

**A collaborative, practical and  
effective approach to supporting  
parents in separation and divorce**

**Insights from the Mid-West FRC  
Parenting When Separated Project**

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# Background



## THE BEGINNING...

In July 2019, Northside Family Resource Centre (NFRC), Limerick Court Service, and the Family Mediation Service piloted a project to support parents experiencing separation.

## THE COLLAB...

The 9 Family Resource Centres in the Mid-West Region collaborated to create the Mid-West FRC Parenting When Separated Project in response to growing demand with the support of Parents Plus.

## NOW...

The project now boasts 15 Parenting When Separated Facilitators, a Regional Steering Group, and a part-time family support worker whose key duties include managing referrals, conducting assessments, recruiting participants, and developing the project.





# About the



## PARENTING WHEN SEPERATED

The programme consists of 7 group work sessions, with one session facilitated by the Family Mediation Service.

- Objectives for parents:

- Solve co-parenting problems positively, focusing on children's needs.
- Cope with the emotional impact of separation and learn stress management techniques.
- Help children cope both emotionally and practically with the separation.
- Enhance communication with their children and their children's other parent.
- Signpost parents to additional supports.

- Delivered **online**, supporting high participation and retention rates.





the project

# project objectives

In addition to supporting parents on their separation journey the project's objective is to:

- Establish relationships with each of the stakeholders who work directly with parents going through separation namely, Court Services, Family Mediation Services and Community and Voluntary Agencies.
- Create meaningful referral pathways
- **Acquaint parents with alternative options other than Court to agree parenting plans.**
- **Before parents attend Court/Mediation support them to orient towards the welfare of their children rather than the conflict between each other**
- Collate and analyse data that will inform future roll-out of parenting when separated that meets the needs of all stakeholders.



# Inward Referral

## Pathways

- Referrals are consistent year-round.
- There is a healthy variance and programme buy-in from both statutory and non-statutory agencies namely Courts, Probation Services, TUSLA, CAMHS, Family Resource Centres, and others.
- The Court Services remain the largest referrer- impact on parental attitudes.
- A notable trend of mothers self-referring or finding alternative pathways while fathers attend at the request of the Court.

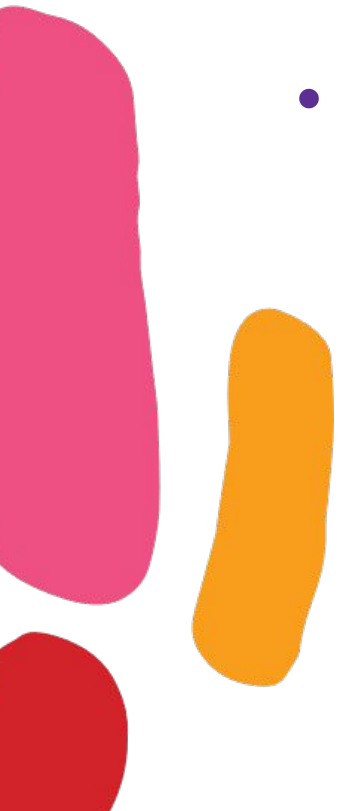




# Referral System



- All parents receive a minimum of 5 one-to-one sessions with a Family Support Worker in addition to 7 weekly group sessions.
- Sessions include initial engagement, pre-assessment, goal setting, midway check-in, and post-assessment.
- Post referrals are made to the parents' closest FRC or other agencies for further supports, such as family support, therapy, or advocacy.







# Participation and Outcomes

Since inception 521 referrals have been received by Northside FRC. Data collection began in 2022 (breakdown available in Table 1).

Year	Referrals	Court	Agency	Self	FRC
2022	102	46	22	12	22
2023	90	29	29	19	13
2024 (Q1&Q2)	59	21	23	13	2
Totals	251	96	74	44	37

# Referrals to Support Services

**Table 3**

Support Services	(N)
Psychotherapy	23
Children's Therapy	27
Family Support	37
Other Agency Support	36
Legal Supports	18
Tech Support	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>147</b>

## OUTWARD REFERRALS

Collaboration with 9 FRCs ensures ease of referrals across the region.  
Since 2022, 147 individual referrals made to various supports (Table 3).

# Impact

- The success is largely dependent on the role of the PWS Family Support Worker.
- On average, a 80% programme completion rate (2022/2023), with many returning to complete later if initially unable.
- Significant indirect impact on 260 children through their parents' participation.





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# Review of the Role of Expert Reports in the Family Law Process

## KEY RECOMMENDATION

Review of the Role of Expert Reports in the Family Law Process

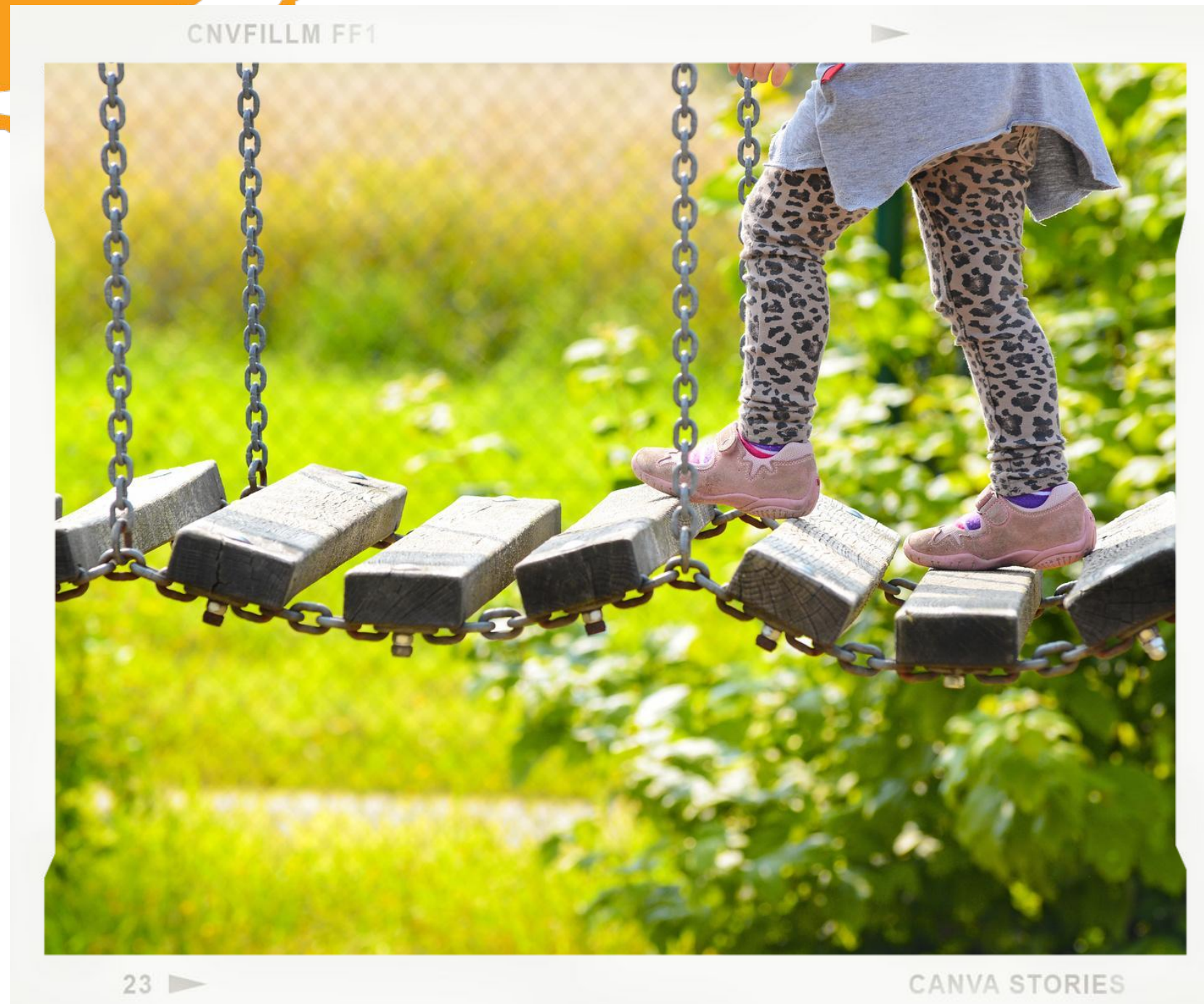
*“Explore the possibility of introducing mandatory parenting when separated courses for those who file family law proceedings”*



# What next?

## FUNDING AND SUSTAINABILITY

- The project should be developed as an action under the Family Justice Strategy 2022-2025 & Tusla's Parenting Support Strategy 2022-2027.
- Wider roll out of the tested and successful model developed by the Midwest FRC Forum, coordinated by Northside FRC and supported by Parents Plus.
- Current funding secured until June 2025 through philanthropic funds. Need for core funding to ensure the project's future.





# Questions?

