Sorting Out Separation Web App

Analysis of Management Information

Date: 13th March, 2014

Summary

The Sorting out Separation Web app is one of the key tools available to provide support on a range of issues following a break-up. The Web app acts as an online information and support hub for separating couples with and without children; those contemplating separation; and their friends or family. Its main objective is to co-ordinate existing support services in order to better support separated parents. It helps couples prioritise their needs and signposts them to relevant expert help.

It is designed to be flexible - embedded, linked to, or found directly at www.sortingoutseparation.org.uk and easily distributable, provide signposting and information.

The data presented in this publication covers Web app statistics for December 2012 to end of January 2014. It is collected by Lightmaker on behalf of the Child Maintenance Group in the Department for Work and Pensions.

Since the Web app's launch it has attracted 143,833 visitors of which 91,469 were unique. 10,872 have gone beyond the home page and out of these 9,132 have been signposted to external organisations to get support (702 per month). Research[1] commissioned by Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) recommended a homepage redesign which was delivered at end November, 2013. DWP are continually looking at ways to improve engagement and closely monitor the statistics.

Overall visitor numbers went up from 8,345 in December 2013 to 12,359 in January 2014. However we saw no increase in engagement, that is to say those customers that go beyond the homepage. The research report published alongside this report, entitled "Sorting out Separation Web app: evaluation of effectiveness", recommended improvements to the homepage which were aimed towards driving engagement. These improvements were completed at the end of November 2013. The above increase in visitor numbers may be due to the improvements on the homepage, but could also be because there may have been an increase in couples considering separation or divorce following the Christmas holiday period. A more definitive view will be possible when further statistics are available in order to look at trends.

The main way that people access the Web app is either by 3rd parties embedding the Web app onto a web page on their sites or from 3rd parties inserting web links on their websites that link directly to the Web app "hub" on sortingoutseparation.org.uk. The top 5 referring websites provide 40% of all visits. During periods when promotions and campaigns run, there is a marked increase in visits.

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[1] Sorting Out Separation Web app: evaluation of effectiveness, DWP Research Report 863, Connors and Thomas

1. Chapter 1 - Sorting Out Separation Web app – background, aims and objectives

1.1 Introduction

This paper provides information about the number of visitors and the level of engagement of the Web app, which was launched in December 2012. The data presented here is collected on a daily basis from Google Analytics and reported on monthly by Lightmaker on behalf of Child Maintenance Group.

1.2 Background

The 2012 Child Maintenance Command Paper – 'Supporting separated families; securing children's futures'[2], sets out the Government's vision for the new child maintenance landscape where collaborative family-based arrangements between separated parents should be the main focus. Government policy is to encourage separated parents to make their own, family-based arrangements wherever possible and to be able to access the support they need to achieve that.

In order to support parents to make their own effective arrangements the Government wants to see better co-ordinated services for separated and separating families across Great Britain. It also recognises the voluntary and community sector is key to helping provide this support to separating families. In addition, people need to be aware what help is available outside the statutory service. An expert Steering Group, including academics and voluntary sector representatives, was established to provide recommendations on how to better co-ordinate support services for separated and separating parents and to ensure that they have access to the right information to help them stay actively involved in their children's lives.

 The Government announced up to £14 million to develop this support under a programme of initiatives called "Help and Support for Separated Families". This is designed to better coordinate expert support services to help parents work together to achieve what's best for their children. The Web app is part of the 'Help and Support for Separated Families' programme. It has been developed by DWP, MOJ, DfE and the devolved administrations, together with the private, voluntary and community sector, based on the recommendations from the expert Steering Group.

The Web app acts as an online information and support hub for separating parents, those contemplating separation and their friends or family with support, to help couples prioritise their needs and to be signposted to relevant expert help.

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[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/176902/strengthening-families.pdf.pdf

1.3 The aims of the Web app application are to provide an application that:

- ❖ Can be embedded into any website by the host, so that family support services are accessible from sites users trust (particularly important for disadvantaged groups who may be hard to reach).

- ❖ Is easily distributable – to reach the widest possible audience quickly.

- ❖ Provides self diagnosis for parents to help identify the type of support they need during a difficult period.

- ❖ Provides highly relevant content and tools to ensure parents have the information they need.

- ❖ Provides intelligent sign posting to the most relevant organisations for parents.

1.4 Key Objectives of the Web app are that:

1. Through effective distribution, diagnosis, intelligent signposting and delivery of the communications plan the Web application will attract the target volumes of users and service providers and drive traffic to key support services.

2. Through engagement and positioning, the Web application will support an increase in dialogue and discussion around co-parenting responsibilities.

3. The Web app should appeal to the target audience, reflect brand values, engage users and be seen by users as valuable to them;

4. Once the Web application has been developed, it will be easily transferable so can be passed to a new host (3rd sector or Commercial partner) who will be responsible for all ongoing development, maintenance and hosting.

This paper will look at the objectives 1 to 3 in section 1.4 above and consider the extent to which these are being met.

The aims in section 1.3 above and objective 4 in section 1.4 above are beyond the scope of this paper.

2. Chapter 2 - Visitors and Target Audience

Objective: Through effective distribution, diagnosis, intelligent signposting and delivery of the communications plan the Web application will attract the target volumes of users and service providers and drive traffic to key support services.

There are 2.5m separated families in the United Kingdom (UK) [3] - these include parents, stepparents and siblings. The Web app was set up to cater for the needs of these separated families as well as the needs of extended family members involved in decisions around separation and parenting, such as grandparents.

As of January 2014 a year and month after its launch, the Web app had attracted 143,833 visitors of which 91,469 were unique. Visitor numbers went up from 8,345 in December 2013 to 12,359 in January 2014. Research (The "Sorting out Separation Web app: evaluation of effectiveness") recommended an improvement to the homepage, which was completed at the end of November 2013. The above increase in visitor numbers may be due to the improvements on the homepage, but could also be because there may have been an increase in couples considering separation or divorce following the Christmas holiday period. A more definitive view will be possible when further statistics are available in order to look at trends.

 When looking at monthly volumes, the highest volumes of visitors were recorded in January 2013(16,993) and June 2013(14,909). The high volumes in these 2 months are a direct reflection of promotions. In January 2013 the Web app was still in the period just after launch where there was more interest in the press and more initial free promotion from partners and stakeholders. Again, there was a 3 month paid for online media campaign on the Good to Know website and using Facebook Advertising from April to June 2013. The monthly volumes after that have been consistent at just about 6,000 unique visitors per month on average.

The table below shows the total and unique number of visitors to the Web app.

- ❖ "Total visitors" is defined as all visits to www.sortingoutseparation.org.uk or any webpage hosting an embedded version of the Web app. This includes multiple visits from the same person.
- ❖ "Unique Visitors" is the total number of people who have visited www.sortingoutseparation.org.uk or any webpage hosting an embedded version of the Web app. It does not include multiple visits from the same person

[3] *Punton-Li, et al., (2012) Separated families and child maintenance arrangements Great Britain 2011, DWP.*

## Table 1: Total and Unique Visitors to the Web app
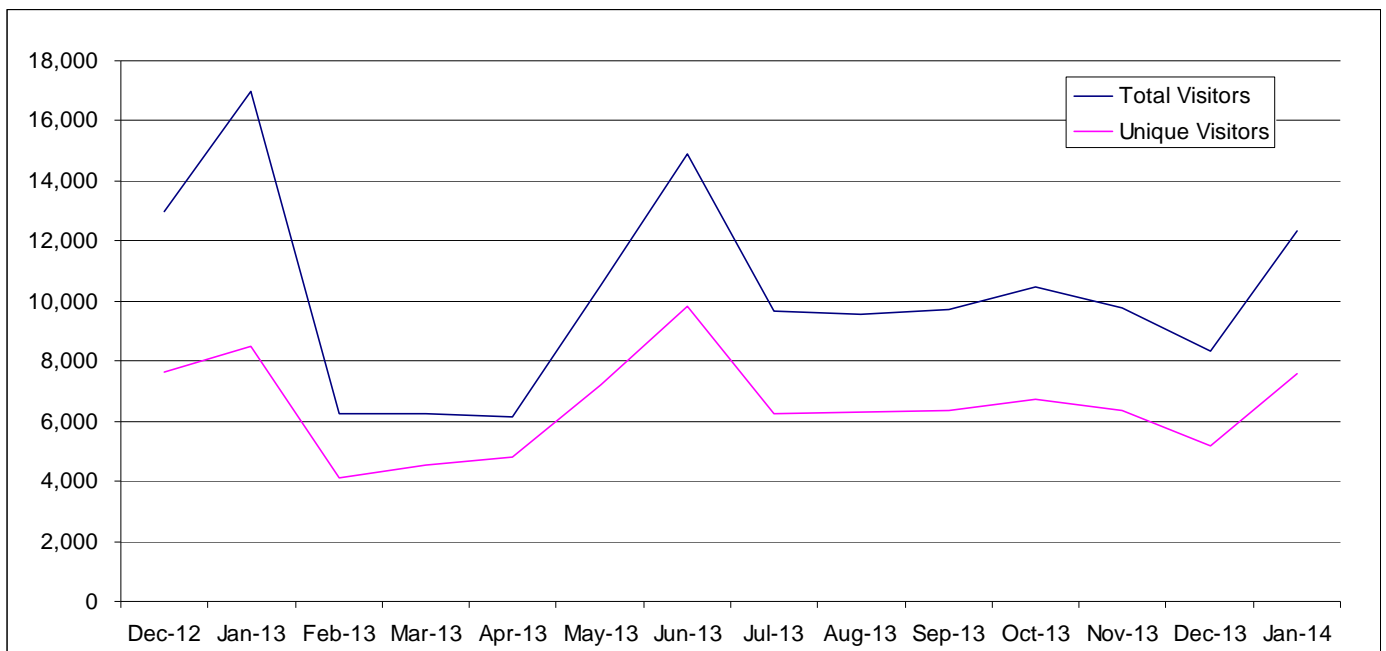
2.1 The Audience being attracted - Demographics:

There is an optional section in the Web app for people to answer questions about themselves. Of the 3228 customers who answered, 49% of those that answer the questions are mothers, 29% are fathers, 8% children, 3% grandparent and 11% have no children. (Note this data has only been available since April 2013).

The research report published alongside this report, entitled "Sorting Out Separation Web app: evaluation of effectiveness" indicated that males users of the Web app *"were particularly keen on anonymity and felt they would be able to use on-line support much more easily than discussing their situation in a face-to-face situation".*

Table 2: Audience Role
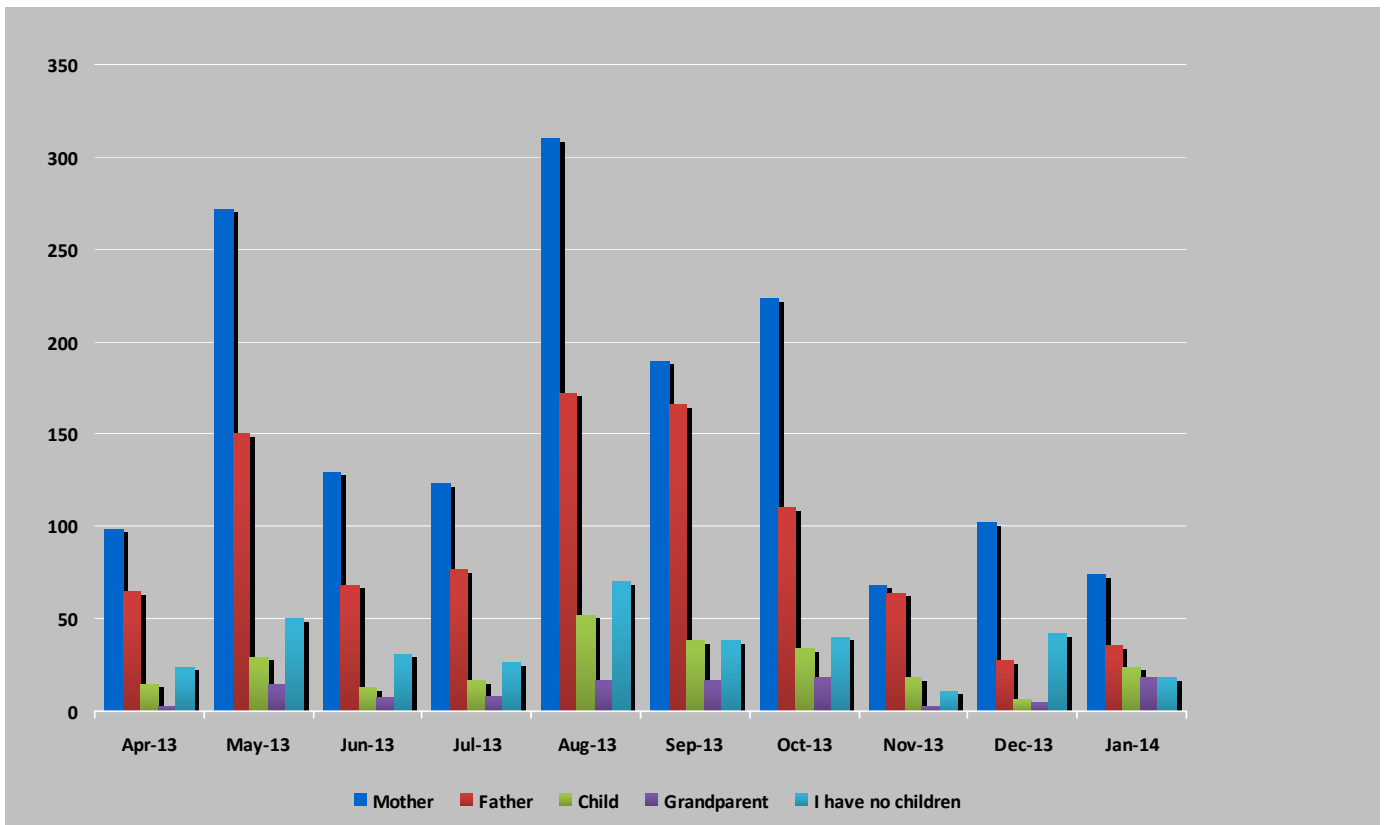
2.2 The Audience being attracted – Emotional and Separation Status:

To ensure customers are being signposted correctly, some of the questions ask about emotional status. 42% said they were struggling emotionally, 32% said they were coping well most of the time, 20% said they were fine and 5% said they had suicidal thoughts, as shown in the graph below. These figures show the importance of correct, accurate signposting due to the sensitive and vulnerable nature of the target group *(Based on 2,115 respondents).*

The Web app aims to cater to the needs of separated couples – both with and without children in decisions around separation. To do this the aim is to attract the audience at differing stages of the separation process. The figures gathered from 1,975 people showed 40% were recently separated at the time of visiting the app, 30% not yet separated, 21% separated for some time and 8% never together.
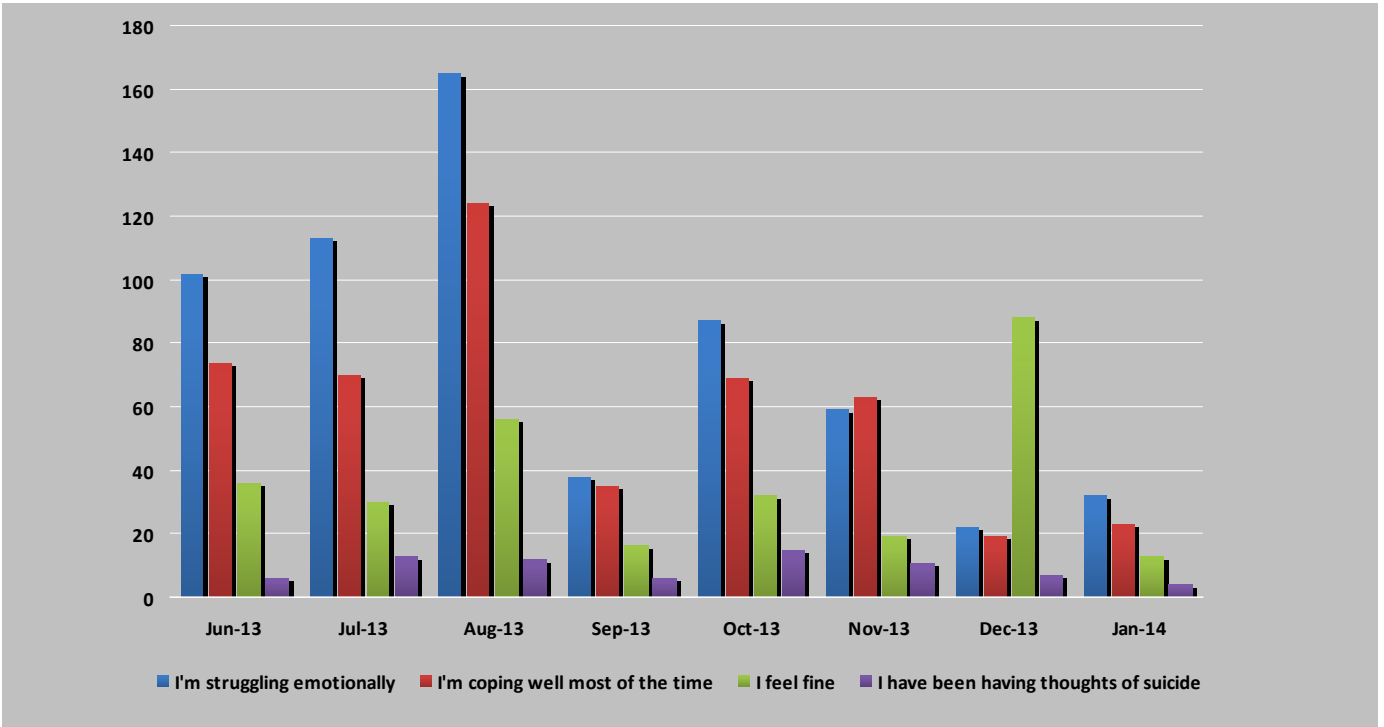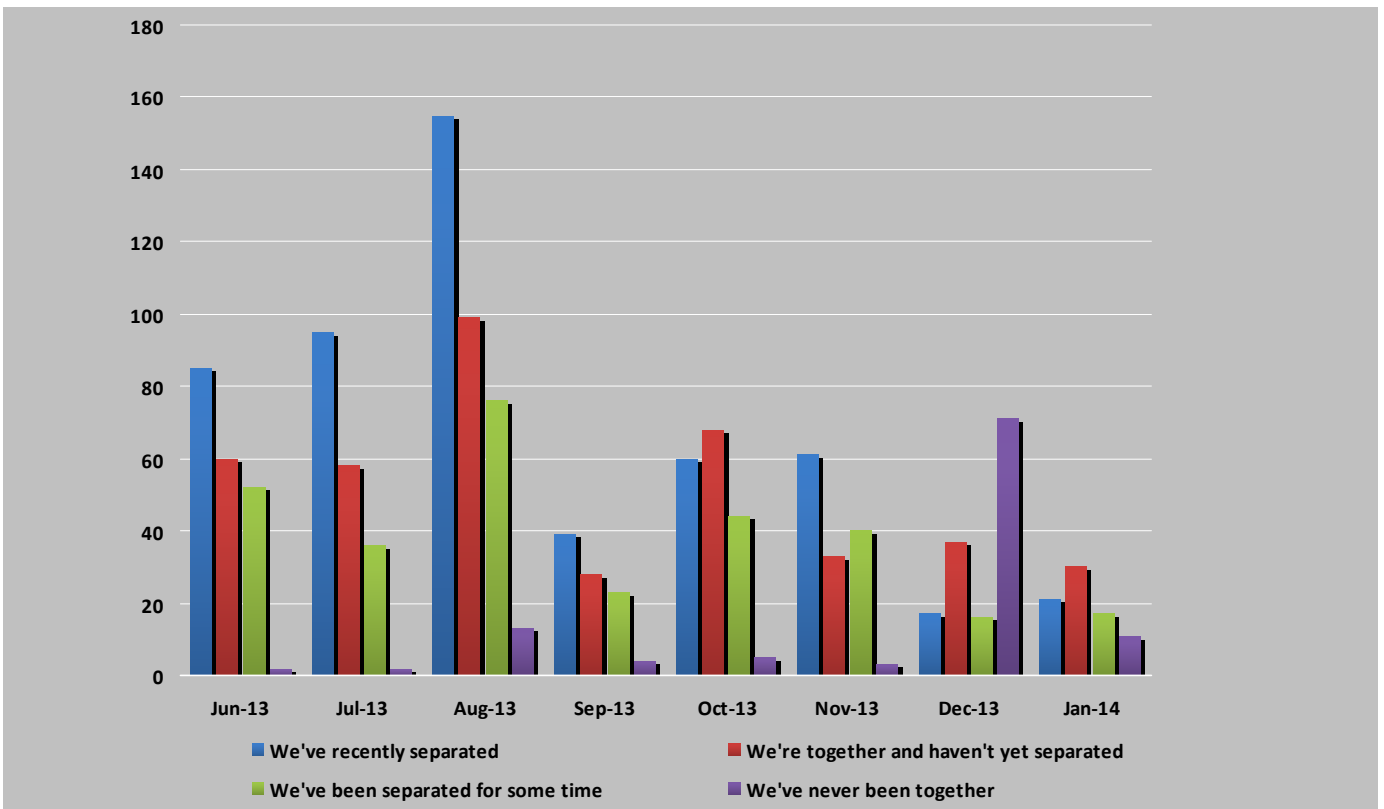
Table 3: Emotional Status

Legend: ■ I'm struggling emotionally ■ I'm coping well most of the time ■ I feel fine ■ I have been having thoughts of suicide

Months: Jun-13, Jul-13, Aug-13, Sep-13, Oct-13, Nov-13, Dec-13, Jan-14

Table 4: Separation Status

Legend: ■ We've recently separated ■ We're together and haven't yet separated ■ We've been separated for some time ■ We've never been together

Months: Jun-13, Jul-13, Aug-13, Sep-13, Oct-13, Nov-13, Dec-13, Jan-14

3. Chapter 3 Engagement

Objective: Through engagement and positioning, the Web application will support an increase in dialogue and discussion around co-parenting responsibilities.

Objective: Providing intelligent sign posting to the most relevant organisations for parents.

Once a member of the target audience visits the Web app homepage, the main aim is to engage them, and through diagnosis and intelligent signposting, drive traffic to key support services. Engagement is where customers go beyond the homepage. The overall engagement of unique visitors stands at 13%. The highest engagement was in April 2013 which marks the start of the promotion trials. The general industry standard for good conversion rates depends on such factors as contents being browsed and what is being measured and can vary between 2% and15%.Though visitor numbers went up in January 2014 (see Chapter 2) engagement did not increase.

Table 5: Visitor's Engagement and Conversion
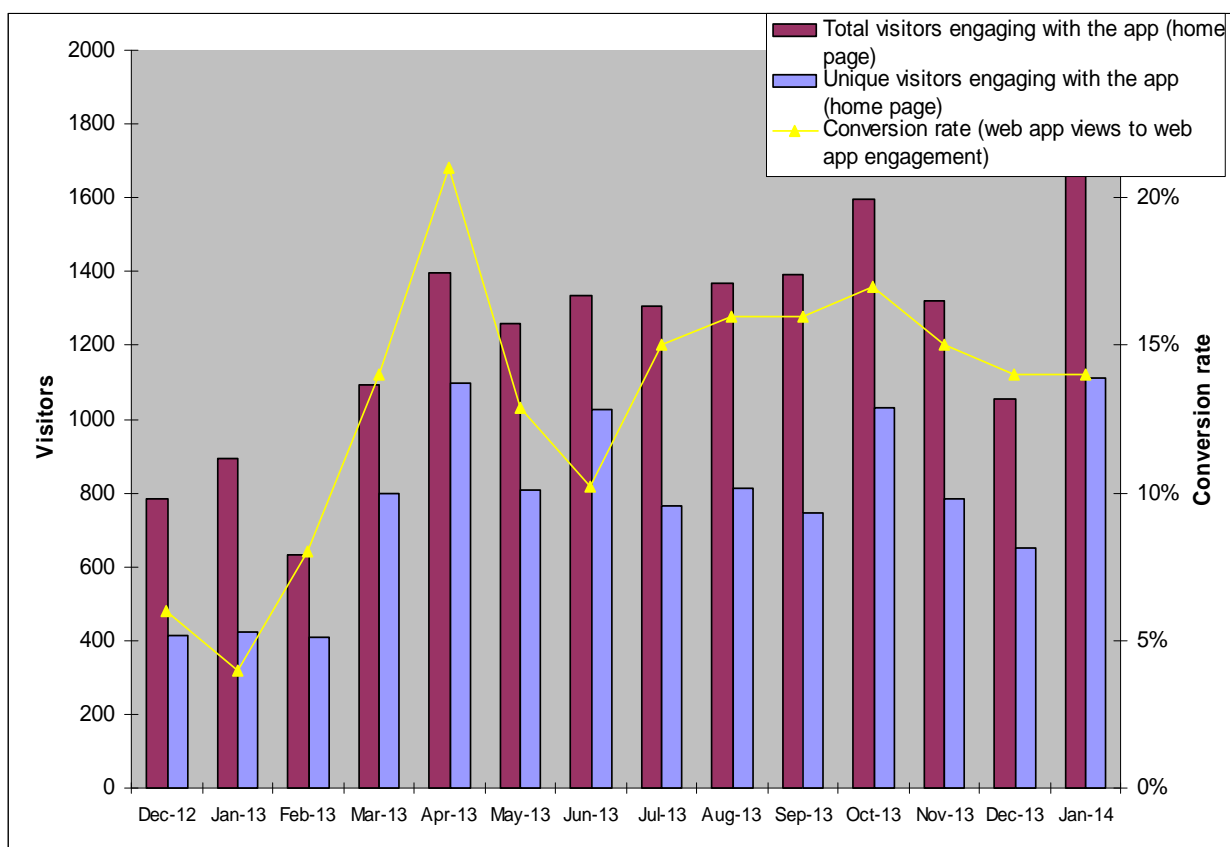
3.1 Source of Traffic – Embedded Apps

The Web application functions as an 'online hub' providing information and support to couples (even if they don't have children) who separate or divorce.

One of the aims of the Web app is to be an application that can be embedded into any website by the host, so that family support services are accessible from sites users trust. To ensure that this aim is being met, the services through which customers visit the Web app are monitored. The Web app relies on attracting service providers (3rd sector voluntary and community groups e.g. mediators, debt advisors etc) and brand and stakeholder partners agreeing to host and promote the service.

Over 50 different websites have embedded the Web app into their websites since launch. The table below shows those which have attracted the most visits since June 2013. The top 5 websites provide 40% of all the visits on the Web app.

Table 6: Embedded Apps Visits

Source	June	July	August	Septembe	October	November	December	January	Total
Bounty	1,672	1,239	1,001	928	1,114	1,436	1,382	1,970	10,742
CMOptions	967	900	829	902	1,011	917	633	767	6,926
Dad info	245	289	288	213	301	271	570	271	2,448
Relate UK	174	263	189	259	237	188	222	229	1,761
Family Lives		151	106	292	262	228	121	191	1,351
fnf	72	65	43	58	66	66	71	82	523
Wikivorce	65	59	42	26		34		37	263
Parent connectio	62	64	67	55	48	58	44	47	445

Bounty is dissimilar to the other websites because although it provides the most visits it had zero engagement (meaning the audience hardly go beyond the homepage). There could be a variety of reasons for this, one being the audience for Bounty; who are mothers to be or new mothers who are the least likely to be thinking about separation or not looking to engage around the subject of separation at that time.

CM Options is by far outperforming other Web app installations, in terms of both conversion rate and unique visitors. This is because CM Options is a Child Maintenance Group website and the Web app is promoted extensively and effectively across the website to a much greater degree than other hosting websites. High engagement with the Web app may also be because separation issues are highly relevant to this audience.

Family Lives, a new addition to the top five, relaunched their website in summer 2013 and promoted the Web app very extensively in their redesign, leading to them becoming a top referral source.

3.2 Source of Traffic - Linked Apps

Apart from embedding the Web app onto their website, third parties can also place links to the Web app on their sites. As of January 2014 there were over 400 links to the Web app from a wide variety of websites. This table shows the top sites that have links and the visits they provide.

There is a good mix of third parties to ensure the Web app reaches a broad range of audiences, including the hard to reach.

Table 7: Linked Apps Visits

Referral Site	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January
relate.org.uk	500	471	512	517	533	572	503	422	681
cafcass.gov.uk	-	52	170	180	245	330	332	241	382
t.co (Twitter)	54	115	164	182	204	326	56	33	33
legal-aid-checker.jus	249	-	296	292	264	245	217	147	281
4children.org.uk	15	46	32	36	44	72	51	22	35
foundationyears.org.	16	14	9	-	22	36	19	7	11
my.bounty.com	18	27	22	15	12	25	12	11	12
mankind.org.uk	46	30	23	21	27	24	21	27	24
advicenow.org.uk	9	25	33	21	24	20	10	14	30
hmctsformfinder.justi	-	-	7	14	-	17	11	11	12
advert.bounty.com	-	-	-	-	12	16	20	-	-
goodtoknow.co.uk	-	-	-	11	10	13	-	-	-
justice.gov.uk	-	30	24	26	14	12	37	27	24
legalaidcalculator.jus	9	7	11	8	7	10	10	10	-
womenscentre.org	-	-	-	-	-	9	-	-	-
nyas.net	12	12	7	-	11	8	9	10	-
netmums.com	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	16	29
staffsmediation.co.uk	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	7	11
careforthefamily.org.	-	-	-	-	7	6	-	-	-
nickymorgan.org	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-
workingwithmen.org	-	-	-	11	-	6	7	-	-
chesterfieldfamilylaw	-	-	-	-	6	5	-	-	-

Engagement levels are very inconsistent between the top 5: Relate, Cafcass, Twitter and Legal Aid, and the others. Relate has the highest volume of visits; it has both an embedded Web app and links out to www.sortingoutseparation.org.uk.

Cafcass and Twitter have had a strong growth – with Cafcass contributing less than 60 in June 2013, then contributing over 300 in January 2014. This is as a result of Cafcass repositioning the link on their website when they redesigned their page. Twitter's figures shot up as a result of a campaign that was run in June that reached out to high profile customers and celebrities to promote the Web app. The campaign finished in October and may be rerun if ministerial approval is obtained.

3.3 Embedded vs. Linked Apps

The Web app is designed so it can be embedded into any website by the host so that family support services are accessible from sites users trust. The tables below show the volumes and conversion rates for Direct, Embedded and Linked Apps.

Table 8: Embedded and Linked Apps Visits

|	Feb-13	Mar-13	Apr-13	May-13	Jun-13	Jul-13	Aug-13	Sep-13	Oct-13	Nov-13	Dec-13	TTD
Embedded app visitors	9,544	7,858	4,740	6,149	4,685	4,257	3,132	3,066	3,067	4,419	3,809	54,726
Embedded app engagement	115	281	356	136	117	134	163	212	167	89	71	1,841
Link Referral visitors	11,732	2,791	3,656	2,867	5,444	2,932	3,212	3,527	3,775	2,669	1,335	43,940
Link referral engagement	186	321	360	257	293	257	254	275	321	237	101	2,862
Direct Visitors	865	896	2,041	2,287	4,006	1,097	1,368	1,718	1,329	1,246	625	17,478
Direct Visitor engagement	99	157	243	210	258	206	189	177	190	155	62	1,946

Table 9:Conversion Rate by App
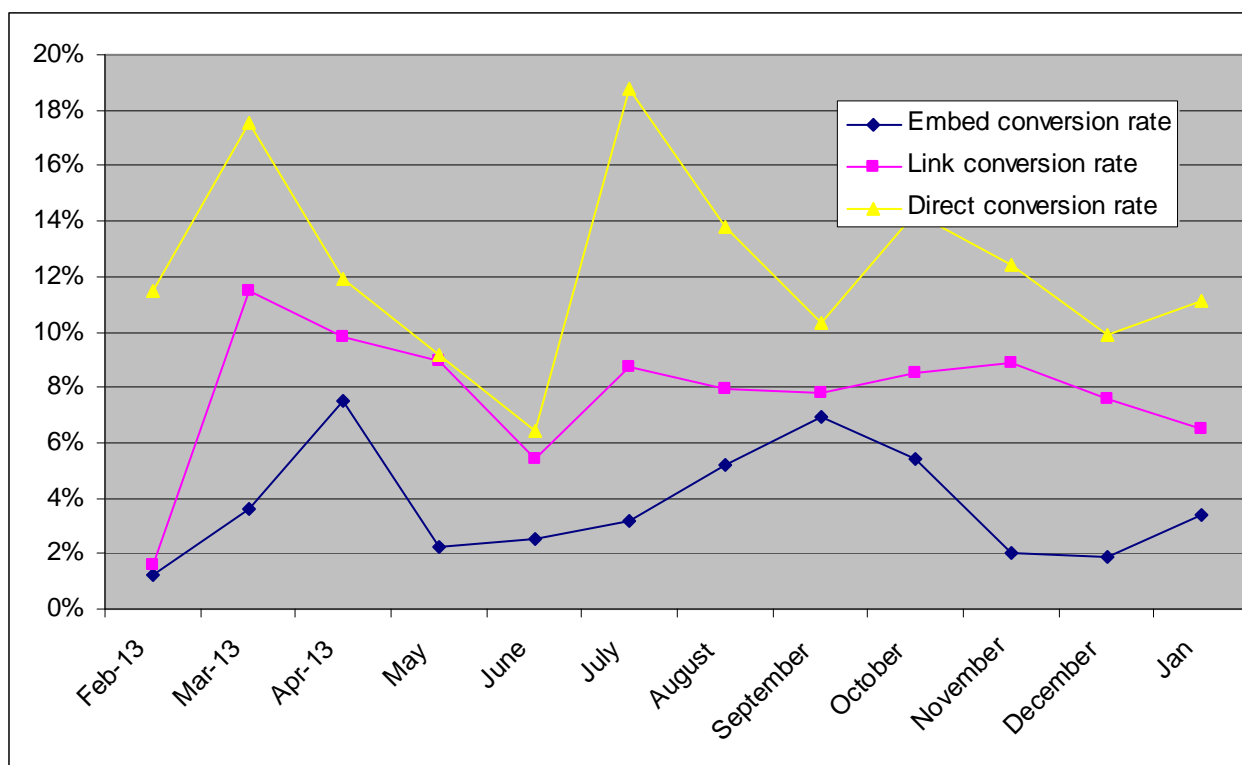
- The conversion rate graph above shows that embedded apps have the lowest conversion rates. This is backed by the research findings where respondents said when they saw the app embedded in other websites they were not sure about the source and didn't know if it could be trusted.

- Direct referrals that took visitors to the Web apps own destination at www.sortingoutseparation.org.uk have the highest conversion rates for engagement.

3.4 Source of Traffic - Video Plays

This graph below shows the performance of the video clips. The Sorting out Separation video clip is by far the most watched, whilst the others have lower viewing figures that are quite similar to each other. The research report "Sorting out Separation Web app: evaluation of effectiveness" highlighted that the video plays on the website were particularly valued by teenage parents and individuals with literacy issues or more visual learning styles (though some people thought they were unrealistic).

Table 10:Video Performance
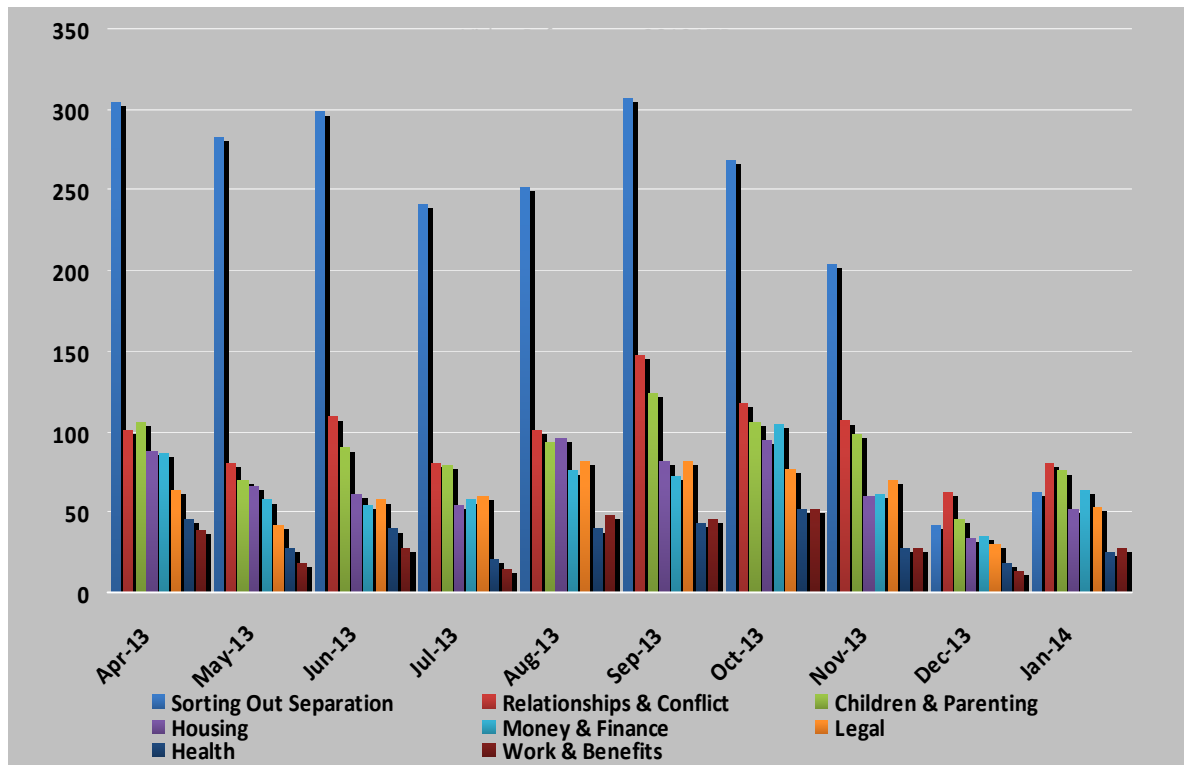

3.5 Signposting

One of the main aims of the Web app is to co-ordinate existing support services in order to better support separated parents and enable people to navigate more easily to the most relevant support to meet their needs. Since its launch in December 2012, 10,872 people who have progressed beyond the home page have accessed 10,000 external links to organisations offering family support services. This suggests that the most engaged users go on to find sources of support as a result of using the web app.

The Web app covers a variety of issues which customers can access. The links available cover these topics:

 ❖ Children & Parenting,
 ❖ Health
 ❖ Housing
 ❖ Legal
 ❖ Money
 ❖ Relationships
 ❖ Work and Benefits

Almost a third of users who used external links browsed for information on Children and Parenting, 14% for Relationship and Conflict accounted 10% for Housing.

The table below shows those users who clicked an external links as a result of using the app and the visits per page.
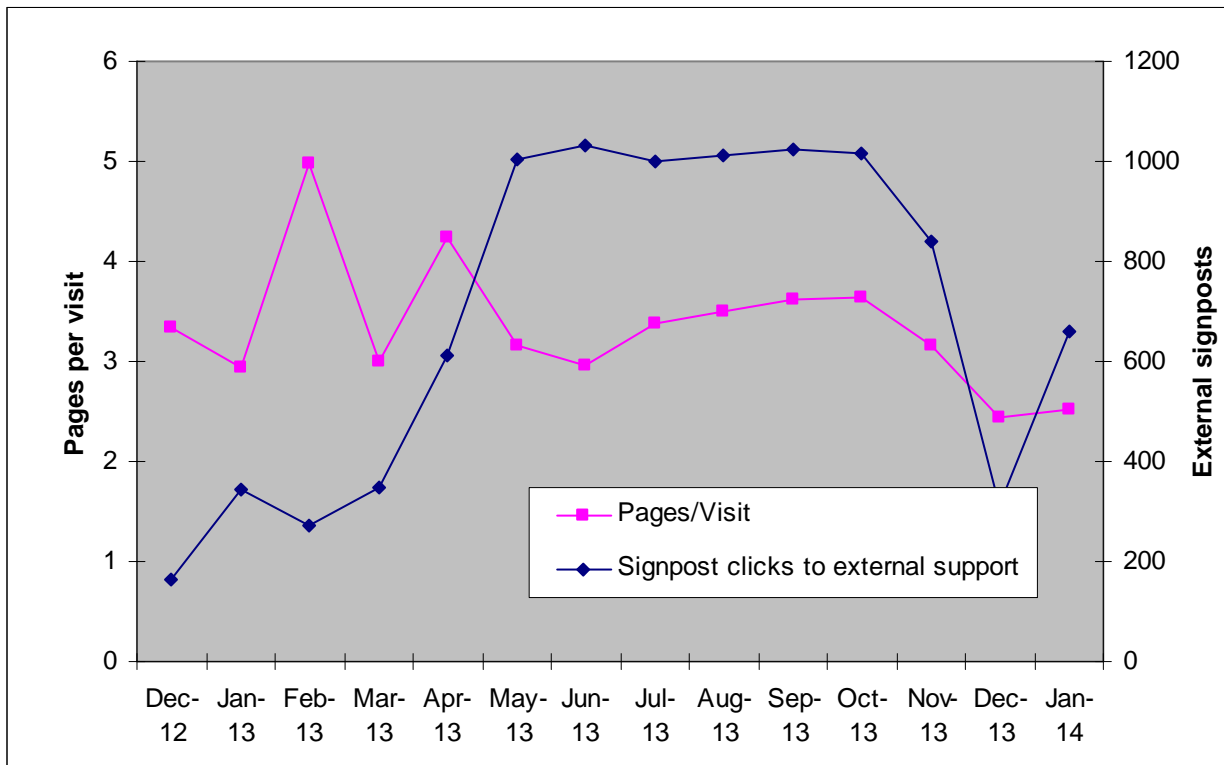
There has been an increase in how people engage with the external links peaking during the campaign periods of June13 – October 13.