



**Anna Freud**  
National Centre for  
Children and Families

**Reflective Parenting Group**  
Information for parents

[annafreud.org](http://annafreud.org)



## Introduction

The Reflective Parenting Group offers a highly collaborative approach for parents in order to promote family relationships, sensitive parenting and reduce the number of conflicts, bringing about behavioural changes and greater harmony.

The core thread of the group is to promote mentalizing in parents (i.e. the ability of a parent to understand the thoughts, feelings and needs of both themselves and their children).

There is extensive evidence about the importance of understanding the intentions behind your child's behaviour, and also getting a greater sense of your own mind (mentalizing) in human relationships and its relationship to attachment (for review, see: Fonagy & Bateman, 2016; Fonagy & Luyten, 2009; Fonagy, Luyten, & Strathearn, 2011). Research also suggests that understanding the thoughts, feelings and intentions behind your child's behaviour and your own reaction (mentalizing) can act as a buffer against difficult behaviour.

## Group-based work with parents

Reflective Parenting group work is an 8-week manualised group. The topics and themes that the groups cover are:

### **1. What is Reflective Parenting? Why is it helpful?**

Research background, outcomes related to Reflective Parenting and making the approach meaningful to your parenting.

### **2. How the state of mind of a parent affects parenting**

Thoughts, feelings, beliefs, past history, the impact of emotion. A tool called the Parent Map is used to help parents reflect on their own minds; for example, what triggers strong emotion and how their mind influences their relationship with their children.

### **3. Thinking about what goes on in children's minds**

Promoting different perspectives and ways to understand the

meaning behind behaviour. It helps parents take a developmental perspective (e.g. what behaviour is common and to be expected), and helps parents examine their own assumptions about their child's intentions.

#### **4. Keeping Reflective Parenting going**

This theme helps parents to look at what influences children to cooperate and examines different ways of disciplining children. Its aim is to promote the idea that empathic parenting and ways of holding a child's perspective in mind reduces the chances of coercive parenting approaches, which can be destructive and lead to an escalation of behaviour. The group approach takes parents' own examples.

#### **5. Taking a Reflective Parenting approach to the future**

How to maintain a Reflective Parenting stance in times of difficulty and when disciplining your child in order to maintain a connection and sense of security in the relationship, as well as holding an authority as parents.

### **Expected benefits to the group**

Parents can expect to develop a better understanding of their child's emotions and behaviours, whilst increasing the connection both they and their children feel towards each other. The programme helps parents to connect with their child's inner world, helping them feel understood and of value. It also helps to deescalate difficult situations and reduces behavioural and emotional outbursts.

### **Fees**

The group runs weekly on Monday evenings for 8 weeks and is free for parents across the UK. We ask that parents commit to attending for the whole 8 weeks, where possible.





# Anna Freud

## National Centre for Children and Families

### How to find out more

For further information including the timings of the groups, our fees, or for referral information, please contact [referrals@annafreud.org](mailto:referrals@annafreud.org), or speak to Reception on 020 7794 2313.

### Other languages and formats

If you would like this leaflet in a different language or format, please ask at reception or contact us at:

Email: [Referrals@annafreud.org](mailto:Referrals@annafreud.org)

Telephone: 020 7794 2313

### How to find us

Buses:

● No. 17, 45, 46, 63, 259

● No. 205, 214, 30, 476, 73

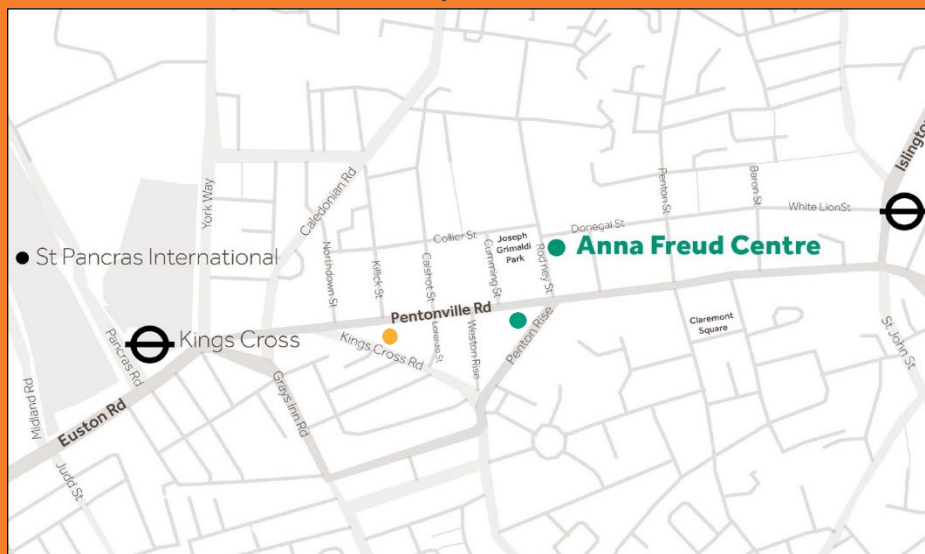
Underground:

Kings Cross – Circle, Piccadilly,  
Hammersmith & City, Northern,  
Metropolitan, Victoria and National Rail  
Angel - Northern Line

Overground:

Caledonian Road & Barnsbury

**Address:** Anna Freud Centre, 4-8 Rodney Street, London, N1 9JH



[annafreud.org](http://annafreud.org)

Our Patron: Her Royal Highness The Princess of Wales

Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families is a company limited by guarantee, company number 03819888, and a registered charity, number 1077106.