Schools can play a significant part in assisting children to cope with the change that family separation brings, by continuing engagement with both sides of a family throughout and beyond the separation itself.

'As someone who has worked as a barrister, I have seen that it can be too easy for contact to be denied to one parent for no reason'

– First Minister , Carwyn Jones AM

Father engagement has been shown to be a significant factor in the well being of children, particularly those children whose families have separated. Evidence from research is offered throughout this guide to demonstrate this and to help you to underpin your practice with the best available knowledge from Wales and around the world.

You can find out more about supporting fathers, together with strategies, additional resources and materials to help you engage the whole family in your work, at www.fnf-bpm.org.uk

This guide was developed by FNF-Both Parents Matter Cymru after consultation with local schools in Cardiff and Family Support Workers across the City. The section on Parental Alienation was written by Karen Woodall, Director at the Centre for Separated Families and the Family Separation Clinic, with whom FNF - Both Parents Matter Cymru are working in partnership to bring specialist services to Wales.

The Centre for Separated Families delivers support to the whole family after separation and works to help mothers and fathers to understand their children's reactions to family separation so that they can support them through difficult times.

The Family Separation Clinic offers specialist services to assist mothers and fathers to work together to resolve conflict and build co-operative post separation relationships.

we support

**DADS AREN'T
SCARY**





Rights of Children and Young persons (Wales) Measure 2011

This Measure was introduced on 14 June 2010 by the Deputy Minister for Children. It was passed by the National Assembly for Wales on 18 January 2011 and approved by Her Majesty in Council on 16 March 2011. The Measure imposes a duty upon the Welsh Ministers and the First Minister to have due regard to the rights and obligations in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and its Optional Protocols, when making policy decisions of a strategic nature.

Key elements of the UNCRC

Article 3

In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

Article 9

States Parties shall respect the right of the child who is separated from one or both parents to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents on a regular basis, except if it is contrary to the child's best interests.

Article 12

States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

Article 18

States Parties shall use their best efforts to ensure recognition of the principle that both parents have common responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child. Parents or, as the case may be, legal guardians, have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child. The best interests of the child will be their basic concern.

“States Parties shall use their best efforts to ensure recognition of the principle that both parents have common responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child.”

Article 18 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 imposes a duty upon the Welsh Ministers and the First Minister to have due regard to the rights and obligations in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).



Background to this guide

As part of the work to support this guide we commissioned a survey into the kind of support that is already available to dads in schools.

Some schools however, did not recognise that fathers need help. Or even that fathers were involved in children's lives at all.

'Well, actually, not many of the children at our school have fathers.'
- Secretary in a Cardiff school, when asked whether she could respond to the questionnaire we had sent.

However, other schools gave us examples of some good practice. We have included those below along with the questions we asked.

How does your school service work with fathers?

"We encourage general parental involvement with the children's learning by running curriculum workshops. We do get some dads that come along, but they are generally in the minority. We don't really do anything specific at the moment to encourage fathers.

We have many fathers who do not live with their children. We therefore offer separate parents evening appointments and all letters ie concerts sports day and reports are sent to them in the post.

They are treated equally (when we have contact details)"

Good Practice that makes a difference
Fathers are particularly engaged when we take the children on trips, etc. to the beach. We actively encourage their involvement and enjoy watching the children engage positively with male role models. The community that we serve is very diverse culturally and socially and we find that many fathers bring their children to school and therefore we are able to develop a direct and meaningful relationship with them individually. We have also taken part in Dad's Days and plan to undertake another later this year. The make up of the professionals at our school also includes males, projecting positive images of men not only as professionals but also as caring individuals taking on a nurturing role in children's lives.

How do you record fathers' details in you school service?

Not well enough -- issues around absent fathers

If they do not live with their children, we ensure that they receive all school information and have their details on file.

When we admit children we take both parents details but often there is no information about the father

Have you developed any policies/ guidance for direct work with fathers?

Less than 15% of schools said that they had

Do you know where to access information to influence your practice when engaging fathers?

Fewer than one in four knew where to find that information

Would you be interested in training and support to improve engagement with fathers?

More than 90% said they would



Engaging with fathers – Step by Step

Information about the why and how of engaging fathers is what this guide is all about, however, if you do nothing else, these top tips will help you to make a start on building a strategy to engage more strongly with them. A step by step approach looks like this.

- 1**__ Consider the world from the perspective of children it will help you to understand why dads matter.
- 2**__ Recognise and support fathers and father figures.
- 3**__ Have high expectations of fathers and help them to meet them
- 4**__ Audit your current engagement with dads and the involvement of men in your services
- 5**__ Review your record keeping, make sure you include fathers at every stage
- 6**__ Invite dads to attend specific events and activities
- 7**__ Don't use the P word – use mum and DAD instead, research shows that many people think the word parent means 'mother'¹
- 8**__ Tell dads that their input matters and show them how it makes a difference
- 9**__ Lead from the top and encourage commitment throughout your team
- 10**__ Don't put up with poor engagement with dads

¹ Aiming High for Children supporting families (2007) states that "The very word 'parent' in relation to services can have the effect of excluding fathers – both because fathers often perceive the term to mean 'mothers', and because this can be reinforced by the approach of practitioners whose habits of working mainly with mothers are deeply ingrained. This impacts on the ability of both parents to fulfil their rights and responsibilities towards their children and, particularly after separation, can lead to fathers drifting out of the lives of their children."



Section One - Why Dads Matter

Research shows that both fathers and mothers have a positive impact on children's development in ways that are similar to each other but, also, in ways that are quite different. For example, a father's influence can often encourage a child to explore the outside world, take risks and stretch themselves physically, whilst a mother's influence can encourage the building of emotional literacy and ability to communicate well with peers.

Of course, both mothers and fathers can also offer children those same things, but it is often the way in which mothers and fathers combine to influence and encourage children to become whole, rounded, human beings that has the greatest impact of all.

It is vital that schools don't just engage with one parent - the parent who takes the children to school the most or the parent with whom the child mostly lives - but with both parents.

Dads' involvement in their children's education

Studies have demonstrated that fathers' involvement in their children's education has a specific impact and that fathers have a critical role to play in ensuring positive outcomes for their children.

Positive Outcomes include:²

- better exam results
- a higher level of educational qualifications
- greater progress at school
- higher educational expectations

- more positive attitudes (e.g. enjoyment) and
- better behaviour (e.g. reduced risk of suspension or expulsion at school).

These positive associations exist across different family types with research indicating that fathers' involvement is important not only when a child is in primary school but also when they are in secondary school and regardless of the child's gender. Evidence from the US³ suggests that fathers' involvement in their children's school has a distinct and independent influence on education outcomes, even after controlling for factors such as the parents' education, household income, and the mothers' involvement. It also suggests that a father's involvement has a stronger influence on the children getting mostly A grades than does a mothers' involvement.

Most of all dads matter to children because they provide:⁴

1. Security and continuity
2. History and identity
3. Support to mums
4. Help children to reach a higher level of intellectual potential
5. Better mental health - Father-child closeness is a crucial predictor of long-term mental health.
6. Support their partners to work outside of the home
7. Encourage potential in children
8. Support better behaviour - Good fathering means your son is less likely to have a criminal record.
9. Strengthen girls happiness - father involvement at age seven is correlated with your daughter's contentment with love at 33.
10. Build self esteem in children - dads make a big difference to how children feel about themselves.

² See The Impact of Parental Involvement on Children's Education, DCSF (2008)

³ See Fathers' Involvement in Their Children's Schools, Statistical Analysis Report, National Household Education Survey, U.S. Department of Education (1997)

⁴ Jack O Sullivan - DK - He's having a baby 2008



How dads help children and schools help dads

David is a dad who works long hours but he always makes sure that he gets home before bed time on at least two days each week. Knowing how important his involvement can be to his children's learning, he spends two hours on two days each week helping his children with their homework. David says that it is difficult sometimes to justify why he is going home at 4pm when his colleagues are working late, but he sticks to his routine, making up the time during other days so that he keeps up with his work. When parents evenings come round, he juggles his time and works over the weekend to make sure that he attends. His children are 12 and 14 and he knows that his input has helped them to do well at exams already. The school helps David to stay involved by sending him information directly by email. This means that he can co-ordinate his work with his parenting and that he and his children's mum are both equally involved in active parenting. David welcomes his children's school being proactive and says that he could not do what he does if they were not so aware of the importance of fathers.

Non Resident Fathers

By the age of five, 28% of children living in Wales will be living mainly with one parent and visiting or living in shared care situations with the other parent. By the age of 15, this figure rises to 45%.⁵

There are approximately 110,000 'non resident' fathers and 10,000 'non resident' mothers living in Wales, today.⁶

A UK survey (Peters et al, 2008) found that 70% of two-parent-family fathers and 81% of non-resident parents (mainly men) wanted to be more involved in their children's education. However, only 31% of the non-resident fathers who have contact with their children go into their schools, compared with 75% of fathers who live at home.⁷

The evidence suggests that school processes that fail to include non-resident fathers and staff anxieties may be the reason for this discrepancy.⁸

Why non resident fathers matter

There are many positive gains for children in engaging their 'non resident' parent in learning and schooling, including:

- better school attendance and behaviour
- better examination results
- better mental and emotional health
- better adjustment to the post separation environment
- less likelihood of criminal behaviour at later ages

Children in separated families lose a large part of their experience of their parents in relationship to each other. It can be a further loss if one of their parents is also absent in other areas of life such as schooling. Schools have a vital role to play in helping children to thrive and survive after family separation. Involving 'non resident' parents and the wider family in school life is an essential part of supporting children to adapt to the changes that come with family separation.

When non-resident fathers are highly involved with their children's learning, the children are more likely to get A's at all grade levels.⁹

In separated families, a number of studies have found that where non-resident fathers spend sufficient time with them to engage in a wide range of everyday activities with them, the children tend not only to achieve better at school but to be subject to fewer suspensions and lower drop-out rates¹⁰

Children who grow up with non-resident but involved fathers have fewer mental health problems as adults (this is especially true for daughters).

Schools have a vital role to play in helping children to thrive and survive after family separation.

Why do 'non resident' parents want to be involved

It has long been believed that it is too difficult to engage with both parents after divorce or separation and that the best policy is to work only with the parent with whom the child mostly lives. School staff can feel afraid of becoming involved in the separation process itself, particularly if there is conflict between parents and each are presenting different expectations about how things will be arranged in the future.

However, most 'non resident' parents long to continue to play an active and ongoing part of their children's lives. They remain deeply concerned about their children's welfare and, just as they did before the family separated, want to assist them as much as possible.

⁵ Extrapolated from Goodman A, and Greaves E, 2010, Cohabitation, Marriage and Relationship Stability, Institute for Fiscal Studies Briefing Note 107 in HM Government, Social Justice Outcomes Framework, October 2012, p7 [accessed via: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/social-justice-outcomes-framework.pdf>] lbid

⁶ (Nord et al, 1998).

⁷ Burgess, 2009; McBride et al, 2000; Lloyd, 1999; Fletcher, 1997).

⁸ National Center for Education Statistics. October 1997. Fathers' Involvement in

⁹ Their Children's Schools; National Household Education Survey. NCES 98-091R2. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.

¹⁰ (for reviews, see Fabricius et al, 2010).

¹¹ Peters & Ehrenberg, 2008; King, 1994



Section two - Reaching out to fathers

Most fathers want to support their children’s learning and schooling. They understand that this is important for their children’s wellbeing. Many want their children to do better than they did at school.

What does an effective strategy look like?

Fathers are more likely to get involved in schooling and learning if:¹²

- the other parent is involved
- there is a good enough relationship between the parents
- the school welcomes and reaches out to both parents as part of an open door policy
- activities are planned with both parents in mind, taking into account the needs of both parents and not just one, with additional, bolt on activities for the father
- activities are explicit about their intention and directed at mothers and fathers, not just generically at parents
- the school is open about its open door policy around separated families and is transparent about its willingness to welcome both parents
- specific activities are offered for fathers so that they can get involved in easy, inclusive ways and so that they feel that they are recognised, acknowledged and valued
- activities which are specifically for fathers should be sensitively supported by teachers who are familiar with the particular needs and experiences of these parents

First steps in an effective strategy

The development of an effective strategy for engaging fathers in their children’s learning and schooling lies within a home-school policy that sets out the framework explaining how a school will engage with families.

This process requires a recognition that mothers and fathers offer their children something which is individually unique and complimentary to each other. A second essential part is to value the way in which the family as a whole offers children a unique opportunity to experience the different things that mothers and fathers bring to their lives. Valuing both parents and recognising that each needs different kinds of support when separated from each other to stay close to their children, is the third essential component of a successful strategy.

An effective strategy requires:

- Understanding of the needs of fathers and the wider family
- Recognition of the value of the family as a whole
- Valuing the different things that mothers and fathers bring to their children’s lives

One-size-fits-all policies do not work for families. An effective strategy must set out a detailed and differentiated approach to reaching out to fathers and must also articulate the unique things that each parent brings to a child’s life as the reasons for seeking engagement with them.

Doing this work may involve additional work in the short term but will lead to longer term gains for the school, for parents and most of all for children.

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¹² Fatherhood Institute – Dads Included 2011



Section 3 - How to do it

It is fairly easy to engage fathers, it doesn't cost very much but it can take some organisation. A step by step guide to auditing your current work follows:

Step 1. Explore your staff team's current understanding of fathers

This way of working ensures that the individual and personal assumptions that people hold about fathers do not get in the way of implementing a new strategy. If staff hold strong assumptions, it can mean that they will consciously or unconsciously sabotage new strategies, particularly for engagement with new groups of people. Helping disagreements to be aired openly means that it is possible to identify how people feel and how they may need assistance to sign up to something that they may not agree with. Awareness training should aim to identify:

- assumptions
- gaps in knowledge
- disagreement on the issues

Step 2. Find out more about the real life experiences of fathers

The purpose of finding out more about the real lives of fathers is to explode the myths around them and help people who feel strongly to understand why it is important to work proactively towards engaging with fathers.

Step 3. Understand how meeting the needs of fathers can help children

It may be useful to invite some fathers in to school to talk about their experiences of living apart from their children and how that changes their relationship with them. Fathers often want to be involved in their children's learning and schooling. Reading the research evidence can assist your team to understand the ways in which helping fathers, helps their children.

Step 4. Highlight the policy initiatives that make it essential to support both parents

Welsh government initiatives demonstrate that it is essential to comply with the UNCRC as enshrined in the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011. Helping staff to understand why it is important to move towards ensuring engagement with both parents is the foundation for implementing your new strategy and studying these policy initiatives together is an important part of training.

Step 5. Develop a clear mission statement that explains why you are committed to supporting both parents after separation

The mission statement of any organisation is an important message of intent to the outside world. It describes how the organisation will meet the needs of the people who need its services. For schools, the people who use your services are the families of children who attend. It is therefore very important that those families understand how the school will treat parents and the wider family.

Step 6. Develop clear objectives and embed these within all procedures

Clear objectives mean that all staff understand how the strategy for engagement with fathers is being implemented in every area of the school. Identifying how each staff member contributes to the strategy and setting out clear expectations of this will ensure that the strategy is 'mainstreamed' that is, put at the heart of everything that the school does. Each member of staff should be offered the opportunity to discuss the ways in which they can contribute to the strategy and ideas and proposals should be widely shared around the staff team.

Step 7. Communicate your intention in all of your messages to families

When your strategy has been developed and your statements and policies are complete, the final step is to communicate this to all families through your normal channels such as newsletters, information days, parents evenings. You may wish to launch your new strategy with a special event just for fathers to explain what you are doing and why. This can help parents to understand the changes and engage them fully with the school.



Section 4 - Taking action to engage with fathers

It is important that when your work to understand the experiences and needs of fathers is complete, that you take action to change the way in which you engage with them. This can range from something as simple as ensuring that you convey to all parents your 'welcome' policy on fathers to ensuring that you understand that some children will be cared for by their 'non resident' father.

Key Ideas

- Make sure that fathers are welcomed and feel comfortable
- Be creative and persistent in involving fathers
- Consult with fathers on the design, publicity, recruitment, timing and venues for events
- Aim programmes explicitly at fathers
- Build activities around father-child involvement

Key Principles

Communicate your intention

- Make your 'welcome fathers' policy a central part of your message to new families
- Communicate your 'welcome fathers' policy throughout all of your literature

Develop accurate records

- Underpin your 'welcome fathers' policy with accurate record keeping

- Ensure that all parents, whether together or apart, receive all information about events, trips, outings and ask each separated parent with Parental Responsibility for their consent (separately and directly). Do not ask children to carry messages between parents
- Ensure that you offer separate slots if required for 'non resident' parents at parents evenings

Proactively build relationships with mothers and fathers

- Invite mothers and fathers to engage with the school
- Invite all parents to inform the school as soon as possible if change is happening at home
- Help staff to feel confident about working with fathers by offering training in understanding and working with them

Communicate your understanding of fatherhood

- Show children and their parents that you understand that fathers are important
- Ensure that changing families are respected throughout the school and help children to talk about their feelings about this as part of your pastoral care work

The difference it makes

Tremorfa Nursery School in Cardiff is running dad specific events so that the lack of male influence in children's lives is addressed. The School recognised that there are very few men in Early Years Education in Schools and wanted to do something about it. The events are called Dads, Lads and Grandads, to encourage all important men in children's lives to go along. Sessions have already been held and they were really well attended. The school will repeat these sessions regularly.

Working with non resident fathers and mothers

Under the Welsh Government's 2007 guidance for schools, a parent is:

- all natural parents, whether married or not;
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person
- any person who, although neither a natural parent nor a person with parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person.

It is therefore important that schools ensure that they engage effectively with non resident fathers and mothers.

Commitments to do this include

- A commitment from school to understand the experiences of both parents during and after separation
- A commitment to communicate openly and directly with each parent
- A commitment not to be drawn into the conflict arising from separation but to maintain and uphold the child's right to a relationship with each of its parents
- A commitment to respect the different roles of separated parents and to ensure that where they are sharing care, communication from the school will be to the appropriate caring parent
- A commitment to training staff in family separation awareness
- A commitment to making time available at parents evening for both parents separately, if required
- A commitment to developing and maintaining a strong and robust relationship with both parents
- A commitment to inviting all parents and their wider family to all events at the school.



The difficulties faced by non resident fathers and mothers Involved dads

Some non resident fathers find it difficult to get information from schools and feel that they are unable to engage with their children's schooling as a result. This is a problem which schools can address proactively by ensuring that they understand the needs of fathers and are committed to engaging with them.

Supporting non resident dads in difficulty

At FNF - Both Parents Matter, a dad we are working with had a letter from the school about his 10 year old daughter which told him that they were no longer going to discuss her education and development with him.

This was because the school had received a letter from the mother's solicitor which pointed out that the dad did not have Parental Responsibility for the child and that the mum did not want him to be involved any more.

We were able to speak with the head teacher and point to **paragraphs 4 and 14 of the Welsh Government guidance - Parents & Parental Responsibility**.¹⁴ This states that everyone who is a "parent" has a right to participate in decisions about a child's education. Because this draws on the definition of 'natural parents' under **Section 576 of the Education Act 1996**¹⁵ the issue of Parental Responsibility does not come into it. We pointed out that this means that despite the mum's objections the school should continue to deal with the father as they have done since the child entered their school.

The head was grateful, he told us that schools needed this kind of guidance

– Paul Apreada FNF – Both Parents Matter Cymru

Disengaged dads

Some non resident fathers do not seem interested in being part of their children's lives and schools can find it very difficult to persuade them that they are important to children, just as important as mothers.

Some schools find that despite all their efforts dads will not engage in their children's learning.

These dads may be -

- young dads
- unemployed dads
- dads of children living in families where mothers have children by more than one father
- dads who are dependent upon drugs and/or alcohol
- dads who culturally are not expected to do the work of bringing up children

In all cases, where dads are disengaged, it is essential to ensure that the efforts of the school to engage are not abandoned. Sometimes it requires specialist services who understand the needs of fathers, to persuade and cajole fathers to take up their responsibilities. FNF – Both Parents Matter Cymru, works to help fathers to engage with their children's upbringing, including learning.

Father rejection can have a traumatic impact on children. A study¹⁶ from Connecticut, demonstrates that children whose fathers reject them can suffer from a drop in well being, which impacts upon their learning at school amongst other things.

Understanding why non resident dads are not engaged with children's learning is an important step to helping them to change their behaviour. Sometimes dads do not realise that they are important to children's learning. Some of the research material in this guide can help them to realise why they matter.

It is also essential to help dads to understand that their children have a right to contact with their parents. Holding this out as a reason for them to engage is also a powerful way of connecting with disengaged dads.

¹³ NAFWC13/07 - "Parents" and "Parental Responsibility" Guidance for Schools

¹⁴ Welsh Government – Parents and Parental Responsibility Guidance 2007

¹⁵ Education Act 1996

¹⁶ Transnational Relations Between Perceived Parental Acceptance and Personality Dispositions of Children and Adults – A Meta Analytic Review
Pers Soc Psychology Rev May 2012 16: 103-115 First published September 2011



'Non resident' mothers

'Non resident' mothers are the most invisible group of separated parents and they can find it especially difficult to remain engaged with their children. You may be unaware that there are mothers who do not live with their children because many 'non resident' mothers will not divulge this information to you. In some cases, just as with 'non resident' fathers, you may be told that 'non resident' mothers are 'not allowed' to see their children by the resident parent. Just as in the case of 'non resident' fathers, it is very rare that a court would ever prevent a mother from having contact with her children. In order that you do not inadvertently support a parent being pushed out of their children's lives, it is essential that when you are told that a parent is 'not allowed' to see their children, that you ask for evidence that supports this. Only a court order that states that a parent must not have direct contact with a child should be acceptable evidence.

Feeling invisible

Carolyn does not live with her children and only sees them at weekends during the day. This is the result of a very difficult separation and a court battle that left her as a part-time parent. Her children are now teenagers and they do not want to stay overnight at her home because they are involved in many different activities outside of school. As a result, Carolyn does not get to spend very much time with them and when she does, it is difficult for her to feel very involved in their lives at all. Carolyn spoke to her children's school about becoming involved as a volunteer and now works three afternoons each week helping younger children to read. She says that this feels as though she is doing something that keeps her connected to her children because it means that she can get to see what other children are doing and get a feel for what her children are experiencing at school. No-one knows however that Carolyn does not live with her children, they didn't ask and she doesn't tell them. Carolyn says that she often feels that her needs are invisible and not thought about but that she cannot raise those issues because she feels ashamed.

Dads (and mums) who are prevented from being with their children.

Fathers and mothers who do not live with their children can experience difficulty in seeing their children at all. This can be for a variety of reasons but is often because of acrimony in the separation of the family. Some dads (and mums) experience severe withdrawal of their children after separation and some face active prevention in their attempts to continue to be there.

Parental Alienation

The concept of Parental Alienation is something which is not widely accepted in Wales although recent judgements in the Family Courts UK wide have established that this phenomenon can now be regarded as being mainstream.

Parental Alienation is a reaction in children living in separated family situations which leads them to resist spending time with a parent or sometimes to reject a parent completely.

The instances where Parental Alienation is found to occur are quite rare, although many children do experience emotional disturbance through separation which causes them to resist spending time with one parent. This can be particularly apparent in children who are moving between homes on a regular basis.

Parental Alienation is a spectrum problem which means that at the mild end, children will show resistance to spending time with a parent for no discernible reason. At the extreme end, a child will show an almost phobic like reaction to a parent. Signs that a child may be affected include, refusal to go to see a parent, angry reactions, allegations against a parent, anxiety and fear on handover.

Parental Alienation requires specialist intervention both where it is suspected and where it has been proven through the family court process. This is because the reactions that arise in children after separation can be easily exacerbated by parents and professionals who do not understand how to deal with these. Children can move quite swiftly from mild to severe reactions and can seem to change virtually over night in the worst cases. Where parents face alienation reactions it is vital to get help. Education about how children react to separation is essential for families as are services to assist parents to help their children to cope with transitions between homes.

The Centre for Separated Families specialises in working with children who are making transitions between parents after separation and has a Family Separation Clinic through which specialist services are delivered to families.

Research evidence

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Families Need Fathers Both Parents Matter Cymru
– registered charity number - 1134723



Check our website for details:
www.fnf-bpm.org.uk

Helpline: **08456 004 446**



we support

