Appendix: Methodology

Overview of the evidence

This review adopted a rapid evidence assessment methodology[1] which assesses what is already known about a policy or practice issue. This methodology uses a more structured and rigorous search of available evidence than a simple literature review but is not as exhaustive and resource intensive as a systematic review. Rapid reviews draw on systematic approaches and are transparent in detailing the search, appraisal, synthesis, and analysis methods of the review, but are pragmatic for applied policy research by constraining the process (such as the types of literature, search terms and quality appraisal) and not conducting exhaustive searches. In this case, priority was given to identifying existing reviews or meta-analyses to provide a rapid overview of relevant literature.

Scoping and search strategy

In consultation with the Department for Work and Pensions and local areas, EIF identified separated or separating parents as a particular group of interest to explore how negative parental relationships in this population can impact child outcomes, and the role of risk factors. Thus, the review focused on five areas of interest:

1. The impact of parental conflict between separated and separating parents on child outcomes.
2. The impact of parental absence after separation on children.
3. The prevalence of mental health risk factors associated with parental conflict in separated and separating parents.
4. The prevalence of financial issues associated with a higher risk of parental conflict in separated and separating parents.
5. The prevalence of alcohol or substance abuse associated with a higher risk of parental conflict in separated and separating parents.

Academic literature was searched using Google Scholar as the primary database (up to page 15, so as to reach theoretical saturation), supplemented by Web of Science. Grey literature was also sourced from a range of websites relevant to the topic area, including national and local government, the voluntary sector, and research organisations. Five separate searches were conducted for each of the topic areas noted above. Search terms utilised, including truncated words and * for wildcard searches, were as follows:

1. divorce* OR dissolution OR parent* separate* OR break* AND Father* OR Mother* OR Carer* AND "Parental conflict" OR "Marital conflict" AND child* outcome* OR child* adjust* OR adolescent* wellbeing OR toddler* problem* behav * OR infant* develop* AND UK

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1   Grant, M. & Booth, A. (2009) A typology of reviews: an analysis of 14 review types and associated methodologies. Health Information and Libraries Journal(26) 2, 91–108

2. divorce* OR dissolution OR parent* separate* OR break* AND Father* OR Mother* AND "Parental conflict" OR "Marital conflict" AND absenc* OR departure AND child* outcome* OR child* adjust* OR adolescen* outcome OR toddler* behav* OR infant* develop* AND UK

3. "mental health" OR adjust* OR psychiat* OR Suicid* OR mood disorder* OR affective disorder* OR post-trauma* AND Father* OR Mother* OR partner* AND prevalen* OR likel* OR associat* AND divorce* OR dissolution OR * separate* OR break* AND UK

4. divorce* OR dissolution OR parent* separate* OR break* AND Father* OR Mother* OR Carer* AND "Parental conflict" OR "Marital conflict" AND financial OR income OR unemployment OR poverty OR economic pressure OR debt AND UK OR "United Kingdom"

5. divorce* OR dissolution OR parent* separate* OR break* AND Father* OR Mother* OR Carer* AND "Parental conflict" OR "Marital conflict" AND Alcohol* OR drinking OR "alcohol* abuse" OR substance* OR drug* OR "substance abuse" AND UK

A list of references from the above sources/searches was retrieved. Duplicates were removed and the titles, abstracts and tags were screened first. Where it was unclear from abstracts/titles if they should be included in the review, full texts were screened. References were given a priority score between one and three to appraise their relevance to the review's inclusion/exclusion criteria. The inclusion and exclusion criteria were as follows:

- **Types of literature:** Priority was given to systematic reviews, literature reviews and meta-analyses that provide an overview of synthesis of the evidence. Primary studies were included if relevant. Grey literature documents (e.g., policy papers, and government/VCS reports from reliable sources) were included.

- **Date:** only papers published since 1 January 2011 were included.

- **Full-text:** only papers with full text available were included.

- **Country of publication:** international papers were included, although UK (or UK comparison) studies were considered a priority.

- **Language:** only papers written in English were included.

In total, 24 articles of relevance were identified across the review categories and included in this rapid review.

Evidence assessment and extraction

The 24 identified articles included in this review were quality appraised (QA) by one research officer to provide an indication of the methodological quality of the study. For primary studies, the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool[2] was utilised, and for review studies, including systematic review, nonsystematic reviews, reviews of reviews and meta-analysis, the Quality Assessment Tool for Review Articles tool[3] was utilised. Forty-fiver percent (45%) of the articles (n=11) were double-appraised by a senior research officer to test interrater reliability. Results were consistent, with an interrater reliability of 82%.

Evidence from each study was extracted and grouped according to the outcome domains measured, and in line with the outcomes of interest discussed in the introduction.

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2   Grant, M. & Booth, A. (2009) A typology of reviews: an analysis of 14 review types and associated methodologies. *Health Information and Libraries Journal (26)2*, 91−108

3   Health Evidence TM (2005). Quality Assessment Tool − Review Articles
    https://www.healthevidence.org/documents/our-appraisal-tools/quality-assessment-tool-dictionary-en.pdf

Light-touch programme assessment

Two interventions have been assessed for this guide: Mentalization Based Therapy for parental conflict—Parenting Together (MBT-PT), and Separated Parent Information Programme (SPIP) *plus*. These interventions have been selected because they are currently delivered in the UK to support separating and separated parents, and preliminary evaluation studies underpinning their evidence were identified. To conduct the light-touch assessment, we used the same approach we used for the EIF report *Reducing parental conflict in the context of Covid-19: Adapting to virtual and digital provision of support:*[4]

1. We searched for impact evaluations of the selected interventions using the following search string on Google Scholar: impact OR evaluate OR evaluation OR intervention OR result OR affect OR effective OR efficacy OR efficacious OR trial OR study "intervention name".

2. At least the first five result pages were screened for relevance of title and abstract, and where applicable, at full text level. Where there were relevant hits on pages four or five, three further pages were searched. Only papers with a full text available in English were included. We did not include time restrictions, and both peer-reviewed articles and grey literature were included.

3. We only assessed the most robust study. To select the most robust study, priority was given to impact evaluations which:

   » reported parent/interparental outcomes and measured child outcomes, or reported only child outcomes

   » were conducted in the most robust way. For instance, we prioritised randomised controlled trials (RCTs) over quasi-experimental designs (QEDs), or selected studies with the larger sample or those reporting information on attrition or baseline equivalence.

After having selected the most robust study underpinning each intervention, we conducted a preliminary assessment, examining the quality of the study design, sample, measurement, analysis and impact. The results of our assessment are described in the **table below**.

Please note that the other interventions included in the light-touch assessment table had been assessed as part of the EIF report *Reducing parental conflict in the context of Covid-19: Adapting to virtual and digital provision of support*.[5] You can find out more about the evidence underpinning such interventions in the appendix C[6] of the RPC Covid review.

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4   Available at **https://www.eif.org.uk/report/reducing-parental-conflict-in-the-context-of-covid-19-adapting-to-virtual-and-digital-provision-of-support**

5   ibid.

6   Available at **https://www.eif.org.uk/files/pdf/rpc-c19-vd-appendixc.pdf**

Intervention	Description	Evidence	References
Mentalization Based Therapy for parental conflict—Parenting Together (MBT-PT)	This is a targeted-selective intervention based on adaptations to Mentalization Based Therapy. The intervention is delivered over six to 12 weekly one-hour sessions by two co-therapists. Parents are initially offered six sessions with up to six further sessions as clinically indicated, with the average number of sessions being eight. Parents attend sessions together unless otherwise indicated clinically. The primary focus of MBT-PT is on making sense of the feelings experienced by each parent, particularly highlighting the ways in which malign assumptions about the other parent's intentions can lead to increased anger, miscommunication and misunderstandings.	MBT-PT has evidence on child and parent/interparental outcomes from a single, small-scale, mixed-methods RCT conducted in the UK. The conclusions that can be reached from the RCT about the intervention's impact are limited given the small sample size (30 parents).	Hertzmann, L., Target, M., Hewison, D., Casey, P., Fearon, P., & Lassri, D. (2016). Mentalization-based therapy for parents in entrenched conflict: A random allocation feasibility study. Psychotherapy (Chicago, Ill.), *53(4)*, 388–401. **https://doi.org/10.1037/pst0000092**
Separated Parent Information Programme (SPIP) plus	This is a targeted-selective intervention designed to help parents who, the court believes, can reach their own agreement about their children but may benefit from additional help. It includes four elements or stages: • A four-hour group programme, where former couples attend different groups, that aims to help parents clarify what their children need most from them, and to help them learn how to manage conflict and difficulties between themselves and their ex-partners. • An online programme featuring filmed scripted scenes 'Getting it Right for the Children' is used to aid the learner in developing insight into why certain behaviours are ineffective and others are effective, both in terms of how the behaviours effect their children and how they enable them to reach their goals. • A scripted 'Plus' session attended by both parents together to attempt to implement any progress together. • A mediation information and assessment meeting (or MIAM) where the parent could then proceed to mediation to negotiate an agreement, make their own arrangements, or return to court.	SPIP plus has evidence on child and parent/interparental outcomes from a single, post-intervention pilot study conducted in the UK. The conclusions that can be reached from the study about the intervention's impact are limited given the use of data from post-intervention only, and the use of inappropriate (not valid and reliable) outcome measures. As yet, the evaluation evidence for the programme's effectiveness is limited.	Trinder, E., Bryson, C., Coleman, L., Houlston, C., Purdon, S., Reibstein, J., Smith, L., Stoilova, M. (2014). Evaluation of the Separated Parent Information Programme (SPIP Plus) Pilot. Department for Education and Cafcass. **https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/103374/3/spip__report_final.pdf**