



Planning Together for Children

Briefing

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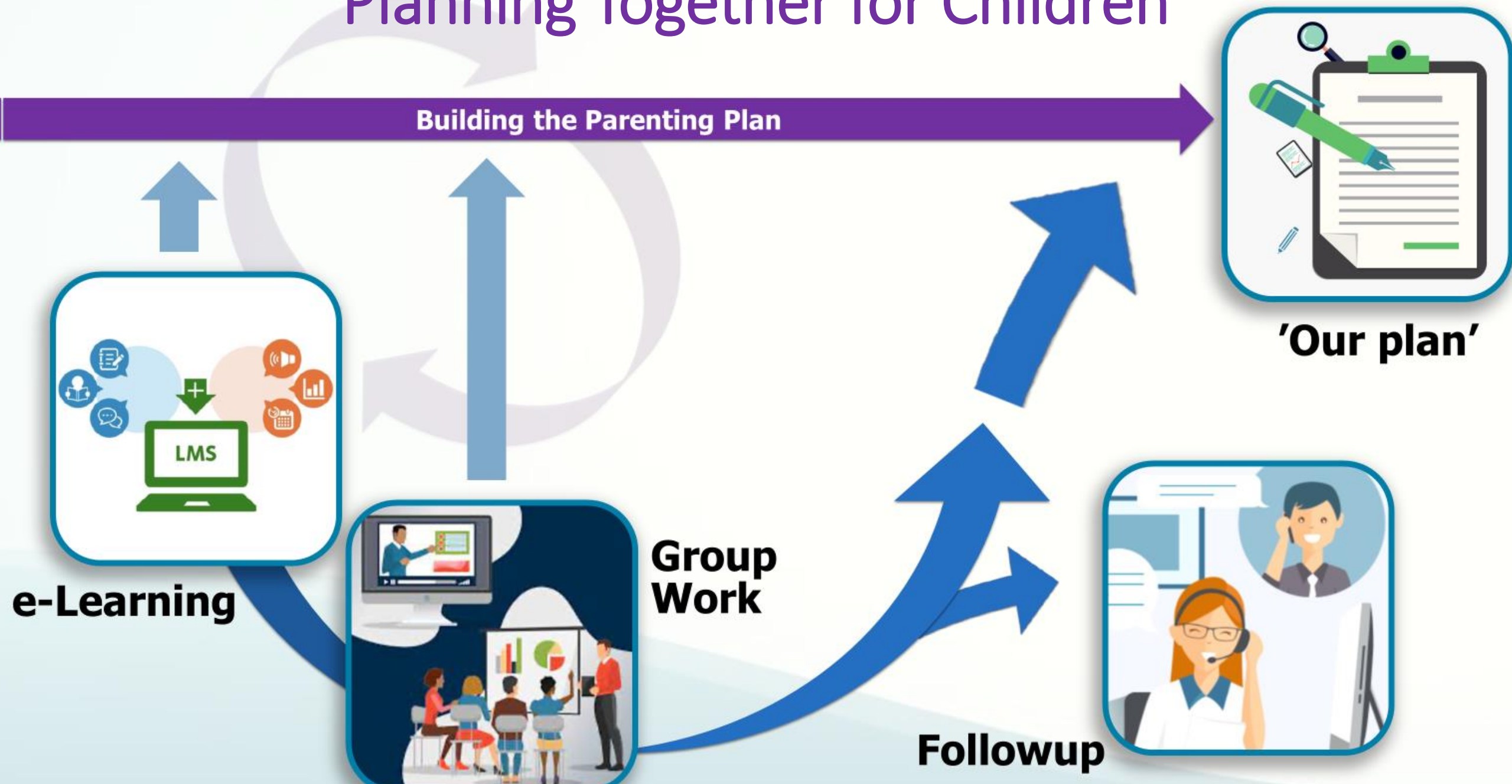
Cafcass

25 July 2023

What has happened?

The Separated Parents Information Programme (SPIP) has been replaced by **Planning Together for Children**, as of 1 April 2023.

Planning Together for Children





Putting children and young people first in the family courts

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Planning Together for Children

Planning Together for Children is a course which promotes cooperative parenting. It supports parents to think about the needs of their children first when they are working out how they can parent together when they are separating and/or they are living apart.

It encourages parents to do their best to work together to think about how they can communicate and work together to agree parenting arrangements without the need for more court hearings. The aim is to protect children against some of the

Related Content:



Planning Together for Children
factsheet



Parenting Plan

A parenting plan is a written agreement worked out between co-parents that covers the practical issues of parenting. Co-parents are those who share the duties of bringing up children, especially those who are separated or not in a relationship.

A parenting plan can help because it clearly shows what arrangements and actions you have agreed to meet the needs of your children. This can sometimes mean that you can avoid having to go to court to reach such agreement. It can help you to think about what is in the best interests of your children and to put the needs of your children first.






The many benefits of making a parenting plan together include:

- helping everyone involved know what is expected of them
- creating a clear agreement to refer back to, and
- setting out practical decisions about your children, such as living arrangements, education and health care.

If you do go to court in the future, it is very likely that judges will expect you to have started a parenting plan.

The [parenting plan should be completed online](#). It works by one parent starting a plan and making some suggestions before sending their proposal to their co-parent. This process can continue until you reach agreement over some, most, or all areas. The parenting plan can be downloaded and shared with other people including your children, a mediator, a Cafcass Family Court Adviser or the court itself.

Related Content:

-  [Online Parenting Plan](#)
-  [Parenting Plan \(Word version\)](#)
-  [Resolution](#)
-  [Listening to your child's voice after separation](#)
-  [Find A Mediator](#)



Planning Together for Children

Planning Together for Children is a course that supports parents to think about the needs of their children first when they are working out how they can parent together, as they are separating and/or they are living apart. It supports parents to think carefully about what is in the children's best interests and to do their best to work together to protect children against some of the harmful effects of parental conflict.

- Planning Together for Children encourages parents to think about how they can communicate and work together to agree parenting arrangements without the need for more court hearings.
- The course helps parents, or those who care for children, to understand how disagreements and arguments can affect children.

When is Planning Together for Children a good idea?

- When parents are not together and want the best for their children.
- When parents find it difficult to focus on their children's needs because of ongoing difficulties in their relationship with one another.
- When feelings and reactions to separation are affecting the parents' ability to communicate about their children because they are under stress.
- When the court and/or Cafcass have no current safeguarding concerns about children or parents.
- When mediation is considered an option to make the best arrangements for the children.

What does Planning Together for Children involve?

There are three stages to Planning Together for Children.

- The first stage is for parents to complete an e-learning course online and in their own time (taking up to two hours). The self-directed e-learning focuses on topics such as what happens if parents go to court, understanding and managing emotion, how separation affects children, and looking at things from a child's point of view.
- Once complete, parents must take part in a workshop with other parents for more learning and discussion. These workshops are usually delivered online but can be in person if needed. They cover topics such as understanding the impact of conflict on children, how separation affects children, and communicating in positive ways with each other.
- Finally, the course introduces parents to an interactive online parenting plan. The plan encourages agreement over sharing the care and support of children. Parents are encouraged to share the plan in a way that is understandable to the children. For some parents, there may also be a follow-up phone call from a trainer up to six weeks after the workshop; this is to see how things are working out.



Planning Together for Children links to:

- An interactive parenting plan, which allows parents to make agreements over important aspects of their parenting relationship with each other, and how they can best support their children together.
- The [Parenting Together](#) web pages, which give parents and families access to a range of information and educational programmes to help families understand the needs of children when parents separate, and the impact of conflict on them.

How is Planning Together for Children delivered?

- [Action for Children](#) coordinates the arrangements for Planning Together for Children on behalf of Cafcass. Action for Children works with different partner organisations across the country to offer Planning Together for Children directly to parents.
- Action for Children, or one of its partners, will contact parents to support them through the process.
- The group workshops are offered to mixed groups of parents in a two-and-a-half-hour session. There will be up to six parents in any one workshop.
- Parents will not attend the same group as the other parent of their children.
- Parents must complete the e-learning before participating in the group workshop.
- Children are not permitted to attend.

Please note – information that parents share during the course is confidential unless there are any concerns about the safety of a child or an adult, in which case the trainer will contact the parents concerned to share next steps.

How do parents take part in Planning Together for Children?

- Parents may be ordered, or directed, to complete Planning Together for Children by a family court.
- A Family Court Adviser may also refer parents to complete Planning Together for Children before the first hearing in court, or afterwards.

What happens when a Planning Together for Children referral is made?

- When a parent is referred to Planning Together for Children, they will receive an email asking them to create an account in the Planning Together for Children 'Parent Hub'. This is where parents can make a start on their e-learning.
- Action for Children, or one of its partners, will also contact the parent, welcoming them to Planning Together for Children and giving them the chance to book onto a group workshop.
- Within the Planning Together for Children 'Parent Hub' there is also a link to the parenting plan which parents can start to use whenever they are ready.

Do families have to pay for Planning Together for Children?

- There is no cost to those who are referred by Cafcass or directed by the court to complete Planning Together for Children.
- Parents cannot refer themselves to the Planning Together for Children course.

How is progress through the course recorded?

- The Planning Together for Children 'Parent Hub' will record what learning has been completed and when. The Family Court Adviser and court will be notified if parents are unable to complete the course, so they can consider next steps.

How is a referral made?

- a) Upon recommendation by a Family Court Adviser
or
- b) Following a court order

Who can be referred?

Planning Together for Children is for parents and adults with caring responsibilities in Private Law family court proceedings.

Note: there is no privately funded option at the moment



Planning Together for Children

Parent Hub

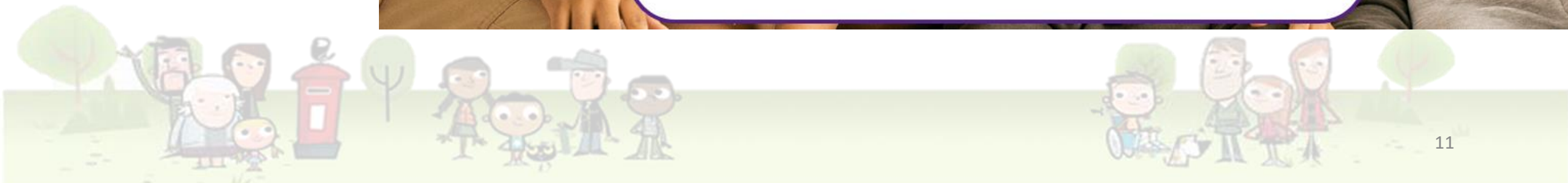
Welcome to Planning Together for Children, a resource for parents and carers to help them focus on putting children first when making arrangements to share parenting responsibilities.

You can access our **online Parenting Plan** by setting up an account below. This allows you to set out a plan with your co-parent over arrangements such as schooling and living arrangements when parents and carers don't live together or following a separation. It is available free-of-charge and designed so you can agree a plan with your co-parent online.

If you are in family court proceedings and have been ordered or recommended to complete a Planning Together for Children course, please use the login details provided and complete your registration. Once registered, you can start straight away by working through the e-learning section. Action for Children (our training partner) or one of their approved partners, will be in touch shortly with more guidance and information on how to complete the various stages of the course. You can also find more information about the course and what you need to do by visiting our [website](#).

[Login](#)[I don't have an account](#)

Self- directed e-learning



Survey:
Tell us how you have
found the e-learning

**Welcome and
introduction**

Survey:
Tell us how you
are feeling before
you start

8. What am I going to
do next?

7. Tips to help me remember
how to listen, talk and
communicate in the future

6. How can I listen and
communicate better to help
my child

5. What can I and my
co-parent do
differently to support
our children?

Survey:
Tell us how your
learning is going

4. Putting myself in
my child's shoes

1. What happens if I
go to court?

2. Understanding and
managing emotions and
feelings better

3. How does the way
we handle our
separation affect my
child/children?



**Planning Together
for Children**



Section 1

Separation and the negative impact of parental conflict on children

Group workshop



Section 2

How to best manage conflict and improve communication for child-centred parenting; looking at a parenting plan; and next steps.

So far (19 July) across England...

Planning Together for Children



Number of Referrals

7,734

eLearning Completed

4,430

Group Sessions Attended

2,995

Completions

Participants to complete e-learning module within 14 calendar days of the referral being made



69.6%

Participants referred to have completed the facilitated group work session by calendar day 35



74.8%

Survey Responses

Participants report having a clearer understanding of the impact of family conflict on children at the end of the facilitated group session



89.3%

Participants report that they will take action to place the child at the centre of all communications and agreements



97.5%

Participants state 'high satisfaction' with the programme and support offered at the end of the facilitated group session



86.1%

- 1,441 referrals (18.6%) were recommended by FCAs
- A10 had 258 referrals of which 12 (4.7%) were recommended by FCAs)
- 3599 viewed/started parenting plan
- 349 learners completed a parenting plan



Parenting plan

A Parenting Plan sets out a shared commitment to your children and their future.

The plan gives you and your co-parent an opportunity to reach agreement over the many practical issues of parenting.

(Co-parents are those who share the duties of bringing up a child or children)

When using the plan you must try and put the best interests of your child (or children) above everything else.

This is a free service but you will need to be registered to use it. Click one of the links below to get started.

Login

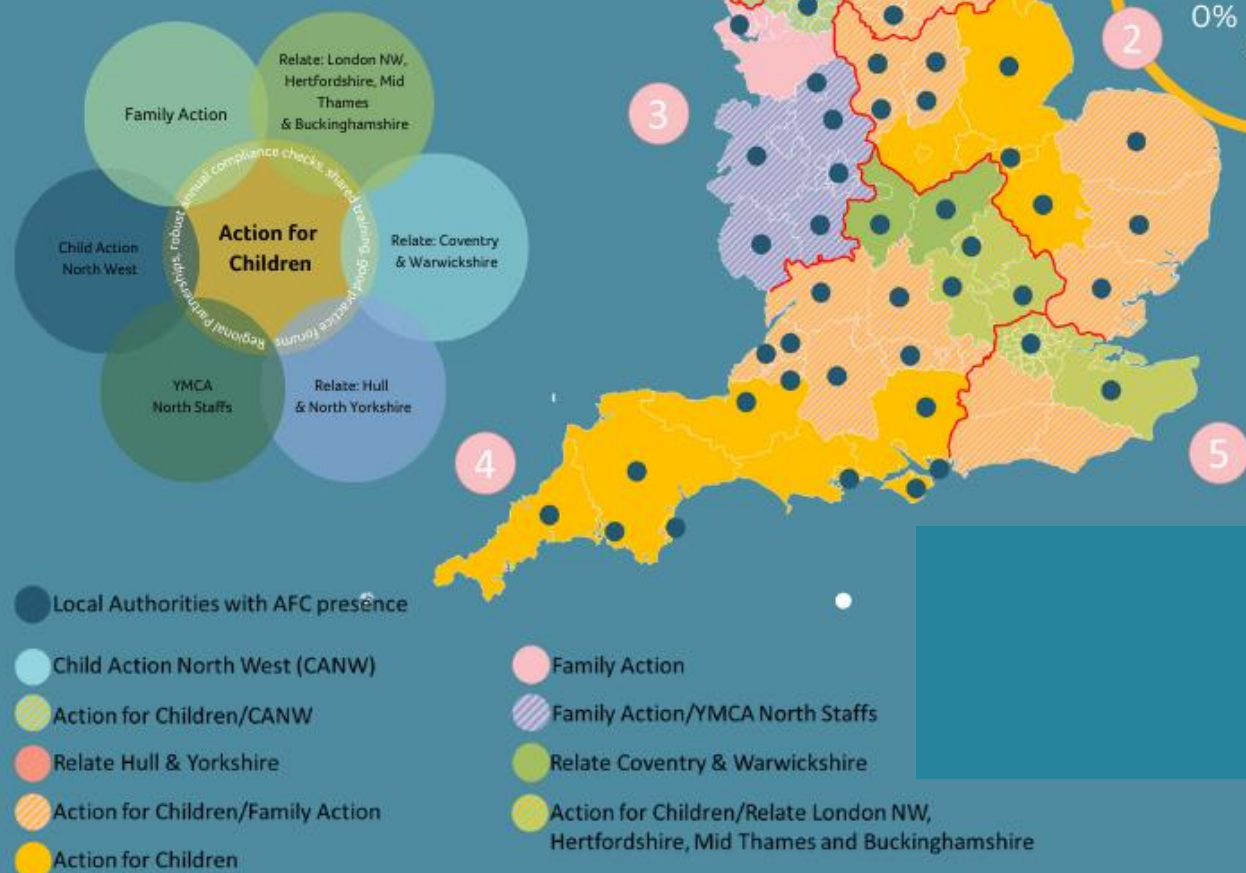
[Create an account](#)

Important to note: Parenting Plan

- The parenting plan is **not** a mandatory part of the course.
- It should not be completed if there are ongoing safeguarding concerns or risks of domestic abuse.
- Ideally, if it is appropriate to complete a plan this should come at the **end of the learning** journey – the trainer will advise and support this in the group workshop.
- It could be completed as part of an ICFA intervention – if appropriate.

Five lot areas, aligned with ICFA boundaries

- Strength of the partnership working



Delivery of the course

- Led by Action for Children and its delivery partners.
- Five delivery areas.