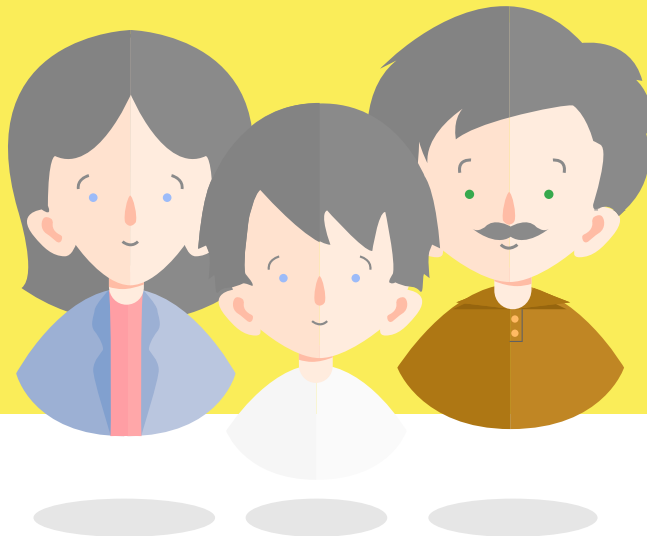


CREATING A LOCAL FAMILY OFFER

LESSONS FROM LOCAL AUTHORITY PIONEERS



THIS GUIDE IS PART OF THE RESOURCE PACK
FOR CREATING A LOCAL FAMILY OFFER

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Between 2015 and 2017, 12 local authorities across the UK were involved in the DWP funded Local Family Offer (LFO) programme. The programme gave them access to expert support from Innovation Unit and OnePlusOne, as well as funding to develop a Local Family Offer focused on improving the quality of inter-parental relationships (IPR) with a view to improving outcomes for children.

The Local Family Offer Resource Pack was created to gather and share the learning that the 12 LFO pilot sites have generated throughout their innovation journeys, as they developed local systems of support to improve inter-parental relationships.

To find out more about the Resource Pack and access the other learning products click [here](#).

Analysing the experience of the LFO pilots, this guide draws out learning on the key components that make up a Local Family Offer. It offers examples from the emergent practice and shares tools and tips developed by the LFO sites.

THE THREE KEY COMPONENTS OF A LOCAL FAMILY OFFER

3 DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

4 The challenge

5 Things you can do

8 The **changes** you can expect to see & how to **measure** them

10 Key learning on developing the workforce

12 Case Studies

An incremental approach to training the workforce in Gateshead

A locality focused approach to training in Essex

Dorset's Relationship Support Navigator

How supervisors can talk to practitioners about IPR - Blackpool, Croydon and Westminster

Responding to the demand for advanced practitioner training in Hertfordshire

Practitioner toolkits in Blackpool, Gateshead and Hertfordshire

Croydon's Parenting and Relationship Hub

Evaluating the impact of workforce development in Westminster

25 DEVELOPING A PATHWAY FOR RELATIONSHIP SUPPORT SERVICES

26 The challenge

27 Things you can do

31 The **changes** you can expect to see & how to **measure** them

34 Key learning on developing the system a pathway for relationship support services

36 Case Studies

Supporting resilient relationships through online resources

Integrating a relationship component into existing parenting provision in Luton

Drop in sessions for parents in schools in Dorset

Parents as Partners Programme: strengthening co-parental relationships and supporting father involvement

A targeted intervention for young parents in conflictual and abusive relationships in Lambeth

A fast track to counselling services in Newcastle

Flexing and adapting delivery to better meet need in Newcastle

Adapting services to respond to emergent learning in Dorset

Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Luton

Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Newcastle

Evaluating the Parents as Partners programme in Manchester

52 CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES

53 The challenge

54 Things you can do

58 The **changes** you can expect to see & how to **measure** them

59 Key learning on developing the system and processes

61 Case Studies

Leading change from the top: Newcastle

Making assessment focus on relationships in Blackburn

A system approach to prevention: the role for relationships in Croydon's offer for families at risk of financial instability

Changing culture and practice: measuring the impact of Hertfordshire's Relationship Ambassadors

Leading change from the bottom up: Hertfordshires' Ambassadors

Using data to inform strategy and delivery in Dorset and Croydon.

Relationships at the heart of a whole system approach in Dorset

Tracking the use of couple relationship questions in the Early Help Assessment in Blackpool

75 WHAT NEXT

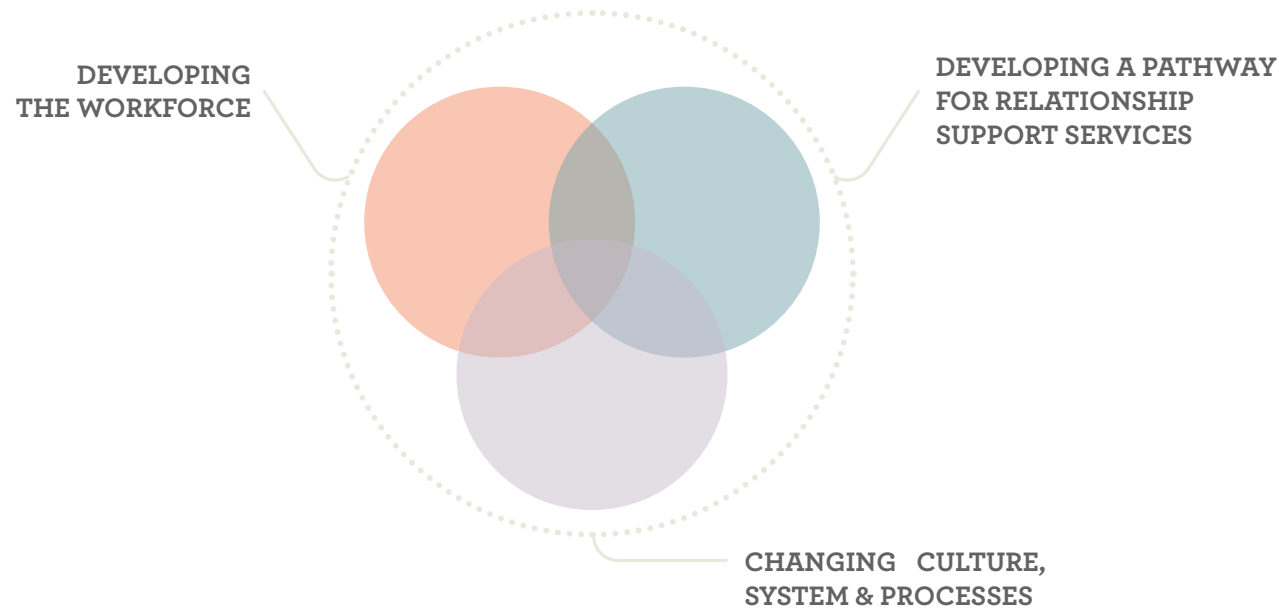
76 LFO PILOTS THEORIES OF CHANGE

89 APPENDIX

90 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE THREE KEY COMPONENTS OF A LOCAL FAMILY OFFER

After analysing the innovation journeys charted by the 12 pilot local authorities over the last two years, we identified three key components that lie at the heart of developing a Local Family Offer. These three components are interdependent and need to be developed and applied simultaneously. Learning from the LFO pilot sites indicates that progress will be limited unless there is a focus on all three.



DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

At the heart of every pilot LFO strategy was ensuring that frontline practitioners are able and confident to: engage with families around the sensitive issue of relationships; offer support where possible; and make effective referrals when necessary. Indeed, a level of awareness, knowledge and confidence around the relationships agenda across the system is the precondition and platform for creating a sustainable offer.

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY FOR RELATIONSHIP SUPPORT SERVICES

Alongside equipping practitioners to identify need, it is necessary to develop the right offer of support to meet this need. This means developing a range of options, from universal early intervention to more specialist intensive therapeutic services*.

*The [Early Intervention Foundation review of what works to enhance parental relationships](#) outlines a number of evidence based interventions. It is a useful starting point for service development.

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES

The third component is a reorientation of the system and processes to focus on inter-parental relationships as a key determinant of outcomes for children. This is not just a matter of processes, of course. What it requires is a culture shift towards recognising that the quality of couple and co-parental relationships has a fundamental impact across the provision of services, not just for children, but also for adults and families.

LFO localities that have developed the most radical and comprehensive offers are the ones that were able to develop traction and support for the relationship agenda among system leaders and frontline practitioners and developed their offer in a cross service partnership. By doing so, they embedded the relationships agenda into their core strategy, making it key to delivering their outcomes. They are developing processes - from performance indicators to supervision to outcome measurement tools and cost benefit analyses - that will ensure that the quality of couple and co-parental relationships is a focal point of the assessment of family health and wellbeing for practitioners across services.

This guide illustrates how the 12 LFO pilots have engaged with these three strands of work to develop their Local Family Offers and what they have learnt along the way. In the [Appendix](#) you will find some practical resources that localities have produced, from evaluation questionnaires, to job descriptions, to practitioner tools.



[BACK TO INDEX](#)

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE



[BACK TO INDEX](#)

THE CHALLENGE

Being able to identify the signs of relationship difficulties and provide early support to prevent conflict between parents can make a positive difference not only to children's outcomes, but also to the health and wellbeing of adults and families.

But all too often practitioners feel inhibited and ill equipped to explore couple and co-parental relationships as a subject with parents. They therefore rarely ask the questions that would help spot issues before they escalate.

“A multidisciplinary focus group of practitioners in Blackpool undertook an appreciative enquiry exercise to explore what each service could do to support the inter-parental relationship and what would help practitioners to do this.

Practitioners agreed that the couple/co-parenting relationship is important and yet it is not something they regularly explore as part of assessments or interventions. They also said that the reluctance to address the topic of inter-parental relationships was due to confidence and an implicit need to get ‘permission’ to address a topic that feels personal and ‘sensitive’.”

- Sara McCartan, Children's Centre Partnership Officer, Blackpool Council

They may also feel that they don't know where to direct parents to for help.

“There are many interventions out there for families and people are not always clear about what is available, for example sometimes they won't understand the difference between mediation and counselling. So, as part of the LFO programme, we have invested in explaining clearly the service offer to practitioners.”

- Ruth Fennemore, Development Manager,
Family Support, Hertfordshire County Council

DEVELOPING
THE WORKFORCE

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

DEVELOPING A
PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE,
SYSTEM & PROCESSES



[BACK TO INDEX](#)

THINGS YOU CAN DO:

Workforce Development

Enabling the workforce to recognise the signs of relationship distress, engage in conversations with parents and respond effectively is a fundamental element to developing a Local Family Offer. Most of the pilot LFO sites engaged in workforce development to provide the platform on which to develop their service offer.

“Our workforce is our most critical resource. Improving their knowledge, skills and confidence must underpin any other intervention we provide”

- Hertfordshire LFO strategy document

Introductory training, such as Brief Encounters® or Think Couple, was offered to raise awareness of the impact of inter-parental conflict on outcomes for children and to enable practitioners to:

- Recognise signs of relationship distress in families;
- Respond effectively using listening skills and appropriate techniques;
- Offer relationship support to those who turn to them for help and know when to refer to specialist services.

Some localities provided more **advanced training** for practitioners who were already working in greater depth with families. For example, Gateshead commissioned a bespoke ‘Couple Conflict’ course for a small group of more specialist

practitioners, over half of whom work in specialist domestic violence and abuse services.

“When staff received the training it resonated with them immediately. They were saying that they’d known the couple relationship was important for years. The programme gave staff the opportunity to engage with dads and talk to both partners rather than focusing just on the mum. The workforce have always seen the value of talking about the couple relationship but now they have been given the tools and knowledge to do that; to make changes in how they work. This was not just another training session.”

- Gavin Bradshaw, Team manager, Family Intervention Team, Gateshead Council

Most of the LFO pilots explicitly recognised in their plans the importance of **training practitioners beyond the Early Help workforce** on the importance of good relationships between parents and co-parents.

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

The challenge

Things you can do

Workforce Development

Tools, Resources & Expert Support for Frontline Practitioners

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES



BACK TO INDEX

THINGS YOU CAN DO:

Workforce Development

This was born out of acknowledging two key facts:

- Relationship distress and conflict between parents has significant negative consequences both on child outcomes and on the health, wellbeing and resilience of families members.
- Lots of services, including housing, employment, GPs, schools and the police, come into daily contact with people who are at risk of or are experiencing relationship difficulties.

For example, Essex provided training to a network of professionals who engage daily with parents of children aged 0-5 in the Langdon Hills area of Basildon. This included all the staff within the local GP practice and representatives of midwifery, health visiting, a local early years childcare provider, the local Children's Centre, social care early intervention services and volunteers.

As well as providing training to their early years workforce, Croydon also trained frontline staff from Gateway, their single point of access for employment support and housing, budgeting and welfare rights advice.

"Research shows that economic stresses put a strain on couple relationships. Looking at our data we realised that the same people were coming into contact with the Council to deal with rent arrears, tax arrears and benefit queries. We

know that lots of parents in Croydon are on low wages and work back to back handing their children over in between.

We decided to provide training to frontline staff in Gateway team so that they can explore relationship issues with parents, signpost them to support and make referrals when appropriate."

- Dwynwen Stepien, Head of Early Intervention Support Service, Croydon Council

In parallel to the delivery of the Local Family Offer programme, DWP commissioned Tavistock Relationships to provide a package of training to support localities wanting to deliver 'Parents as Partners'. Some localities also looked again at the parenting provision they had in place and how they might strengthen the couple element by, for example, subscribing to the advanced programme of Incredible Years.

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

The challenge

Things you can do

Workforce Development

Tools, Resources & Expert Support for Frontline Practitioners

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES

RELATED CASE STUDIES

An incremental approach to training the workforce in Gateshead

Responding to the demand for advanced practitioner training in Hertfordshire

A locality focused approach to training in Essex



BACK TO INDEX

THINGS YOU CAN DO:

Tools, resources & expert support for frontline practitioners

As well as investing in training the workforce, some LFO localities identified the need to provide practical support to frontline practitioners as they engage in conversations with parents about relationships in their day to day practice.

“Through stakeholder engagement, we identified several barriers impacting the confidence of professionals in Hertfordshire to address relationship issues. Practitioners requested:

- *tools and resources to support their conversations with families*
- *a greater understanding of solutions and services available*
- *improved access to tailored and timely services.*

Feedback is clear that addressing any of these strengtheners in isolation will not be enough to affect outcomes for families - only in combination, will they provide practitioners with the methodology for intervening.”

- LFO Strategy, Hertfordshire

Gateshead and Hertfordshire, for example, compiled **local directories of services** aimed at practitioners and families to improve understanding and visibility of the local support offer.

Hertfordshire and Blackpool developed practitioner tools that include a **map of the pathway to support** for families

that are experiencing relationship difficulties and **conversation prompts** and reminders for practitioners engaging parents in conversations about their relationships.

Croydon and Dorset created new roles and functions designed to be the go-to resource for practitioners on **relationship support advice** and enable them to make links to the existing support offer.

Some localities have also introduced a specific focus on IPR as part of their **supervision**.

“We need to be realistic that workforce development is not only about ‘useful’ training. It is about incremental change, trial, peer review and supervision from managers that understand relational approaches. The Local Family Offer is therefore the start of a process as opposed to a funded short-term project or initiative.”

- Gavin Bradshaw, Team manager, Family Intervention Team, Gateshead Council

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

The challenge

Things you can do

Workforce Development

Tools, Resources & Expert Support for Frontline Practitioners

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES

RELATED CASE STUDIES

Practitioner toolkits in Blackpool, Gateshead and Hertfordshire

Dorset's Relationship Support Navigator

Croydon's Parenting and Relationship Hub

How supervisors can talk to practitioners about IPR - Blackpool, Croydon and Westminster



BACK TO INDEX

THE CHANGES YOU CAN EXPECT TO SEE AND HOW TO MEASURE THEM

Equipping the workforce to talk about inter-parental relationships, to respond effectively to relationship distress and to signpost to other services where necessary is likely to create changes in workforce practices. Over time, it will also create helpful changes in the families that receive support.

CHANGES YOU MIGHT EXPECT TO SEE

You would expect to see changes in practitioners' attitudes, beliefs, knowledge about relationships and in their interactions with clients following workforce development initiatives. For example, you might see:

- Greater awareness of the importance of the inter-parental relationship and its impact on child and family outcomes
- A workforce that feels more confident about talking about relationships and more knowledgeable about relationship dynamics
- More conversations with parents focussing on their relationships
- An increase in referrals where appropriate, although some practitioners may be helping parents with their relationship in the context of their own practice
- An increase in skills for dealing with relationship problems

Further down the line you can expect to see an impact on the families who have been identified as in need of support and taken up the offer. We look at them in the next chapter.

ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

It is usual to invite practitioners who have been involved in training to complete evaluation questionnaires - before a course, after a course and ideally a few months later - to see what difference it has made to their knowledge, confidence and skills in dealing with relationship problems among the families they work with. Getting a baseline measurement from before any training is therefore crucial. The questionnaires could be paper ones, completed there and then, or simple online questionnaires. You can look at the ones that are used to evaluate OnePlusOne's training in the [Appendix](#).

You can get deeper insight into what, if any, difference the training has made by asking practitioners to provide case studies, by running discussion groups with practitioners or interviewing some practitioners about their experiences. You can also make use of system level data, such as looking at referrals to other services or take-up of specialist services following a referral.

DEVELOPING
THE WORKFORCE

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

DEVELOPING A
PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE,
SYSTEM & PROCESSES

THE CHANGES YOU CAN EXPECT TO SEE AND HOW TO MEASURE CHANGE

That could also include adding a prompt for managers in case audit tools and questions about relationship assessment or intervention in supervision sessions.

GETTING ANOTHER ANGLE ON IT - TALKING TO FAMILIES

You can get another perspective from talking to the families that practitioners have been working with and seeing what they think about the new ways of working and if they have made a difference to them. You may also see, in the longer-term, a positive impact on children, but this will depend on your service and offer.

We talk more about measuring the impact on parents and children in the next section.

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES

RELATED CASE STUDY

Evaluating the impact of workforce development in Westminster

KEY LEARNING ON DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

TARGET THE TRAINING

Recruit practitioners who will have the opportunity, appetite and, ideally, support to apply the skills they learn.

DIFFERENT TRAINING FOR DIFFERENT PRACTITIONERS

Tailor the training offer: some people will need awareness raising and basic skills, others will want a more advanced level of training.

THINK BEYOND THE EARLY HELP WORKFORCE

Early help and children's services will be receptive to this way of working, but they are not the only ones you need to persuade. For the inter-parental relationships agenda to deliver on its preventive potential, other services - like health, housing or the police - need to be mindful of relationships as well.

THE TRAINING IS JUST THE BEGINNING

You need to keep supporting and encouraging practitioners to embed the relational focus into their 'business as usual'.

CREATE A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Some LFO localities have successfully developed a bottom-up cohort of leaders and champions for the relationship agenda. This creates not only momentum and focus but also opportunities for mutual support between practitioners.

BUILD FOCUS ON INTER-PARENTAL RELATIONSHIPS IN SUPERVISION

To support a shift in practice, make sure that conversations about relationships feature in supervision. This will support reflective practice and monitor emergent needs identified in families by practitioners.

GIVE STAFF PERMISSION TO DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY

Many practitioners feel that parents' relationships are a 'private' issue, which often does not feel within their remit to explore. Changing this perception may require giving staff explicit permission to do things differently, as well as building their skills and confidence to ask what may have so far been considered 'private' and 'sensitive' questions.

SUPPORT MANAGERS AS WELL

To help drive a shift in frontline practice managers need support as well, so they can help practitioners reflect on their practice and recognise any impact on the caseload and support needs.

"Don't assume it's happening. Keep working at it, keep the conversation going."

- Clare Burrell, Head of Commissioning for Vulnerable People, Essex County Council

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

DEVELOPING A
PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE,
SYSTEM & PROCESSES



[BACK TO INDEX](#)

KEY LEARNING ON DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

Helpful resources you can browse in the [Appendix](#):

- Hertfordshire 'Parents at War' course summary and learning outcomes
- Gateshead 'Working it out for the Kids' guide
- Hertfordshire's [Better Relationships, Better Parenting](#) practitioner toolkit
- Blackpool's practitioner toolkit
- Dorset's Relationships Navigator job description
- One Plus One's Brief Encounters® Training evaluation tools

DEVELOPING
THE WORKFORCE

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

DEVELOPING A
PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE,
SYSTEM & PROCESSES



[BACK TO INDEX](#)

CASE STUDY

An incremental approach to training the workforce in Gateshead

Gateshead describe their approach to workforce training as 'incremental'. They commissioned Tavistock Relationships to provide introductory training to the workforce and more specialist training to a group of specialist practitioners.

RAISING AWARENESS

Think Couple training was delivered to 57 practitioners from the family intervention team, health visiting, safeguarding & care planning, youth offending team, family group conference service, Children's Centres and the Positive Pathways team. The one-day relationship awareness raising training helps participants to develop their knowledge about family relationships, including conflict and attachment, and introduces them to ways of identifying and responding to relationship problems.

The majority of participants reported increased knowledge about relationship issues and greater confidence in working effectively with couples following the training. They were keen to look at how they could use the training in their everyday work with families. Practitioners were aware that their work tended to be focussed around mothers; they wanted to challenge this and become

more inclusive of fathers. Just over half of respondents were hoping to use what they had learnt in their teaching or supervisory practice, ensuring that they used their learning in supporting their staff. The majority of staff felt they would benefit from greater skills development to complement the knowledge base they had acquired.

COUPLE CONFLICT TRAINING

Training on 'Couple Conflict' was delivered to a small group of more specialist practitioners, over half of whom work in specialist domestic violence and abuse services. The course is designed to help practitioners to develop their capacity to think relationally about couple conflict, intimate partner violence and abuse. The course was deliberately designed to challenge practitioners to think about working differently with couples involved in domestic violence and abuse

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

An incremental approach to training the workforce in Gateshead

Responding to the demand for advanced practitioner training in Hertfordshire

A locality focused approach to training in Essex

Practitioner toolkits in Blackpool, Gateshead and Hertfordshire

Dorset's Relationship Support Navigator

Croydon's Parenting and Relationship Hub

How supervisors can talk to practitioners about IPR - Blackpool, Croydon and Westminster

Evaluating the impact of workforce development in Westminster

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES



BACK TO INDEX

CASE STUDY

and adopt more relational approaches where appropriate and safe. Gateshead report seeing a change in the culture of working with some of their higher need families. This has also generated greater debate among Local Authority leads and workforce about approaches to domestic violence.

“We see more practitioners working with couples not on the basis of how the practitioner wants things to be but on the basis of what the family wants, assessing the relationship dynamics in depth, enabling and encouraging couples to be open and honest about the nature of their relationship and work with them as a couple rather than just separating them.”

- Gavin Bradshaw, Team manager, Family Intervention Team, Gateshead Council

LOOKING AHEAD

Gateshead plan to build on the significant progress they have made with workforce

development and train staff in Parents as Partners (individual family approach), Incredible Years (baby care) and Standard Teen Triple P (parenting teenagers). They will also develop the skills of management staff through training in supervising and developing 'relational practitioners'.

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

▶ An incremental approach to training the workforce in Gateshead ◀

Responding to the demand for advanced practitioner training in Hertfordshire

A locality focused approach to training in Essex

Practitioner toolkits in Blackpool, Gateshead and Hertfordshire

Dorset's Relationship Support Navigator

Croydon's Parenting and Relationship Hub

How supervisors can talk to practitioners about IPR - Blackpool, Croydon and Westminster

Evaluating the impact of workforce development in Westminster

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES



BACK TO INDEX

CASE STUDY

Responding to the demand for advanced practitioner training in Hertfordshire

Hertfordshire recognised that at the heart of delivery of their Local Family Offer was the need for practitioners to have confident conversations with families on the quality of couple relationships. One of the aims of their pilot was to raise awareness of the impact and symptoms of relationship stress among staff and volunteers working at universal and emerging needs level.

INTRODUCTORY TRAINING

Over the course of the pilot, 100 practitioners from the Early Help workforce took part in OnePlusOne's Brief Encounters® training. The training combines an online learning module with a one-day skills workshop. It develops practitioners' ability to start a conversation around inter-parental relationships and conflict. It also provides useful skills, tools and information to explore relationship issues and, where appropriate, sensitively signpost to more specialist services.

There were high levels of demand for the training and feedback from participants was extremely positive. However, it also highlighted that some professionals wanted more in-depth training enabling them to work at a deeper level, which led Hertfordshire to commission a training

programme on working with parents in conflict.

COMMISSIONING A BESPOKE TRAINING ON CONFLICT MEDIATION

Hertfordshire commissioned a local mediation organisation to deliver a one-day course 'Parents at War'. 60 practitioners have been trained so far with another 60 to be trained.

The course is aimed at frontline practitioners who are actively working with parents who are in conflict (whether the parents are together or separated) and who will work with both parents to resolve low level conflict.

The course provides a mix of theory and practice aiming to develop understanding of the causes and development of couple conflict.

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

An incremental approach to training the workforce in Gateshead

Responding to the demand for advanced practitioner training in Hertfordshire

A locality focused approach to training in Essex

Practitioner toolkits in Blackpool, Gateshead and Hertfordshire

Dorset's Relationship Support Navigator

Croydon's Parenting and Relationship Hub

How supervisors can talk to practitioners about IPR - Blackpool, Croydon and Westminster

Evaluating the impact of workforce development in Westminster

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES



BACK TO INDEX

CASE STUDY

It helps practitioners use mediation to resolve low-level conflict, while at the same time knowing when and how to encourage parents to engage with professional mediation services.

AMBASSADOR NETWORK AND 'TRAIN THE TRAINER' TRAINING

To build sustainability into the training model, Hertfordshire have recruited a group of champions, the Better Relationship Ambassadors, from among training participants. When this community of practice is established, they will develop a 'train the trainer' model in which the Ambassadors train fellow practitioners to identify and respond to relationship issues.

"We're seeing an awful lot of families facing difficulties now, but in the past there has been little we have been able to do for them. A lot of the relationships and family advice that has been available has had to be paid for. But thanks to the training, there is something we can do. I have started sitting down with some of the families we're aware are having difficulties. We talk through things and I try to help them or signpost them to services that are available. I think families trust us, they talk to us, so it is really good that we can do something for them."

- Lynn Corbett, Children's Centre Outreach Worker, Hertfordshire

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

An incremental approach to training the workforce in Gateshead

Responding to the demand for advanced practitioner training in Hertfordshire

A locality focused approach to training in Essex

Practitioner toolkits in Blackpool, Gateshead and Hertfordshire

Dorset's Relationship Support Navigator

Croydon's Parenting and Relationship Hub

How supervisors can talk to practitioners about IPR - Blackpool, Croydon and Westminster

Evaluating the impact of workforce development in Westminster

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES



BACK TO INDEX

CASE STUDY

A locality focused approach to training in Essex

When Essex did an analysis of their Opportunity Assessment, they identified a high level of mental health needs amongst parents. This was corroborated by conversations with frontline staff. In particular GPs said they were often seeing cases where they believed poor inter-parental relationships were at the heart of problems patients were presenting with.

"We have a young population and GPs are seeing a lot of patients with problems that are linked to relationships – depression, anxiety and sleeping difficulties, so I think getting this training will allow us to do more for our patients and help them deal with the underlying causes of the problems."

- Marguerite Cuttings, Practice Manager,
Basildon Langdon Hills Medical Centre

SETTING UP LOCAL NETWORKS

Essex chose to take a targeted geographic approach, offering Brief Encounters® training to a network of professionals who engage with parents of young children (pre birth to 5) on a day to day basis and work in and around a GP practice within the Langdon Hills area of Basildon. These included: all the staff within the local GP practice (GPs, practice manager and deputy manager, reception manager, practice nurse and health care assistant),

representatives of the midwifery service, the health visitor service, a local early years childcare provider, Children's Centre, and social care early intervention services. In total, 27 people attended the one day training workshop.

After the training a virtual network was established to enable the professionals who received the training to remain in touch. Though it is being used by a limited number of professionals, the network has facilitated a connection between the GP surgery and a nursery provider and the GP now runs sessions for parents in the nursery.

RESPONSE TO THE TRAINING AND LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

Feedback on the training was overall positive. However, differences in training impact between the different professional

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

An incremental approach to training the workforce in Gateshead

Responding to the demand for advanced practitioner training in Hertfordshire

A locality focused approach to training in Essex

Practitioner toolkits in Blackpool, Gateshead and Hertfordshire

Dorset's Relationship Support Navigator

Croydon's Parenting and Relationship Hub

How supervisors can talk to practitioners about IPR - Blackpool, Croydon and Westminster

Evaluating the impact of workforce development in Westminster

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES



BACK TO INDEX

CASE STUDY

groups attending the training were observed, with early years staff showing greatest self-assessed benefit from the training, followed by health visitors and then GPs.

Having learnt about the complexities of meeting the needs of a diverse group of practitioners, Essex are considering providing a differentiated offer in order to maximise reach and impact of training.

This could include:

- Foundation training: Brief Encounters® E-Learning for professionals working in universal settings, e.g. GPs and teachers
- Intermediary training 'How to Argue Better' blended workshop and E-Learning evidence based training to support parents experiencing high levels of conflict for Early Help practitioners within the additional need settings.

"This project gave us the opportunity to target some resource to better understand the issues. We are committed to applying what we learnt from this pilot about engaging frontline professionals to other parts of the workforce."

- Clare Burrell, Head of commissioning for vulnerable people, Essex County Council

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

An incremental approach to training the workforce in Gateshead

Responding to the demand for advanced practitioner training in Hertfordshire

A locality focused approach to training in Essex

Practitioner toolkits in Blackpool, Gateshead and Hertfordshire

Dorset's Relationship Support Navigator

Croydon's Parenting and Relationship Hub

How supervisors can talk to practitioners about IPR - Blackpool, Croydon and Westminster

Evaluating the impact of workforce development in Westminster

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES



BACK TO INDEX

CASE STUDY

Practitioner toolkits in Gateshead, Hertfordshire and Blackpool

Gateshead's 'Working it Out for the Kids Guide' provides information about local organisations and online resources for couples, co-parents and other family relationships. The guide is designed for use by practitioners or families. It includes service listings and a wide range of online information and e-learning options.

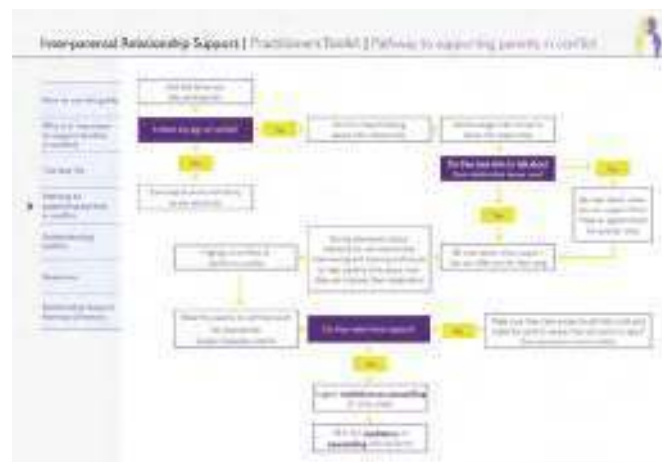
The directory has been shared across the Local Authority and with partners in the health, education and voluntary sectors. Publishing the relationship directory has served to improve understanding among families and practitioners about support services. It has also created new opportunities for collaboration with local voluntary sector providers.



Hertfordshire embedded their directory in an interactive toolkit for practitioners that sits in the Hertfordshire Families First portal. The directory,

called **Better Relationships, Better Parenting**, includes information on local organisations as well as sources of online support.

The toolkit also provides helpful guidance on working with the inter-parental relationship and working specifically with couples in conflict – which draws on the training Hertfordshire practitioners took part in. A pathway for supporting parents in conflict guides practitioners through the helping steps.



Hertfordshire developed the toolkit with their Better Relationships Ambassadors, building on the resources provided by OnePlusOne's training, and gathering ideas and feedback on a prototype at an Ambassador networking meeting.

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

An incremental approach to training the workforce in Gateshead

Responding to the demand for advanced practitioner training in Hertfordshire

A locality focused approach to training in Essex

Practitioner toolkits in Blackpool, Gateshead and Hertfordshire

Dorset's Relationship Support Navigator

Croydon's Parenting and Relationship Hub

How supervisors can talk to practitioners about IPR - Blackpool, Croydon and Westminster

Evaluating the impact of workforce development in Westminster

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES



BACK TO INDEX

CASE STUDY

In phase 1 of their Local Family Offer **Blackpool** ran a series of focus groups including practitioners from the Local Authority Early Help teams (Families in Need, Children's Centres, specialist support), the health visiting service, school nursing service, NSPCC, A Better Start, Head Start, Job Centre Plus and Connect.

The multidisciplinary focus groups undertook an appreciative enquiry exercise to explore what each service could do to support the inter-parental relationship and what would help practitioners to make a difference.

They developed a practitioner tool to increase staff skills and confidence in focusing on couple and co-parental relationships, and to make this part of standard practice in assessment and interactions with parents.

The development of the tool was informed by:

- Practitioners' analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the current assessment process and practitioner materials regarding neglect
- Practitioner's experience of having conversations with parents on relationship quality, conflict and domestic violence

- Practitioners insights about what parents want to be asked about relationship quality and at what points in their lives

The tool is currently being trialled in the Local Authority Early Help service. Though it is too early for definitive findings, indications are that the increased awareness of the impact of the inter-parental relationship is resulting in practitioners routinely considering the couple relationship as part of the assessment process within the Early Help team.



DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

An incremental approach to training the workforce in Gateshead

Responding to the demand for advanced practitioner training in Hertfordshire

A locality focused approach to training in Essex

Practitioner toolkits in Blackpool, Gateshead and Hertfordshire

Dorset's Relationship Support Navigator

Croydon's Parenting and Relationship Hub

How supervisors can talk to practitioners about IPR - Blackpool, Croydon and Westminster

Evaluating the impact of workforce development in Westminster

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES



BACK TO INDEX

CASE STUDY

Dorset's Relationship Support Navigator

Dorset created a Relationship Support Navigator role, whose main aim is to advise a range of practitioners in directing parents to the appropriate level of support. The post is co-funded by the local authority and the Chesil Education Partnership.

The Navigator's role is to raise awareness in school staff about the importance of providing support to parents around relationships, to build their skills and confidence in responding to issues and knowing where to refer people for more help.

"Teachers are busy people. Looking after the emotional health and wellbeing of parents is not the only thing they have to do. This role has made it possible for professionals to work more as a team, and it has strengthened trust between teachers and parents."

- Michelle Hayes, Relationships Navigator,
Chesil Education Partnership

SUSTAINING AND EMBEDDING CHANGE

As part of her role, the Navigator developed CPD training sessions on relationships for school staff. She also created drop-in sessions on relationships for parents and adapted the content to be suitable for secondary school pupils.

Recruiting to the Navigator post was challenging due to the unique skill set required. In the end, a trained counsellor with a teaching background was seconded from Relate into the role.

To establish this as a sustainable service, the Navigator is embedded in the wellbeing team, where she works closely with other frontline practitioners (two Families Matter workers, the Education Zone lead, an educational psychologist, and a social worker). She is also training teachers and head teachers to grow their awareness and skills in supporting relationships.

"One impact of the work has been building trust between different layers of support (i.e. teachers and counsellors) and making better connections between them."

- Michelle Hayes, Relationships Navigator,
Chesil Education Partnership

You will find the the Dorset Relationships Navigator Job Description in the [Appendix](#).

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

An incremental approach to training the workforce in Gateshead

Responding to the demand for advanced practitioner training in Hertfordshire

A locality focused approach to training in Essex

Practitioner toolkits in Blackpool, Gateshead and Hertfordshire

Dorset's Relationship Support Navigator

Croydon's Parenting and Relationship Hub

How supervisors can talk to practitioners about IPR - Blackpool, Croydon and Westminster

Evaluating the impact of workforce development in Westminster

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES



[BACK TO INDEX](#)

CASE STUDY

Croydon's Parenting & Relationship Hub

Croydon are developing a Parenting and Relationship Hub as part of their Early Help service.

Staffed by a Hub Coordinator and an Admin Support Officer, its role is to:

- Offer advice and support to frontline staff around relationships issues
- Develop an overview of parenting and relationship support available in Croydon
- Lead on the development of a graduated support offer across the four stages of intervention
- Develop robust referral pathways
- Manage the workforce development offer
- Coordinate and quality assure the delivery of evidence based programmes
- Generate evidence and ensure that new research informs programme delivery

One of the key aims of the Hub is to support the development of a multi-disciplinary workforce that has the skills and capacity to provide a range of support responding to the individual needs of parents who identify that their relationships need to be strengthened.

"This is a virtual, rather than a physical Hub. Practitioners dip in and out. It serves to coordinate provision and to identify areas of need. One of the aims of developing our workforce and training existing staff is to hopefully ensure the sustainability of the offer."

- Karen Ploghoeft, Parenting and Relationships Hub Coordinator, Croydon Council

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

An incremental approach to training the workforce in Gateshead

Responding to the demand for advanced practitioner training in Hertfordshire

A locality focused approach to training in Essex

Practitioner toolkits in Blackpool, Gateshead and Hertfordshire

Dorset's Relationship Support Navigator

Croydon's Parenting and Relationship Hub

How supervisors can talk to practitioners about IPR - Blackpool, Croydon and Westminster

Evaluating the impact of workforce development in Westminster

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES



BACK TO INDEX

CASE STUDY

How supervisors can talk with practitioners about IPR: Blackpool and Croydon

TESTING NEW APPROACHES TO SUPERVISION IN BLACKPOOL

While they were involved in the LFO programme, **Blackpool** were also part of Research in Practice's Change Project pilot on reflective supervision. In testing the pilot's reflective supervision tools, they used them to prompt conversations about how practitioners were exploring inter-parental relationships with their clients.

They also developed prompts for supervision conversations with staff in the Early Help teams - Families in Need and Children's Centre. While line managers talk to practitioners about a case, they are prompted to discuss whether and how the relationship between parents has been considered, what learning has emerged and what actions might be taken. The conversation is then recorded in the family's file.

"Prompting managers to routinely ask the question [has the inter-parental relationship been considered] ensures that relationships are at the forefront of practitioners' minds... that they are as important as other issues they may be looking out for."

- Sara Mc Cartan, Children's Centre Partnership Officer, Blackpool Council

SUPERVISION FOR THE EARLY HELP WORKFORCE IN CROYDON

The Early Help workforce in **Croydon** has an established systemic approach to reflective supervision.

Within their individual supervision, managers and frontline practitioners have conversations that explore the dynamics in the child's environment, reflecting for example on Genograms, and considering key adults in the child's life and their relationships.

Staff also regularly take part in peer supervision, where they come together in groups to talk through more complex cases and benefit from each other's perspective and experience.

Croydon are also trialling a workgroup for multi-agency collaboration around complex cases for children under 5. The group meets every two weeks and includes professionals from Best Start, Early Help, health visiting, Family Nurse Partnership, community independent domestic violence advisors, midwives, Home Start and Children's Centres. Bringing together practitioners from diverse services creates an opportunity for more integrated working, for example for deciding together with which agency the case should

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

An incremental approach to training the workforce in Gateshead

Responding to the demand for advanced practitioner training in Hertfordshire

A locality focused approach to training in Essex

Practitioner toolkits in Blackpool, Gateshead and Hertfordshire

Dorset's Relationship Support Navigator

Croydon's Parenting and Relationship Hub

How supervisors can talk to practitioners about IPR - Blackpool, Croydon and Westminster

Evaluating the impact of workforce development in Westminster

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES



BACK TO INDEX

CASE STUDY

diverse services creates an opportunity for more integrated working, for example for deciding together which agency the case should best sit with. The workgroup enables practitioners with diverse backgrounds to use their different expertise and perspectives to support each other.

SUPERVISION FOR GATEWAY FRONTLINE TEAM

Croydon provided Brief Encounters® training to the members of its Gateway team, a service which provides a single point of access for employment support and housing, budgeting and welfare rights advice. This equipped them to explore relationships issues as part of their conversations with people.

This team's background and business orientation means that they are further removed from having conversations about relationships as the norm than, for example, Early Help services. For this reason it has been clear from the start that including a focus on IPR in supervision is important to embed this approach into 'business as usual'.

Over the coming months Croydon will be exploring the most effective and efficient ways of supporting both frontline staff and managers from the Gateway team to embed the Brief Encounters® model into the team's practice.

"So far we have had an operational focus. We will now be more explicitly strategic, starting from the senior leadership in Gateway and thinking about how we can effectively and efficiently provide supervision support to embed this way of working into business as usual. If we get this right, we'll be able to transplant this model to other areas, like for example housing."

- Debby Mac Cormack, Early Intervention and Family Support Strategic Manager, Croydon Council

SUPPORTING MANAGERS IN WESTMINSTER

Westminster are acutely aware of the importance of supporting managers to use supervision as a tool to enhance, monitor and learn from frontline practice.

They held two seminars for managers, facilitated by Tavistock Relationships, to help them think through how to put inter-parental relationships at the heart of case discussions with practitioners.

They are also thinking about how best to capture learning from supervision conversations. They are considering using observations and surveys as a tool to quality assure and evaluate supervision.

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

An incremental approach to training the workforce in Gateshead

Responding to the demand for advanced practitioner training in Hertfordshire

A locality focused approach to training in Essex

Practitioner toolkits in Blackpool, Gateshead and Hertfordshire

Dorset's Relationship Support Navigator

Croydon's Parenting and Relationship Hub

How supervisors can talk to practitioners about IPR - Blackpool, Croydon and Westminster

Evaluating the impact of workforce development in Westminster

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES



BACK TO INDEX

CASE STUDY

Evaluating the impact of workforce development in Westminster

Westminster used the questionnaires provided as part of OnePlusOne's Brief Encounters® training course to assess the impact of the training. These included questionnaires to be completed by their Early Help workforce before and after the

Questions covered:

- Confidence in identifying relationship difficulties
- Confidence in the knowledge gained about relationships
- Likelihood of asking questions about a relationship
- Feelings about helping parents to deal with a relationship problem
- Confidence in signposting a parent to specialist relationship support

WHAT ELSE COULD YOU DO?

Luton worked with its local university to assess the impact of its different training strands on practitioners through online questionnaires completed before, immediately and four months after the course. Practitioners were also asked to provide a case study describing how they had used the training. Other Local Authorities have taken a similar approach, such as Newcastle, Hertfordshire and Gateshead.

Including IPR-focused prompts in case audit tools helps managers to look for how practitioners are addressing inter-parental relationships when reviewing case notes. Questions in supervision also provide another means of capturing changes in practice. You can find some example evaluation questionnaires in the [Appendix](#).

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

An incremental approach to training the workforce in Gateshead

Responding to the demand for advanced practitioner training in Hertfordshire

A locality focused approach to training in Essex

Practitioner toolkits in Blackpool, Gateshead and Hertfordshire

Dorset's Relationship Support Navigator

Croydon's Parenting and Relationship Hub

How supervisors can talk to practitioners about IPR - Blackpool, Croydon and Westminster

Evaluating the impact of workforce development in Westminster

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES



BACK TO INDEX

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY FOR RELATIONSHIP SUPPORT SERVICES



THE CHALLENGE

Raising awareness of the impact of parental conflict on children's outcomes, equipping practitioners to identify and sensitively explore issues and to know when more specialist support is needed is a great start. But without the right support offer for families, chances are that we will either generate demand we cannot meet, or direct people towards interventions that do not meet their need.

*"We want to give people choice, because we want them to succeed.
When you have a range of programmes, from something like a seminar in your child's school all the way to more targeted interventions, like for example Parents as Partners, you will be able to match need with the right form of support."*

- Debby MacCormack,
Early Intervention and Family Support Strategic Manager, Croydon Council

DEVELOPING
THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A
PATHWAY

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

CHANGING CULTURE,
SYSTEM & PROCESSES



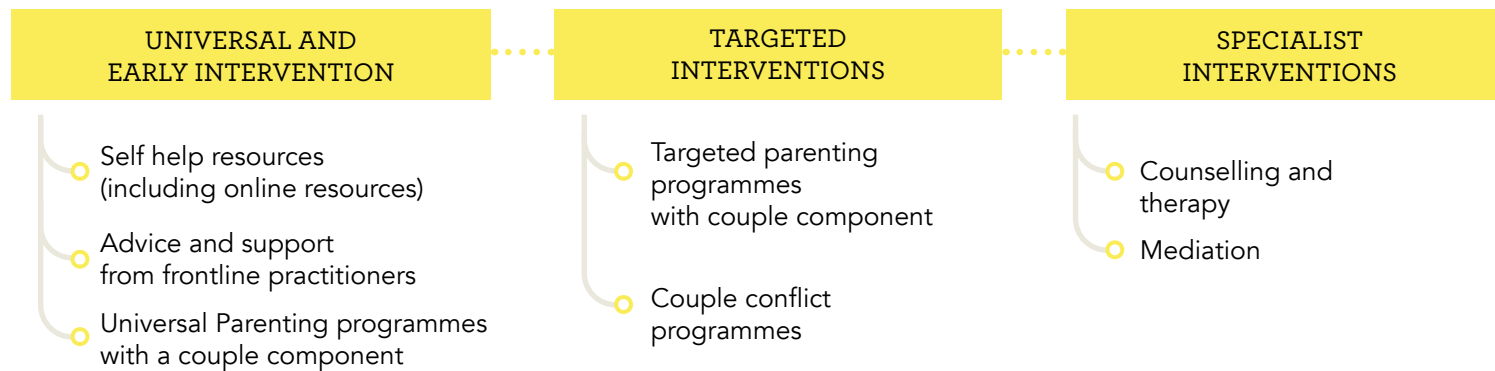
[BACK TO INDEX](#)

THINGS YOU CAN DO:

A Continuum of Support

As pilot sites developed their Local Family Offer, they knew they needed to have a close look at their support provision, alongside building the skills of the workforce in identifying issues and ensuring that parents get the right help.

The continuum of relationship support ranges from preventative approaches to specialist targeted interventions.



*The interventions outlined in this spectrum of relationship support have been selected with a specific focus on couple and co-parental relationships. A number of other services, such as those provided for Domestic Violence, will sit alongside this offer.

DEVELOPING
THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A
PATHWAY

The challenge

Things you can do

A Continuum of Support
Tailoring and Flexing the Offer

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

CHANGING CULTURE,
SYSTEM & PROCESSES

THINGS YOU CAN DO:

A Continuum of Support

“Couples can benefit from a spectrum of support that reflects life stage, life circumstances, attitude to support, and level of need.

A spectrum of support ranges from preventive approaches around strengthening relationships, such as relationship education, through early intervention, for example targeting support at those at risk of experiencing relationship difficulties, to more intensive support responsive to relationship distress, such as counselling or therapeutic interventions.”

- Dorset, Phase 1 Evaluation

As a result of mapping local provision, some LFO pilots identified gaps in their support offer and opportunities to deepen the relationship focus within the existing offer.

For example, Croydon and Hertfordshire identified the need to develop **online resources** to provide light touch support to families who did not meet the threshold for more intensive provision, but could benefit from some advice and guidance.

Some of the LFO localities that had already adopted evidence based parenting programmes have expanded that offer to incorporate specific components about inter-parental relationships.

Newcastle LFO has a well established Incredible Years pre-school programme and has chosen to enhance the existing service with Incredible Years Advanced in the second phase plans. Luton worked with OnePlusOne to embed relationships content from the ‘Me, You and Baby too’ into their ‘Bump to Babe’ parenting programme.

“Inter-parental relationships are being discussed a lot more and in simpler language with clients. As an issue, it is something we have always been conscious of, but there is a lot more focus around it now, and that comes from a number of different angles.”

- Holly Fountain, Health Visitor, Luton

Essex commissioned a **bespoke intervention** influenced by the evidence based programme the Incredible Years, and which adopted counselling and coaching methods. This was delivered by two experienced service providers who were already delivering the Essex Family Innovation Fund: Kids Inspire.

Lambeth delivered a bespoke version of an intervention called Caring Dads, specifically designed to help fathers change their behaviour and strengthen the couple and co-parenting relationship, and so improve outcomes for their children.

DEVELOPING
THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A
PATHWAY

The challenge

Things you can do

A Continuum of Support
Tailoring and Flexing the Offer

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

CHANGING CULTURE,
SYSTEM & PROCESSES

THINGS YOU CAN DO:

A Continuum of Support

In parallel to the delivery of the Local Family Offer programme, the Department for Work and Pensions commissioned Tavistock Relationships to support local areas in the delivery of '**Parents as Partners**', an intervention for couples and co-parents of young children designed to improve relationships between parents and to increase children's well-being and success. Parents as Partners formed part of the support offer in many LFO localities.

Some LFO localities have been particularly aware of the important role that **peer interaction and support** can have, when it comes to normalising help-seeking around relationships. For example, Dorset's Relationship Navigator has been running drop in sessions for parents in schools to talk about relationship issues in a non-judgemental space.

Localities that have been delivering group interventions, such as Parents as Partners, or Lambeth's Caring Dads, talk about the transformational impact of providing opportunities for parents to come together,

talk openly and share their experiences of couple relationships and parenting.

For some localities the LFO programme offered an opportunity for **closer collaboration with the voluntary sector**. Voluntary sector organisations acted as partners in service delivery and facilitated access to families in need of support.

"We offered 'Parents as Partners' training to our partners in the voluntary sector to build their capacity to do this work as well. An organisation working with families who have children with disabilities was keen to get involved as they often have to support parents whose couple relationships are strained"

- Madhu Chauhan, Early Help & Partnership Service Manager, Westminster

DEVELOPING
THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A
PATHWAY

The challenge

Things you can do

A Continuum of Support
Tailoring and Flexing the Offer

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

CHANGING CULTURE,
SYSTEM & PROCESSES

RELATED CASE STUDIES

Supporting resilient relationships through online resources

Integrating a relationship component into existing parenting provision in Luton

Drop in sessions for parents in schools in Dorset

Parents as Partners Programme: strengthening co-parental relationships and supporting father involvement

A targeted intervention for young parents in conflictual and abusive relationships in Lambeth

A fast track to counselling services in Newcastle



BACK TO INDEX

THINGS YOU CAN DO:

Tailoring and Flexing the Offer

In developing their offer, LFO localities generated valuable learning about what it takes to ensure that the match between provision and need is as close as possible. It is still relatively early days and more learning will emerge as the local offers continue to develop, however some key lessons can be drawn from the pilots' experiences.

Tailoring is key. For example, Newcastle's LFO team talk about the importance of designing as much as possible around the needs of families and of supporting parents to take up the help offered.

"Families have multiple and complex needs, they are involved with multiple services, and experience multiple crises – services need to be flexible and work in partnership to meet the family's needs. We are looking at putting more admin support in place to do crucial follow up calls, texts and crèche."

- Cath Elsy, Senior Practitioner Early Help Team,
Newcastle City Council

Creating the right match between support and need is also very important. For example, Croydon's Parenting and Relationship Hub invested in making information about services accessible to parents. It reaches out to referrers and helps them understand the role of the Hub and what support is available. When parents contact the Hub or are referred by other professionals to particular interventions, members of the Hub team talk with them about their understanding, appetite, readiness and commitment to be involved.

"I am working to improve the visibility of the offer, to enable parents to identify quickly and easily help and information available for specific issues. So, for example, if someone is looking for information about healthy eating, we can point them towards just that, they don't need to go on an 8 week parenting course."

We are also thinking about how to improve the accessibility of our services for parents who work outside the borough or work long hours."

- Karen Ploghoeft, Parenting and Relationship Hub
Coordinator, Croydon Council

Developing a broader offer is also about working along the principles of minimal sufficiency and recognising parents' strengths and enabling them to help themselves.

The other big lesson is about the importance of **flexing and iterating the offer** to adapt to emergent learning. For example, Dorset's Relationship Navigator role was developed as an innovation in response to a need identified by schools and the role description kept evolving as the Navigator developed a deeper insight into the needs of staff and families.

DEVELOPING
THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A
PATHWAY

The challenge

Things you can do

A Continuum of Support
Tailoring and Flexing the Offer

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

CHANGING CULTURE,
SYSTEM & PROCESSES

RELATED CASE STUDIES

Flexing and adapting delivery to better meet need in Newcastle

Adapting services to respond to emergent learning in Dorset



BACK TO INDEX

THE CHANGES YOU CAN EXPECT TO SEE AND HOW TO MEASURE THEM

The impact of the service pathways you develop will vary greatly depending on a range of factors, such as who the service is targeting, what its aims are, and the needs and circumstances of potential users.

For example, you might see a much more obvious impact from an intensive intervention working with families whose relationships are highly distressed, compared with the impact of an early intervention service to help couples maintain good relationships. It is much harder to demonstrate that you have helped to maintain the positive status quo of a relationship than it is to show that you have helped to reduce conflict between distressed parents. Yet both services have a profoundly positive experience on children, and are worth providing. To justify offering different kinds of services, you may need to use different measures of impact.

CHANGES YOU MIGHT EXPECT TO SEE IN FAMILIES

Broadly speaking, outcomes for parents should combine changes in parents' knowledge, attitudes and behaviours and a beneficial impact on aspects of family functioning and members' well-being.

Changes in parents' knowledge, attitudes and behaviours may include:

- Raised awareness of importance of the inter-parental relationship
- Acceptance and readiness to talk about relationships with professionals
- Conversations with practitioners about the couple relationship as part of normal interactions
- Normalisation of help-seeking for relationship issues
- Greater steps taken to protect and enhance the relationship with their partner
- Better understanding of inter-parental relationship support available

Changes in family functioning and members' well-being

If practitioners are providing more intensive support or parents are making use of new services you should see an impact on family functioning and individual member's health and well-being, depending on the type of intervention you offer. You can measure the direct impact, such as the impact of a couple conflict programme on inter-parental conflict.

DEVELOPING
THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A
PATHWAY

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

CHANGING CULTURE,
SYSTEM & PROCESSES

THE CHANGES YOU CAN EXPECT TO SEE AND HOW TO MEASURE CHANGE

You can also look at whether your intervention had an indirect impact, such as whether as a result of improvements in the quality of the relationship parents have seen improvements in their well-being or mental health.

You are likely to see changes in one or more of the following areas:

- Family relationships or family functioning (e.g. parent-child relationships, parenting style, co-parenting relationship, family dynamics)
- Parental or child mental health and well-being (e.g. parental depression, well-being, or life satisfaction or child behaviour and mental health)
- Inter-parental relationship (e.g. couple conflict, relationship quality, satisfaction or happiness in the relationship, couple communication)
- Co-parenting relationship (e.g. quality of co-parent relationship, conflict between co-parents)

MEASURING THE IMPACT AND USE OF SERVICES

There are different ways to measure the impact and use of a service on clients. A common approach is to invite clients to complete questionnaires before and after attending a service.

If you want to find out if the intervention made a long-term difference you should also go back to clients in three or six months' time and see if any changes have lasted.

Often, questionnaires will involve a mix of questions about clients' experience of the service and whether it made a difference to their situation.

It is good practice to include tried and tested measures in order to compare results fairly between different users and periods of time.

The [Appendix](#) provides a brief overview of easy to use and readily available measures that you could consider using to evaluate the impact of your service. Do make sure that you obtain 'before and after' measures so that you can assess if the service made a difference and how big the impact was.

There are other things you could do to get a different perspective on service impact and use, including:

- Observations conducted by trained practitioners in the home or other setting looking at parenting, child behaviour or interaction between parents. These are likely to use validated observation tools
- Discussion group with service users
- Case audits
- Parent or child reflections (e.g. offline or online journals, video diaries)
- Client written responses to open ended questions about a service
- Case studies written by practitioners
- Interviews or structured conversations with participants
- For separated parents - reviews of co-parenting plans (e.g. have new plans been drawn up or are parents happy with and following existing plans)

DEVELOPING
THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A
PATHWAY

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

CHANGING CULTURE,
SYSTEM & PROCESSES

RELATED CASE STUDIES

Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Luton

Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Newcastle

Evaluating the Parents as Partners programme in Manchester



BACK TO INDEX

THE CHANGES YOU CAN EXPECT TO SEE AND HOW TO MEASURE CHANGE

We can often be so preoccupied with whether clients are benefiting from a service that we can forget to see if and how parents are actually using it and how they find the experience.

Part of the evaluation therefore needs to include measures of:

- Take-up - how many parents who are referred to the service are making use of it?
- How many parents drop out early? How many rarely attend appointments or classes? Why?
- How do parents find the service? Does it meet their expectations? Could it be improved?
- Would they recommend it to others?

DEVELOPING
THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A
PATHWAY

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

CHANGING CULTURE,
SYSTEM & PROCESSES

KEY LEARNING ON DEVELOPING A PATHWAY FOR RELATIONSHIP SUPPORT SERVICES

INVEST UPFRONT IN ENSURING THAT INTERVENTIONS MATCH NEED

Understanding the regional and local context is as much a part of the design of the service as is the international evidence.

THINK ABOUT THE WHOLE CONTINUUM OF SUPPORT

Ensure that, once needs are identified, you can point people towards the right kind of help. As eligibility for free support may be an issue for some families, some LFO localities have invested in including a relationship focus in universal parenting programmes and are considering investing in online self help resources. Localities are also building the skills and confidence of their staff to move away from a 'default referral' culture towards providing appropriate support directly to parents where relevant and possible.

TRAIN PRACTITIONERS TO KNOW WHEN AND WHERE TO REFER FOR MORE SPECIALIST HELP

Practitioners should understand what each service offers and the types of parents who are likely to benefit.

TAILOR THE SERVICE TO THE NEEDS OF THE FAMILY

This will include making arrangements to reduce any barriers to a family accessing support, for example, through reminder texts or helping to arrange transport or childcare.

CREATE SAFE SPACES FOR PARENTS TO COME TOGETHER AND SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES

This normalises talking about relationships and seeking help and can spread the word about your relationship support offer.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL PARTNERS

Voluntary organisations and other groups build an effective web of support.

JOIN FORCES WITH NEIGHBOURING AUTHORITIES

Deliver more specialist services or courses where uptake is insufficient in your own area.

OFFER THE RIGHT SUPPORT TO PRACTITIONERS WHO ARE DELIVERING INTERVENTIONS

This will include opportunities for peer reflection and good quality supervision.

THINK RELATIONSHIPS

Ensuring that existing support is deployed effectively equires an underpinning culture that pays due attention to the significance of relationships.

"There should be a golden thread of family relationship improvement - with good coparental relationships as part of key outcomes - inside all services that local authorities provide. "

- Honor Rhodes, Director of Strategic Development,
Tavistock Relationships

DEVELOPING
THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A
PATHWAY

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

CHANGING CULTURE,
SYSTEM & PROCESSES



BACK TO INDEX

KEY LEARNING ON DEVELOPING A PATHWAY FOR RELATIONSHIP SUPPORT SERVICES

Helpful resources you can browse in the [Appendix](#):

- List of online relationship support resources
- Dorset's Relationship Navigator JD
- Relate Newcastle's pre and post counselling questionnaire
- Manchester's LFO relationship questionnaires
- Overview of impact measures

DEVELOPING
THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A
PATHWAY

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

CHANGING CULTURE,
SYSTEM & PROCESSES



[BACK TO INDEX](#)

CASE STUDY

Supporting resilient relationships through online resources

During the first phase of the LFO programme, local authorities identified a requirement to provide a range of support for families that responded to different levels of need and reflected gaps in current provision.

For example, Hertfordshire's practitioners were identifying parents, who experienced relationship difficulties but did not meet the LFO criteria for referral to their service pathway because they did not have multiple needs.

“Feedback from practitioners was that this pilot is ringfenced for families experiencing multiple issues but they were identifying families where the couple relationship is the only issue. So we are looking at where practitioners could signpost these parents to for support. Part of that could be about self-help resources.

We are also exploring what a ‘middle offer’ might look like. In other words, what kind of intervention could we offer that is not a specialist referral but is more than a conversation in the course of practice. We have looked at the viability of a behaviour change app, for example.”

- Ruth Fennemore, Development Manager, Family Support, Hertfordshire County Council

Part of a digital offer is effective online signposting.

Hertfordshire and Gateshead have begun to tackle this through their Service Directories. Croydon have begun to explore digital alternatives as they were aware that they could not continue to raise demand for services by asking about relationship issues without putting in place options for support that were financially sustainable for the local authority. Looking ahead to the next phase of the LFO Croydon have identified the need for a digital offer as part of their pathway.

Hertfordshire and Blackpool developed practitioner tools that include a map of the pathway to support for families that are experiencing relationship difficulties and conversation prompts and reminders for practitioners engaging parents in conversations about their relationships.

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

Supporting resilient relationships through online resources

Integrating a relationship component into existing parenting provision in Luton

Drop in sessions for parents in schools in Dorset

Parents as Partners Programme: strengthening co-parental relationships and supporting father involvement

A targeted intervention for young parents in conflictual and abusive relationships in Lambeth

A fast track to counselling services in Newcastle

Flexing and adapting delivery to better meet need in Newcastle

Adapting services to respond to emergent learning in Dorset

Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Luton

Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Newcastle

Evaluating the Parents as Partners programme in Manchester

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES

CASE STUDY

“We are looking to provide online access to Triple P training. Some of our children live with different parents in different places. If the co-parent parent lives in Birmingham at the moment we can’t work with them, but if we have an online offer we can say ‘this is what mum is doing in Croydon, and you can do this too, online’. If the child has contact with a parent who lives outside the area, we should be talking with them because the impact of our work with one parent can be undone if there is no consistency when they are with the other parent.”

- Debby Mac Cormack,
Early Intervention and Family Support
Strategic Manager, Croydon Council

An initial scoping of digital resources carried out during the LFO programme gave some pointers into what is already available for parents. You can find this in the [Appendix](#).

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

Supporting resilient relationships through online resources

Integrating a relationship component into existing parenting provision in Luton

Drop in sessions for parents in schools in Dorset

Parents as Partners Programme: strengthening co-parental relationships and supporting father involvement

A targeted intervention for young parents in conflictual and abusive relationships in Lambeth

A fast track to counselling services in Newcastle

Flexing and adapting delivery to better meet need in Newcastle

Adapting services to respond to emergent learning in Dorset

Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Luton

Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Newcastle

Evaluating the Parents as Partners programme in Manchester

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES

CASE STUDY

Integrating a relationship component into existing parenting provision in Luton

Flying Start is Luton's strategy for improving outcomes for children focused on pregnancy and the very earliest years of a child's life. It has a particular focus on those babies and children who are born in areas of the town with the highest levels of disadvantage and poorer outcomes.

Luton's Flying Start learning and development programme provides opportunities for staff to access evidence based learning and development courses to support the primary prevention and Early Help key messages that underpin healthy development in the very earliest years of life.

To ensure that a focus on relationships was embedded in this programme of work from the outset, Luton LFO commissioned OnePlusOne to work with their Flying Start midwifery and health visiting team to adapt the content of Me, You and Baby Too (MYBT), a new evidence based psycho-educative relationship education package for first time parents. 23 midwives and health visitors were trained in the delivery of MYBT and have incorporated it into their antenatal parenting programme (Bump to Babe) and postnatal provision.

This bespoke one-day training programme for practitioners enables them to deliver the

relationship content from Me, You and Baby Too, including:

- Raising parents' awareness of the impact having a baby can have on their relationship.
- Raising parents' awareness of the impact of their relationship on their baby.
- Preparing parents for the changes and challenges to their relationship: physical, emotional, sexual, financial, and practical.
- Helping parents develop skills in communication and managing conflict

"Relationships are being discussed a lot more and in simpler language with clients. We now focus more explicitly on the couple relationship after the baby is born and communication features as a big topic...the activity on what parents argue about (from MYBT) has worked really well. We have been delivering this for the past six months and the response is really positive"

- Holly Fountain, Health Visitor, Luton

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

- Supporting resilient relationships through online resources
- Integrating a relationship component into existing parenting provision in Luton
 - Drop in sessions for parents in schools in Dorset
 - Parents as Partners Programme: strengthening co-parental relationships and supporting father involvement
 - A targeted intervention for young parents in conflictual and abusive relationships in Lambeth
 - A fast track to counselling services in Newcastle
 - Flexing and adapting delivery to better meet need in Newcastle
 - Adapting services to respond to emergent learning in Dorset
 - Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Luton
 - Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Newcastle
 - Evaluating the Parents as Partners programme in Manchester

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES

CASE STUDY

Drop in sessions for parents in schools in Dorset

As part of the wider offer of support around relationships, Dorset's Relationship Navigator trialed offering drop-in sessions in schools for parents to come together and talk about relationships in a safe and non judgemental space.

Topics discussed include: 'healthy relationships', 'communicating with my children and with my ex', and 'when things go wrong'.

The response from parents to these sessions has been very positive. Families are spreading the word about the relationship support available and drawing other parents in. The navigator is considering how to further develop opportunities for networking and support for parents.

"The main thing is the transformation from feeling shame or somehow fearful about accessing support to feeling enabled to seek support. For example, I supported a family whose child has an issue, which the parents have started dealing with relatively late in their child's learning career. Before our conversation the parents had felt reluctant to seek support. Now they have reached out to the school psychologist and speech and language therapist for help."

- Michelle Hayes, Relationships Navigator,
Chesil Education Partnership

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

Supporting resilient relationships through online resources

Integrating a relationship component into existing parenting provision in Luton

Drop in sessions for parents in schools in Dorset

Parents as Partners Programme: strengthening co-parental relationships and supporting father involvement

A targeted intervention for young parents in conflictual and abusive relationships in Lambeth

A fast track to counselling services in Newcastle

Flexing and adapting delivery to better meet need in Newcastle

Adapting services to respond to emergent learning in Dorset

Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Luton

Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Newcastle

Evaluating the Parents as Partners programme in Manchester

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES



CASE STUDY

Parents as Partners Programme: strengthening co-parental relationships and supporting father involvement

The Parents as Partners programme (PasP) is an intervention for parental couples and co-parents, who live apart, of young children and young people, based on the work of Professors Phil and Carolyn Cowan from the University of Berkeley, California.

After testing and adapting the programme to the UK context with support from the Department for Education and in partnership with the Cowans, Tavistock Relationships was licenced to run groups and to train, supervise and accredit others to deliver PasP in the UK.

Since this initial grant, Tavistock Relationships has been contracted by the Department for Work and Pensions to deliver both the programme and training, whilst continuing to gather pre-and post measures on the critical aspects of the curriculum and outcomes for parents and children.

The programme is designed to improve relationships between parents and to increase children's wellbeing and success. It looks at relationships across the family, not just at parenting skills. Parents' relationship together, parent-child relationships and family patterns across generations are all considered.

A male and a female facilitator deliver group sessions for a group of six couples (participation of both partners is a requirement) over a period of 16 weeks. Before the sessions start, facilitators meet individually with each couple and each partner to ensure that this is the right intervention for them and that they are ready and able to take part.

The Parents as Partners course has been part of the offer in many LFO localities. Facilitators were trained by Tavistock Relationships, who also provided some support in setting up and evaluating the programme.

In phase 1 most pilots found recruitment to the course a challenge. Tavistock themselves acknowledge that recruiting families to the programme takes time and investment.

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

- Supporting resilient relationships through online resources
- Integrating a relationship component into existing parenting provision in Luton
- Drop in sessions for parents in schools in Dorset
- Parents as Partners Programme: strengthening co-parental relationships and supporting father involvement
- A targeted intervention for young parents in conflictual and abusive relationships in Lambeth
- A fast track to counselling services in Newcastle
- Flexing and adapting delivery to better meet need in Newcastle
- Adapting services to respond to emergent learning in Dorset
- Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Luton
- Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Newcastle
- Evaluating the Parents as Partners programme in Manchester

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES

CASE STUDY

"The first time you run a programme it is going to take much longer than you could bear to believe. That is because you need to be an ambassador of the programme to your colleagues and referrers - who often don't think about couple relationships in this way - and at the same time a number of conditions need to come together for a group to be ready to start - i.e. having the right number of couples with all partners signed up, finding a time and venue that works for all, including accessibility and availability of creche facilities..."

- Honor Rhodes, Director of Strategic Development, Tavistock Relationships

IMPACT

Courses have taken longer than anticipated in getting off the ground in most localities, but practitioners who have run Parents as Partners courses talk about the visible impact the programme has had on participating couples.

"It was so rewarding to see from week to week the difference that it made - people saying 'for the first time I did not shout at my daughter', 'for the first time my husband showed his affection to me.'"

- Sarah Keen, Health Visitor and Parent as Partners Facilitator, Croydon

"Two of the families we worked with came off their child protection plans and got back into employment by the end of the programme and another family no longer needed support/intervention from other agencies."

- Diane Grey, Senior Parenting Practitioner and Parents as Partners facilitator, Manchester

LEARNING AND TIPS

Facilitators, LFO leads and Tavistock Relationships shared some of the learning and key tips emerging from implementation of the Parents as Partners programme so far:

- Invest time and energy up front to get the right referrals through - work with referrers to raise their awareness of the relationship agenda and of the programme and to generate relevant referrals
- Invest time and energy up front in getting to know prospective course participants and ensuring they are ready and able to take part, and support them along the way, giving a personal touch that makes them feel valued (reminder texts before sessions, birthday cards..)
- Attending is a choice - even when couples are referred to the programme as part of a safeguarding plan, it is important that they are given a choice and are encouraged to

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

- Supporting resilient relationships through online resources
- Integrating a relationship component into existing parenting provision in Luton
- Drop in sessions for parents in schools in Dorset
- Parents as Partners Programme: strengthening co-parental relationships and supporting father involvement
- A targeted intervention for young parents in conflictual and abusive relationships in Lambeth
- A fast track to counselling services in Newcastle
- Flexing and adapting delivery to better meet need in Newcastle
- Adapting services to respond to emergent learning in Dorset
- Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Luton
- Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Newcastle
- Evaluating the Parents as Partners programme in Manchester

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES

CASE STUDY

take ownership of the decision to attend the programme. For the programme to have an impact couples must be ready and willing to change

- Recruit for several groups in parallel to avoid losing people in the waiting loop. Constantly building the cycle of referrals to the programme will make referrals faster and better
- Provide the right infrastructure of support for facilitators. Train a cohort of practitioners at the same time, so they can support each other in a community of practice. Preparation and reflection for facilitators delivering a couple and appropriate supervision are essential.

“The delivery of this programme was a great achievement for Westminster, our two facilitators valued the support they received through the supervision sessions from Tavistock. The key lessons learnt from delivering the programme are: to have more staff trained in the programme who understand the referral criteria, and to ensure time is set aside adequately for planning , debriefing and supervision.”

- Madhu Chauhan, Early Help & Partnership Service Manager , Westminster

“When you are starting something that is new and cutting across the grain of how things usually are, you have to accept that it is a bit like trekking to the North Pole and everybody is going in the opposite direction. We have to look after staff with good supervision. And we need managers who want this to happen and help it to happen”

- Honor Rhodes, Director of Strategic Development, Tavistock Relationships

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

- Supporting resilient relationships through online resources
- Integrating a relationship component into existing parenting provision in Luton
- Drop in sessions for parents in schools in Dorset
- Parents as Partners Programme: strengthening co-parental relationships and supporting father involvement
- A targeted intervention for young parents in conflictual and abusive relationships in Lambeth
- A fast track to counselling services in Newcastle
- Flexing and adapting delivery to better meet need in Newcastle
- Adapting services to respond to emergent learning in Dorset
- Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Luton
- Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Newcastle
- Evaluating the Parents as Partners programme in Manchester

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES

CASE STUDY

A targeted intervention for young parents in conflictual and abusive relationships in Lambeth

A high proportion of children in Lambeth live in lone parent households (48%) and are significantly disadvantaged. The proportion of sole births registrations in Lambeth is 59% higher than the national average, which indicates that fathers are not actively involved in their child's life at the earliest stage.

Lambeth decided that the focus of their Local Family Offer should be on improving the quality of couple relationships between young parents in relationships where there is conflict, domestic abuse and violence, with a particular focus on engaging with dads.

A TARGETED INTERVENTION FOR DADS

Lambeth delivered a customised version of the Caring Dads programme, which is specifically designed to help fathers change their behaviour and strengthen the couple and co-parenting relationship.

St Michaels Fellowship ran the first round of the Caring Dads programme with a group of four fathers.

The 17-week group intervention uses a combination of motivation enhancement, parent education (including skills training and behavioural practice) and cognitive behavioural therapy to improve men's recognition and prioritisation of their child needs. Topics covered include:

- Defining domestic abuse
- Examining and comparing healthy and unhealthy relationships
- The effect of domestic abuse on children

Group sessions typically last 2 hours and are run one night a week. Groups are co-led by experienced male and female facilitators.

ADDITIONAL WRAP-AROUND SUPPORT

St Michael's offered one-to-one support to each father to ensure they were ready, able and felt confident to share their feelings and experiences in a group session.

The one-to-one work continued throughout the entirety of the programme and included linking dads with local agencies. The work also connected with the DIVA programme, a locally funded service to support young mums affected by domestic abuse.

The programmes and onsite crèche facilities enabled the Local Family Offer to provide a holistic service to the families involved.

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

Supporting resilient relationships through online resources

Integrating a relationship component into existing parenting provision in Luton

Drop in sessions for parents in schools in Dorset

Parents as Partners Programme: strengthening co-parental relationships and supporting father involvement

A targeted intervention for young parents in conflictual and abusive relationships in Lambeth

A fast track to counselling services in Newcastle

Flexing and adapting delivery to better meet need in Newcastle

Adapting services to respond to emergent learning in Dorset

Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Luton

Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Newcastle

Evaluating the Parents as Partners programme in Manchester

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES

CASE STUDY

The programmes and onsite crèche facilities enabled the Local Family Offer to provide a holistic service to the families involved.

IMPACT

Recruitment to the programme was a challenge. Though the cohort of dads who went through the course was smaller than initially anticipated, case studies suggest that the intervention has had a high level of impact on the lives of the four families involved.

“All four dads developed sufficient trust to undertake the programme and see it through to the end.

The case studies indicate that Dads that attended the programme are no longer abusive, when they were before the programme to their partners compared to during and after the programme.

Before the programme, 3 of the 4 children whose fathers attended Caring Dads were on a child protection plan.

After the programme:

Client 1 child is no longer on a child protection programme

Client 2 child is no longer on a child protection programme

Client 3 child is no longer on a child protection plan.

There is now Shared Guardianship, where child was with an extended family member

Client 4 Co-parenting has improved with the mother”.

- Lambeth LFO phase 1 evaluation

CO-PRODUCING A RELATIONSHIPS AND CO-PARENTING AWARENESS PROGRAMME

In the next phase of the Local Family Offer Lambeth intend to work with parents to co-produce a relationship and co-parenting awareness raising programme.

They have been working with young parents to produce a film, which documents their lives as parents and the importance of respectful couple and co-parenting relationships. The film is aimed at young parents to be and practitioners.

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

Supporting resilient relationships through online resources

Integrating a relationship component into existing parenting provision in Luton

Drop in sessions for parents in schools in Dorset

Parents as Partners Programme: strengthening co-parental relationships and supporting father involvement

A targeted intervention for young parents in conflictual and abusive relationships in Lambeth

A fast track to counselling services in Newcastle

Flexing and adapting delivery to better meet need in Newcastle

Adapting services to respond to emergent learning in Dorset

Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Luton

Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Newcastle

Evaluating the Parents as Partners programme in Manchester

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES

CASE STUDY

A fast track to counselling services in Newcastle

The Local Family Offer in Newcastle was developed as an integral part of their strategy for troubled families. The Opportunity Assessment confirmed the high incidence of domestic violence, high levels of conflict and relationship instability.

Analysis of the local data revealed a cohort of young couples (16-25), living in the top 30% of the most deprived wards of the city, beset by significant socio-economic difficulties and with a history of living with poorly managed family conflict. This is a context of such high risk that it is more than likely that these couples will experience relationship difficulties when faced with the added pressure of a major life event such as the birth of a baby.

“This is central to all areas of family work. Inter-parental conflict has a huge impact on outcomes. We would expect all workers to bear that in mind, ask the questions, have a level of skill and competency to manage the responses to families but also knowing what is available in the City”

- Cath Elsy, Senior Practitioner, Early Help Team, Newcastle City Council

AN INTEGRATED PATHWAY

In phase 1 of the pilot, Newcastle set out to design a locality based integrated pathway for relationship support for the target vulnerable group of young families. Based on the learning

from phase one they have now extended the offer to include families of all ages.

They sought to increase accessibility to specialist counselling services provided by Relate with an enhanced referral system embedded within the Family Hub services.

Training was provided by Relate for the senior practitioners and family support workers to enhance their skills and confidence in identification and referral of parents who were most likely to benefit from the service. A relationship focus was embedded in monitoring, supervision and review.

“When you go into families it is very obvious when conflict is an issue and you can see the impact that has on the children. However, it is often difficult to know how to move that forward. As a Family Support Worker you can have that conversation but it is really important to recognise when it does need to be handed over to someone with more therapeutic training.”

- Jenny Hansom, Family Support Worker, Newcastle

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

Supporting resilient relationships through online resources

Integrating a relationship component into existing parenting provision in Luton

Drop in sessions for parents in schools in Dorset

Parents as Partners Programme: strengthening co-parental relationships and supporting father involvement

A targeted intervention for young parents in conflictual and abusive relationships in Lambeth

A fast track to counselling services in Newcastle

Flexing and adapting delivery to better meet need in Newcastle

Adapting services to respond to emergent learning in Dorset

Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Luton

Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Newcastle

Evaluating the Parents as Partners programme in Manchester

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES

CASE STUDY

IMPACT

So far nine couples have been fast-tracked to Relate and are being supported by one-to-one counselling. Fifteen sessions, equating to 30 people hours of therapy, have been provided. Newcastle's analysis of outcomes for their phase 1 evaluation suggests that there has been an improvement in the quality of adult relationships and mental health. Domestic violence and alcohol and drug use was reduced; some people moved into employment or training and some people were supported to secure their tenancy.

"We have attended five sessions, prior to these we had a lot of niggly arguments in front of the baby, we used to argue through text messaging and they used to escalate to serious fallouts and unreasonable behaviours. Following counselling we feel happier, we cope better with talking about feelings, we listen to each other better and we have agreed not to use texts to send niggly messages. We do not argue when the baby is about, we're aware of body language and only argue about serious issues. The number of times we argue has been greatly reduced and other family members have noticed we get on better and have less fallouts. We also use techniques learnt to manage relationships with other family members"

- Family quote, Newcastle phase 1 evaluation

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

- Supporting resilient relationships through online resources
- Integrating a relationship component into existing parenting provision in Luton
- Drop in sessions for parents in schools in Dorset
- Parents as Partners Programme: strengthening co-parental relationships and supporting father involvement
- A targeted intervention for young parents in conflictual and abusive relationships in Lambeth
- A fast track to counselling services in Newcastle
- Flexing and adapting delivery to better meet need in Newcastle
- Adapting services to respond to emergent learning in Dorset
- Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Luton
- Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Newcastle
- Evaluating the Parents as Partners programme in Manchester

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES

CASE STUDY

Flexing and adapting delivery to better meet need in Newcastle

Newcastle paid particular attention to the conditions that enable families to access support quickly once their need has been identified. They learnt that, in order to access the support available, some families need a considerable amount of help.

“Just getting mum to attend her appointment with a counsellor required a lot of work. We had to help her deal with her anxiety and supporting her to access the service became the priority.

It is of no use having a great service if for whatever reason people are not going to be able to access it.”

- Jenny Hansom, family Support Worker, Newcastle

They made a concerted effort to fit their service offer around families who have multiple and complex needs, often involved with multiple services and often in crisis. In practice, this meant anything from ensuring that conversations could take place in the most appropriate spaces to arranging transport and childcare, and from sending reminder texts to timing interventions to fit with family commitments.

“Making that pathway work has been a priority. We have been constantly refining and honing the service, responding to families’ needs to make it as smooth as possible. This means complex logistics: from transport, to childcare, timing and communication around the interactions.”

- Nick Price, CEO, Relate Newcastle - stakeholder group member

When asked about top learning and tips on ensuring that pathways to support are as smooth as possible, they mentioned:

- Getting the practical logistical processes right - ‘the smallest omission can mean precious support resource is wasted. Transport and childcare cut down attrition and barriers to a family taking up support’
- Some handholding for families from a practitioner they know as part of assessment and review makes it much more likely that families will take up support
- Training for frontline practitioners should enable them to provide some support and to refer when necessary - as opposed to systematically defaulting to referrals
- Good communication between teams is key to smooth and effective referrals and integrated support
- A steering group can play a very important role in leading the development and adaptation of the service in response to emergent learning

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

Supporting resilient relationships through online resources

Integrating a relationship component into existing parenting provision in Luton

Drop in sessions for parents in schools in Dorset

Parents as Partners Programme: strengthening co-parental relationships and supporting father involvement

A targeted intervention for young parents in conflictual and abusive relationships in Lambeth

A fast track to counselling services in Newcastle

Flexing and adapting delivery to better meet need in Newcastle

Adapting services to respond to emergent learning in Dorset

Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Luton

Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Newcastle

Evaluating the Parents as Partners programme in Manchester

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES



CASE STUDY

Adapting services to respond to emergent learning in Dorset

Dorset's Relationship Navigator is an innovation that emerged out of schools' difficulty in accessing relationship support services for their families.

Initially, the role was to be limited to providing advice and signposting for practitioners and did not include any direct work with families.

However, as some of the families that were referred to counselling services didn't follow up, the Navigator started having initial meetings with some parents to discuss their situation and outline possible support available.

This made clear that working directly with some families was extremely helpful. The Navigator, who is a trained family counsellor seconded from Relate, was able to take on a small caseload of parents to whom she offers counselling. This helps to ensure that the service does not 'lose' the most vulnerable people due to the delays in referral, or through having to establish a relationship with a different professional.

"In the beginning it was hard to turn down direct referrals for families. When you introduce delay you lose some families and these may be ones that really need the support. We have now flexed the role to address this. I can only hold a small caseload, but being able to directly offer more intensive support and continuity in the relationship makes a very big difference for some people."

- Michelle Hayes,
Relationship Navigator, Dorset

The role has evolved flexibly during the course of the project to respond to emergent learning. The plan is for this to be a two day per week post, with one and a half days spent on support and advice to professionals and supported conversations with families and half a day on direct counselling.

You can find the Relationship Navigator Job Description in the [Appendix](#).

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

Supporting resilient relationships through online resources

Integrating a relationship component into existing parenting provision in Luton

Drop in sessions for parents in schools in Dorset

Parents as Partners Programme: strengthening co-parental relationships and supporting father involvement

A targeted intervention for young parents in conflictual and abusive relationships in Lambeth

A fast track to counselling services in Newcastle

Flexing and adapting delivery to better meet need in Newcastle

Adapting services to respond to emergent learning in Dorset

Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Luton

Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Newcastle

Evaluating the Parents as Partners programme in Manchester

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES



CASE STUDY

Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Luton

As part of their Local Family Offer, Luton commissioned Relate to deliver a couple counselling service. They tracked the take-up and measured the impact of this service using a number of different tools:

SERVICE USE

A range of service use measures were recorded, such as number of referrals, number of hours offered and used, number of couples that took up the referral, number of sessions attended, and cancelled or 'DNA' appointments.

IMPACT ON PARENT(S)

Luton used ENRICH and PHQ-9 to look at the impact of the service on parents.

ENRICH is a validated relationship measure that looks at, for example, communication and issues affecting relationship quality. This was given to clients at every counselling session, including the initial and final sessions.

PHQ-9 is a nine-item scale taken from the larger Patient Health Questionnaire and provides a useful indication of psychological distress. The PHQ-9 was given to clients at every counselling session, including the initial and final sessions.

IMPACT ON CHILDREN

Parents completed the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) for any children over two at the first and last counselling session. The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire is a brief behavioural

screening questionnaire about 3-16 year olds. SDQ asks about 25 attributes divided between five scales: emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship problems, and prosocial behaviours.

You can see examples of impact measures in the Appendix with some information about how to use them.

USER EXPERIENCE

A series of case studies was also collected to obtain insight into parents' views of the service and the value of the provision.

WHAT ELSE COULD YOU DO?

Manchester's impact evaluation questionnaire included an opportunity to capture any comments from the children and the worker. It was completed at the start of engagement with the family, part way through and when support finished. This provided useful ongoing monitoring data.

You will find Manchester's relationship questionnaires in the [Appendix](#).

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

- Supporting resilient relationships through online resources
- Integrating a relationship component into existing parenting provision in Luton
 - Drop in sessions for parents in schools in Dorset
 - Parents as Partners Programme: strengthening co-parental relationships and supporting father involvement
 - A targeted intervention for young parents in conflictual and abusive relationships in Lambeth
 - A fast track to counselling services in Newcastle
 - Flexing and adapting delivery to better meet need in Newcastle
 - Adapting services to respond to emergent learning in Dorset
- Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Luton
- Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Newcastle
- Evaluating the Parents as Partners programme in Manchester

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES



CASE STUDY

Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Newcastle

Newcastle commissioned Relate to deliver a counselling service for parents identified by practitioners as in need of intensive relationship support.

Parents were invited by Relate to complete questionnaires before and after the counselling.

The pre-counselling questionnaire identified issues clients were seeking help for and the post-counselling questionnaire asked clients to rate their level of conflict, the quality of their communication and the impact of counselling on any issues they had identified. You can look at the questionnaires in the [Appendix](#).

Referring practitioners were also asked to rate how severe difficulties were at the time of referral and following the intervention on a scale of 0 - 10.

In addition, Relate have provided case studies on parents who have made use of the service.

WHAT ELSE COULD YOU DO?

You could also use validated measures that are completed by parents or by practitioners to look at the impact of the service on different aspects of the inter-parental relationship, such as conflict or communication or other aspects of family functioning.

Using validated measures means you can be confident that you are really measuring what you think you are measuring. You can also compare your results with other interventions that use the same measures.

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

Supporting resilient relationships through online resources

Integrating a relationship component into existing parenting provision in Luton

Drop in sessions for parents in schools in Dorset

Parents as Partners Programme: strengthening co-parental relationships and supporting father involvement

A targeted intervention for young parents in conflictual and abusive relationships in Lambeth

A fast track to counselling services in Newcastle

Flexing and adapting delivery to better meet need in Newcastle

Adapting services to respond to emergent learning in Dorset

Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Luton

Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Newcastle

Evaluating the Parents as Partners programme in Manchester

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES



CASE STUDY

Evaluating the Parents as Partners programme in Manchester

Manchester ran Parents as Partners courses as part of their Local Family Offer, like a number of other local authorities.

The course includes a series of validated measures in the form of questionnaires that are designed to assess changes in:

- Parents' psychological well-being
- Levels of stress in relation to parenting
- Couple relationship quality
- Father engagement
- Children's emotional and behavioural wellbeing

Questionnaires were administered by trained group workers and family caseworkers before group sessions began. These were repeated immediately following the end of the programme and once again six months later.

You can find Manchester's LFO questionnaires in the [Appendix](#).

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

Supporting resilient relationships through online resources

Integrating a relationship component into existing parenting provision in Luton

Drop in sessions for parents in schools in Dorset

Parents as Partners Programme: strengthening co-parental relationships and supporting father involvement

A targeted intervention for young parents in conflictual and abusive relationships in Lambeth

A fast track to counselling services in Newcastle

Flexing and adapting delivery to better meet need in Newcastle

Adapting services to respond to emergent learning in Dorset

Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Luton

Evaluating the impact of relationship support services in Newcastle

Evaluating the Parents as Partners programme in Manchester

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES



CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESS



[BACK TO INDEX](#)

THE CHALLENGE

In order to create a system where conflict between parents is prevented or resolved early and effectively, it is necessary, but not sufficient, to:

1. Engage in appropriate and targeted workforce development
2. Create a comprehensive pathway of support with tailored, flexible interventions.

The third part of the formula is to change the culture of service providers. Without the recognition that healthy inter-parental relationships underpin many of the outcomes for children, adults and families that local agencies are responsible for, a relationship offer will only ever be a 'bolt on', which does not fulfil the strategic potential of this agenda. It will also be vulnerable to budget cuts.

"Somebody at the strategic level has to want it, they have to be persuaded that this is the answer to many of the problem they need to solve."

- Honor Rhodes, Director of Strategic Development, Tavistock Relationships

"We are investing substantially in parenting programmes, but where there is significant parental conflict going on, if we are not also investing in addressing the inter parental conflict, we are simply pouring resources down the drain. It is simply wasted effort. We haven't done this work as a bolt on, we have incorporated our planning around this into our work in Early Years. This is a critical workstream in our wider '1001 critical days' strategy."

- Colin Williams, Senior Specialist, Newcastle City Council

DEVELOPING
THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A
PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE,
SYSTEM & PROCESSES

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies



[BACK TO INDEX](#)

THINGS YOU CAN DO:

Changing the Culture

Every single LFO locality says that engaging with **evidence** around the impact of parental conflict on children's outcomes was crucial to getting buy-in to this agenda. Many localities were, to various degrees, already recognising the importance of relationships, but the LFO programme brought the issue into sharper focus and created important momentum around the work.

"The evidence on inter-parental relationships dropped like a very large penny. Before, if you had asked the question 'Do you think it's a good idea for parents to shout and swear at each other in front of their children?' most people would have answered 'No'. But their answer would have been based on ideas of common decency rather than on science. Now we have clear evidence that this is actually damaging to child development. It means we can say, for example to GPs 'Doing something about parental conflict is your business as much as tackling smoking in the household is. Its impact on children is as harmful, both in terms of direct outcomes and in terms of learnt behaviour.'"

- Colin Williams, Senior Specialist,
Newcastle City Council

"We already talked about relationships a lot - people respond to this. It is not a new concept, but this does not mean that people are asking these questions. Often practitioners don't feel it is their job to do it. ...Some people don't like asking this because they don't know what to do once they get the answer back. This work has been about helping people to tune in to what they already know and giving them explicit permission to act."

- Clare Burrell, Head of commissioning for vulnerable people, Essex County Council

Making sense of local data in relation to the national evidence on inter-parental relationships enabled localities to develop their specific case for change and target their offer accordingly.

For example, Croydon decided to bring a focus on relationships into assessments in their Gateway service, which supports people and families at risk of financial instability. Newcastle decided to focus their offer specifically on those families for whom a combination of two factors are at play: poor material circumstances and poor family functioning - which suggests that children are at significant risk of poor outcomes. Dorset identified that Weymouth has the 4th highest separation rates in the country and decided to target their pilot offer to this area.

A strong evidence base and a **clear local case for change** supported LFO leads' efforts to create buy-in to the relationships agenda. Localities whose **senior leaders were committed** to the LFO work found it easier to embed the relationships offer at the heart of their wider service offer. This meant that they saw relationships as underpinning and enhancing the existing offer.

DEVELOPING
THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A
PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE,
SYSTEM & PROCESSES

The challenge

Things you can do

Changing the Culture

Changing the processes
and ways of working

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies



BACK TO INDEX

THINGS YOU CAN DO:

Changing the Culture

“We sited the programme of work in a strategy that has a lot of energy and focus from the top strategic level right down to the operational level..”

- Stephanie Cash, Children’s Trust Business and Commissioning Manager, Luton Borough Council

Working from the bottom up to raise awareness and gain support also proved important to bring about a shift in culture.

For example, Hertfordshire and Blackburn both recruited an enthusiastic group of Relationship Ambassadors whose job it is to raise awareness among their colleagues and support best practice around relationships. Blackpool worked with a multidisciplinary group of frontline practitioners to develop their toolkit to support relationship questioning.

“Stakeholder involvement has been key in the development of our offer. Get practitioners and managers involved at the beginning and they are more likely to buy into the change you want to bring about and engage with it. You need them to tell you it is a problem and to be part of the solution – that’s how you get good feedback about what will and won’t work.”

- Ruth Fennemore, Development Manager, Family Support, Hertfordshire County Council

In many pilot localities the LFO work was embraced and taken forward by **partnerships** of agencies who had a history of collaboration. This created opportunities to embed the relationships

offer into other strategic initiatives and to have conversations about how different ways of working could use the resources available across the systems to the best effect.

For example, Luton’s Local Family Offer was sponsored by the partnership board that oversees the Flying Start programme and became embedded in the roll out of Flying Start. Dorset developed their offer in close partnership with the Chesil Education Partnership and voluntary sector colleagues. The different perspectives brought by the partners enabled the creation of a brand new Relationships Navigator role, which is creating a stronger connection between the Early Help offer and schools.

“As a group of schools, we are very keen that the window we have on children and families’ lives is used fully and we are always trying to find new ways of doing things differently and working in partnership with others..”

- Vicky Prior, Chair, Chesil Education Partnership

“As a local authority our mindset is that of facilitators. We don’t have to deliver everything ourselves. Rather than the money just sitting with us in the local authority, we are looking for opportunities to collaborate with others to make the most of our collective resources.”

- Patrick Myers, Assistant Director - Design and Development, Childrens Services, Dorset County Council

DEVELOPING
THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A
PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE,
SYSTEM & PROCESSES

The challenge

Things you can do

Changing the Culture

Changing the processes
and ways of working

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

RELATED CASE STUDIES

Leading change from the top:
Newcastle

Leading change from the bottom
up: Hertfordshire Ambassadors



BACK TO INDEX

THINGS YOU CAN DO:

Changing Processes and Ways of Working

As well as practitioners leading change from the top-down and bottom-up, processes and working practices need to change to embed a focus on relationships in the existing and emerging models of delivery.

Assessment processes and systems for collecting, sharing and interrogating data need to be adapted to embed the focus on inter-parental relationships.

For example, Blackburn have updated their CAF assessment forms, which are shared by professionals across different agencies, and have adapted their audit and assurance documentation to reflect the new focus on relationships.

"If we want this to become just the way we do things, we need to prompt relationship questioning in interactions with families, we need to record these conversations in our system, feature relationship questioning in supervision and interrogate the data we are collecting to deepen our understanding of the issues and target our response."

- Tracy Lysons, Family Support and Outreach Manager, Blackburn

Dorset have developed a predictive modelling tool that enables them to gather and analyse data about target families to inform interventions. Gateshead are creating a new outcomes framework for Early Help, which includes indicators and outcomes around relationship work. And Essex, in partnership

with Hertfordshire, are developing an Outcomes Star for relationship quality.

"We are going to invest in different ways of measuring the impact of this work. We are doing that because we feel that this is important to build an evidence base for the future."

- Gavin Bradshaw, Team manager, Family Intervention Team, Gateshead Council

Drawing on their experiences of implementing their Local Family Offer, a number of local authorities recognised that to fully realise the preventative potential of relationships work, **cross service collaboration** is necessary. Many localities are working to embed the relationships offer into the multidisciplinary teams that are emerging as a result of a concerted effort to more integrated and family centred working.

For example, Newcastle are rethinking the design of children's social care provision with a strong multidisciplinary and collaborative focus and embedding the inter-parental relationships lens in it. Dorset will include a relationships element in their Family Partnership Zones support offer. Blackpool are exploring the development of an Early Help Duty System approach. This is about deploying experienced practitioners from the

DEVELOPING
THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A
PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE,
SYSTEM & PROCESSES

The challenge

Things you can do

Changing the Culture

Changing the processes
and ways of working

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies



BACK TO INDEX

THINGS YOU CAN DO:

Changing Processes and Ways of Working

Early Help workforce to support colleagues across different services. The idea is to promote more collaborative working as an alternative to the default referral culture. Essex and Luton are also planning to roll out their training and awareness raising to colleagues in other departments like health, police and housing.

“Don’t just think about your traditional easy to reach professionals - there are lots of other roles for whom it is important to be aware of relationships. Our colleagues in housing, for example, are very well placed to pick up the early signs of things going wrong in families.”

- Stephanie Cash, Children’s Trust Business and Commissioning Manager, Luton Borough Council

Dorset and Croydon developed ‘Hub’ models of working as part of their pilots - Croydon through their Parenting and Relationships Hub function, which initiates, coordinates and supports work to embed relationships in their ‘business as usual’. Dorset have the Relationships Navigator who acts as the first point of contact and support for frontline staff, as well as families, and makes connections between the existing offer and the need identified in schools.

A number of other local authorities, including Westminster, Newcastle and Gateshead, also recognised the value of creating a role within the local authority that holds responsibility for taking forward the relationships agenda, and has specialist skills and dedicated time to developing this strand of work. They have included this in

their plans for phase 2.

“We plan to create the first ‘Relationship Navigator’ post for the LA. This will take a lead role in promoting, delivering and evaluating the (group) Parents as Partners programme. The Navigator will also provide a family support role. A key learning outcome from Phase 1 has been the need for protecting time to develop this pathway through a designated role. We will develop a Job Profile which gives the appointee responsibility for supporting a network of relationship ‘champions’ across services and to continuously map and promote relationship support across the LA, health and the local voluntary sector.”

- Gateshead, Phase 2 strategy

DEVELOPING
THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A
PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE,
SYSTEM & PROCESSES

The challenge

Things you can do

Changing the Culture

Changing the processes
and ways of working

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

RELATED CASE STUDIES

Making assessment focus on relationships in Blackburn

Using data to inform strategy and delivery in Dorset and Croydon.

A system approach to prevention: the role for relationships in Croydon’s offer for families at risk of financial instability

Relationships at the heart of a whole system approach in Dorset



BACK TO INDEX

THE CHANGES YOU CAN EXPECT TO SEE AND HOW TO MEASURE CHANGE

Because the changes that you make to the system are designed to change practice and improve outcomes for families, you are likely to take the same approach to measuring the impact of system change as for measuring the impact of workforce development and developing the service offer.

You might also include some system level measures to check that the system changes are in place and working as you expect, that they are being received positively by parents, partner organisations and practitioners, or to demonstrate you have made the type of changes planned. Approaches could include:

- Practitioner views on the effectiveness of tools that have been developed and ease of use (e.g. how well referral pathways are working or their experiences of using relationship-focused questions in assessment processes)
- Parents' feedback on service pathways or on their experiences of identifying sources of help
- Qualitative feedback from partner organisations on information sharing processes
- An audit of available services against identified need once new pathways have been established
- Cost effectiveness assessments or other means of demonstrating value for money

DEVELOPING
THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A
PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE,
SYSTEM & PROCESSES

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

RELATED CASE STUDIES

Changing culture and practice:
measuring the impact of
Hertfordshire's Relationship
Ambassadors

Tracking the use of couple
relationship questions in the
CAF Assessment in Blackpool



[BACK TO INDEX](#)

KEY LEARNING ON CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

LEADERSHIP MATTERS

The direct involvement and support of senior leadership and buy in from frontline practitioners through 'ambassadors' and community of practice initiatives have played a very important role in the success of many LFOs.

RELATIONSHIPS AS CORE, NOT BOLT ON

The development of a strong local offer had the most traction when localities recognised that the focus on relationships should be embedded into the core service provision, not treated as a bolt-on.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING AT THE HEART OF A SYSTEMIC APPROACH

In a number of pilot localities the LFO was developed building on strong existing partnerships across different services and local agencies. This meant recognising from the start the importance of inter-parental relationships to everybody's core business.

INCLUDE A FOCUS ON RELATIONSHIPS IN ASSESSMENT AND REVIEW PROCESSES

...to prompt relationships questioning, monitor the impact of relationship support and embed this way of working into 'business as usual'.

USE DATA, BUILD EVIDENCE

Use data to target your offer, review it and interrogate it. Adapt to evolving need. Build an evidence base for the impact.

CREATE SPACES FOR INNOVATION AND REFLECTION

The LFO programme carved out a protected space for teams to innovate and reflect on how they would bring about change in their locality. This is essential but not easy to achieve in the context of competing priorities and constrained resources.

PUT RESOURCE INTO TAKING THE AGENDA FORWARD

An important lesson from the programme is the need to resource the efforts to make the Local Family Offer a reality. A number of LFO localities recognised the value of creating a role within the local authority that holds responsibility for taking the offer forward, has specialist skills and dedicated time to developing this strand of work.

"When staff ask me 'Will this distract us from the day job?' My answer is: 'This IS the day job.'"

- Gavin Bradshaw, Team manager, Family Intervention Team, Gateshead Council

"If we are serious about making a difference, then we need a well equipped workforce who are confident to talk about inter-parental conflict with parents and who know how and when to offer help; a broad range of services that are accessible and available when needed and a shift in culture to think about inter-parental relationships as an important part of the picture."

- Jan Mitcheson, Deputy Director, Innovation, One Plus One

DEVELOPING
THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A
PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE,
SYSTEM & PROCESSES

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies



BACK TO INDEX

KEY LEARNING ON CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

Helpful resources you can browse in the [Appendix](#):

- Hertfordshire Ambassadors Job Description
- Hertfordshire Ambassadors bulletin
- Ambassador evaluation framework
- Ambassador evaluation form
- Blackburn CAF assessment form
- Presentation on Dorset's Dashboard
- Presentation on Croydon's Parenting and Relationships Hub

DEVELOPING
THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A
PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE,
SYSTEM & PROCESSES

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies



[BACK TO INDEX](#)

CASE STUDY

Leading change from the top: Newcastle

As in many other pilot localities, the LFO programme in Newcastle augmented, complemented and benefited from a number of parallel and previous strategic initiatives.

The fact that Newcastle City Council could also count on a strong and longstanding team of senior leaders and middle managers was an important supporting factor to the successful embedding of the relationship agenda at the heart of Newcastle's children's strategy.

THE POWER OF EVIDENCE

Newcastle invested in championing the relationship agenda across the system. They held an event where they shared the compelling evidence so clearly set out by [Professor Gordon Harold's review](#) with over 50 practitioners, managers and decision makers. They also ensured that the issue of relationships was considered in a themed discussion on children at the Health and Wellbeing Board and widely disseminated the message across their networks.

Colin Williams, one of the senior leaders behind Newcastle's LFO, says that stripping down the evidence to a small number of clear and compelling statements has really helped to

make the case and the messages have been overwhelmingly well received across the system.

Within their Sure Start provision, Newcastle had been working to counter a 'default referral' culture by promoting the notion that all the key issues that affect child development are every professional's business. This means that the majority of the workforce was open to embracing the challenge of tackling relationship issues in their conversations with parents. For children's services practitioners in particular, this brought a sharper focus to the relational work they were already doing with parents and children.

"The evidence hammers it home. In the context of a pretty well-performing system and a workforce committed to working holistically with families, we had a receptive audience for the message. So that was an easy door to be pushing."

- Colin Williams, Senior Specialist, Newcastle City Council

DEVELOPING
THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A
PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE,
SYSTEM & PROCESSES

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

Leading change from the top:
Newcastle

Leading change from the bottom
up: Hertfordshire Ambassadors

Making assessment focus on
relationships in Blackburn

Using data to inform strategy and
delivery in Dorset and Croydon.

A system approach to prevention:
the role for relationships in
Croydon's offer for families at risk of
financial instability

Relationships at the heart of a
whole system approach in Dorset

Changing culture and practice:
measuring the impact of
Hertfordshire's Relationship
Ambassadors

Tracking the use of couple
relationship questions in the
Early Help Assessment in Blackpool



BACK TO INDEX

CASE STUDY

LEADING CHANGE IS ABOUT LISTENING AND LOOKING FOR SOLUTIONS

However, there was some resistance from parts of the workforce, particularly from people in non specialist roles whose capacity is already stretched and who saw relationship questioning as just 'one too many tasks'. When this happened, LFO programme leaders engaged in conversation with different groups to understand barriers and think together about how they could be tackled.

LEADING CHANGE IS ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

When asked about the key ingredients to strong change-focused leadership, Colin Williams mentions establishing credibility, cultivating relationships and creating space for innovation.

In his role as Senior Specialist he is in the unusual position where he can offer challenge, support and steer to service managers, without having direct responsibility for their service. His deep expertise in children's services and experience of leading change processes enables him to bring strong and credible source of challenge and support from the senior leadership to the managers who implement the programme.

Establishing and cultivating relationships with people across the system; engaging with colleagues on the basis of an open and genuine interest for their perspective and concerns and with a mindset of reciprocal help; and having enough flex to allow for reflective practice and innovation have proved key to the success of Newcastle's approach.

"I am a social worker by practice and though I haven't practiced in a long time, the relational fundamentals of the profession stayed with me. Establishing relationships with people and using these relationships as a force to affect change is as relevant a strategy when you are dealing with clients as when you are trying to bring about culture and system change."

- Colin Williams Senior Specialist, Newcastle City Council

THE ONLY CERTAINTY IS THAT THINGS WILL CHANGE

It is not easy to do this work when we are asking ever more of our services in a context of ever declining resources. Things change a lot and very quickly. Newcastle feel they have created capacity to deal with this reality by consciously cultivating a group of middle managers who see their role as both 'doing the day job' and managing change. They strive to achieve continuity as opposed to chasing the 'flavour of the month'. They have three-year rather than one-year budgeting cycles, which allow for a longer planning cycle and explicitly build a narrative of consistency and continuity in their services.

"It is like holding a Kaleidoscope. When your hand gets knocked the pattern shifts, but you can reconstruct a pattern. We try to create a narrative of continuity among the change."

- Colin Williams Senior Specialist, Newcastle City Council

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

Leading change from the top: Newcastle

Leading change from the bottom up: Hertfordshire Ambassadors

Making assessment focus on relationships in Blackburn

Using data to inform strategy and delivery in Dorset and Croydon.

A system approach to prevention: the role for relationships in Croydon's offer for families at risk of financial instability

Relationships at the heart of a whole system approach in Dorset

Changing culture and practice: measuring the impact of Hertfordshire's Relationship Ambassadors

Tracking the use of couple relationship questions in the Early Help Assessment in Blackpool



BACK TO INDEX

CASE STUDY

Leading change from the bottom up: Hertfordshire's Ambassadors

Hertfordshire's stakeholder-led approach to strengthening parental relationships involved creating a group of Relationship Ambassadors to spread the message to other practitioners and lead change in their own areas or practice teams.

The idea is that Ambassadors will be champions for the importance of healthy relationships, raising awareness of the issue and supporting colleagues in their practice around couple and co-parental relationships.

This group of practitioners was recruited from among participants in the Brief Encounters® training courses. The response to the invitation to join the Ambassadors group was overwhelming - over 63% of training participants were keen to be Ambassadors.

THE JOB OF AMBASSADORS

The team agreed an Ambassador Job Description which sets out what each Ambassador is committing to and the support available to them. Ambassadors then work out their own SMART objectives in the context of their practitioner role and 'pledge' to see them through. Each Ambassador must send in a case study, which provides evidence of their work and

also contributes to the programme evaluation. In turn, Ambassadors can attend regular network meetings. This is a chance to talk about how things are going but also to get the Ambassadors' invaluable insights into the resources Hertfordshire develops.

For example, Hertfordshire invited the Ambassadors to comment on the prototype toolkit for practitioners. A regular Ambassador bulletin is circulated.

Ambassadors have priority access to any inter-parental relationship training, such as Hertfordshire's locally developed Parents at War training.

Hertfordshire plans to run a train the trainer programme with its Ambassadors. This will enable them to deliver awareness workshops in the Local Authority as well as enhancing their own expertise.

DEVELOPING
THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A
PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE,
SYSTEM & PROCESSES

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

Leading change from the top:
Newcastle

Leading change from the bottom
up: Hertfordshire Ambassadors

Making assessment focus on
relationships in Blackburn

Using data to inform strategy and
delivery in Dorset and Croydon.

A system approach to prevention:
the role for relationships in
Croydon's offer for families at risk of
financial instability

Relationships at the heart of a
whole system approach in Dorset

Changing culture and practice:
measuring the impact of
Hertfordshire's Relationship
Ambassadors

Tracking the use of couple
relationship questions in the
Early Help Assessment in Blackpool



BACK TO INDEX

CASE STUDY

SEEING THE IMPACT

It is early days yet to see what impact Hertfordshire's culture change initiative is having, but the team have put in place an evaluation framework that enables them to assess the impact of the different approaches each ambassador takes. Each ambassador's progress against their pledge is measured at one, three and six month intervals. They are also monitoring the number of referrals to counselling and mediation from Ambassadors and will be gathering data from the case studies.

"Stakeholder engagement been really helpful in shaping the programme. Their ideas have shaped our LFO bid and we are now relying on them to refer to services. Because these people have been involved from the start it means their engagement has been high. And those practitioners - for example from across Children's Centres, health visiting, Troubled Families, local school partnership have been able to raise the issue with practitioners in their own areas."

- Ruth Fennemore, Development Manager, Family Support, Hertfordshire County Council

KEY LEARNING

Hertfordshire found that recruiting the Ambassadors was a pivotal moment in the programme as they were surprised at how many practitioners volunteered.

"This changed the thinking around what we should do and how to use the Champions. It meant we had to develop a clearer focus and strategy. Recruiting the champions and the subsequent work then also gave the project a new momentum and spurred on the development of the directory and referral pathways to ensure that Ambassadors had signposting options in place."

- Ruth Fennemore, Development Manager, Family Support, Hertfordshire County Council

The team also realised that they needed to ensure that initial enthusiasm translated into commitment over the long-term. To help this happen they came up with the idea of the Ambassador's pledge and put an accountability structure in place.

You can find the Hertfordshire Ambassador Job Description and Ambassador Bulletin in the [Appendix](#).

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

Leading change from the top: Newcastle

Leading change from the bottom up: Hertfordshire Ambassadors

Making assessment focus on relationships in Blackburn

Using data to inform strategy and delivery in Dorset and Croydon.

A system approach to prevention: the role for relationships in Croydon's offer for families at risk of financial instability

Relationships at the heart of a whole system approach in Dorset

Changing culture and practice: measuring the impact of Hertfordshire's Relationship Ambassadors

Tracking the use of couple relationship questions in the Early Help Assessment in Blackpool



BACK TO INDEX

CASE STUDY

Making assessment focus on relationships in Blackburn

Blackburn launched an Early Help strategy in 2013, which has driven a number of key developments to assess and respond to the unmet needs of children and their families. Central to the strategy has been the redevelopment of the Early Help assessment tool, CAF.

Work to develop the CAF has focused on raising the quality of the assessment, improving analysis of the information gathered and developing of SMART action plans for unmet needs.

RETHINKING CAF TO GET A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF PARENTS' NEEDS

As part of the review of the CAF assessment Blackburn has embedded the use of routine enquiry about parents' adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) to develop a deeper understanding of parents' needs.

When they became part of the LFO programme the team knew from routine auditing of CAFs that the couple relationship did not feature strongly in their assessment process.

They considered this a missed opportunity to consider relationships as a protective factor for the children. So, learning from their experience

of building ACE questioning into the assessment, they developed additional questioning on inter-parental relationships as part of their routine enquiry.

You can find Blackburn's assessment form in the [Appendix](#).

CHANGING PROCESSES AND WAYS OF WORKING

The team reviewed CAF documentation to include prompts for relationship questioning. The captured data can be analysed to support the development of SMART plans of activities. They also amended their audit and assurance documentation and processes to support this change in practice.

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

Leading change from the top: Newcastle

Leading change from the bottom up: Hertfordshire Ambassadors

Making assessment focus on relationships in Blackburn

Using data to inform strategy and delivery in Dorset and Croydon.

A system approach to prevention: the role for relationships in Croydon's offer for families at risk of financial instability

Relationships at the heart of a whole system approach in Dorset

Changing culture and practice: measuring the impact of Hertfordshire's Relationship Ambassadors

Tracking the use of couple relationship questions in the Early Help Assessment in Blackpool



BACK TO INDEX

CASE STUDY

“CAF documentation prior to the review focused on the needs of individual children and whilst parents’ needs were detailed, full assessment of these were not evidenced or undertaken robustly.”

- Tracy Lysons, Family Support and Outreach Manager, Blackburn

In 2015/16, 485 children in Blackburn were supported by a CAF, a number that has grown in recent years. CAFs are led by a wide range of professionals from across different agencies, including community health providers, Children’s Centres, troubled families, schools and the third sector. The multidisciplinary nature of the partnerships that form around these assessments make CAFs a particularly strategic focus for embedding relationship questioning.

Blackburn have an e-system that enables professionals across different services to gather and share information and makes it easier to analyse data on a regular basis.

Anecdotal findings and an increase in CAF numbers suggest that there is a real appetite across partner services for working in this way. The approach that Blackburn have taken has been to focus on embedding routine practice, while reviewing processes and making changes on an ongoing basis, rather than stopping and starting when things don’t quite work.

You can find Blackburn’s assessment form in the [Appendix](#).

DEVELOPING
THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A
PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE,
SYSTEM & PROCESSES

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

Leading change from the top:
Newcastle

Leading change from the bottom
up: Hertfordshire Ambassadors

Making assessment focus on
relationships in Blackburn

Using data to inform strategy and
delivery in Dorset and Croydon.

A system approach to prevention:
the role for relationships in
Croydon’s offer for families at risk of
financial instability

Relationships at the heart of a
whole system approach in Dorset

Changing culture and practice:
measuring the impact of
Hertfordshire’s Relationship
Ambassadors

Tracking the use of couple
relationship questions in the
Early Help Assessment in Blackpool



BACK TO INDEX

CASE STUDY

Using data to inform strategy and delivery in Dorset and Croydon

USING DATA TO TARGET SERVICES IN CROYDON

Croydon's Opportunity Assessment highlighted high levels of unemployment, low pay and homelessness. Mindful of the evidence that links relationship conflict and financial or housing stress, Croydon saw the potential to identify families most at risk of relationship difficulties through their Gateway service.

Gateway is Croydon's one-stop shop delivering housing, welfare, employment and debt support services via the Council's 'front door'.



With the help of their data analysis team Croydon were able to identify the number of families in contact with Gateway who may be

at risk of relationship difficulties as a result of financial and housing pressures and made a strong case for including relationships in their assessment of family needs as part of Gateway's 'brief'.

They found that out of the 10,000 families known to Gateway in 2015/2016 (which includes just under 20,000 children) 2,676 families were in receipt of income related benefits such as Income Support, Employment Support Allowance or Jobseeker's Allowance.

A further 900 families were in arrears to the council and more than 800 households containing over 1,800 children were expected to be affected by the benefit cap. 1,680 households approach the council as homeless annually. Croydon's experience highlighted how families in temporary accommodation were also often involved in social care and vulnerable to family instability.

Identifying a clear target group also meant Croydon could build effective monitoring processes into its systems to assess the impact of its LFO programme on families making use of Gateway's service.

Dorset are structuring their family support

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

Leading change from the top: Newcastle

Leading change from the bottom up: Hertfordshire Ambassadors

Making assessment focus on relationships in Blackburn

Using data to inform strategy and delivery in Dorset and Croydon.

A system approach to prevention: the role for relationships in Croydon's offer for families at risk of financial instability

Relationships at the heart of a whole system approach in Dorset

Changing culture and practice: measuring the impact of Hertfordshire's Relationship Ambassadors

Tracking the use of couple relationship questions in the Early Help Assessment in Blackpool



BACK TO INDEX

CASE STUDY

DORSET'S DATA DASHBOARD – IDENTIFYING AT RISK FAMILIES EARLY

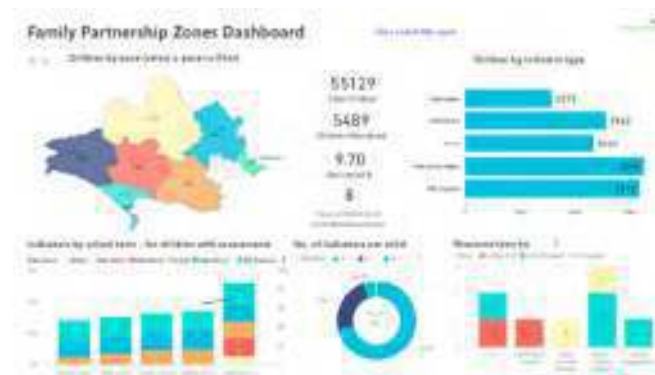
Dorset are structuring their family support around seven 'Family Partnership Zones' (FPZ), which are geographical areas linked to Dorset school pyramid areas. The business intelligence team are developing a tool which will help to identify the most vulnerable children and families in each zone thereby providing support at the earliest opportunity and ensuring resources are targeted effectively.

The 'Dashboard' brings together data from multiple sources including key indices such as school attendance, free school meals, low level special educational needs, troubled families, failing to progress and zone specific data.

As well as identifying the most vulnerable and at risk children and families, the Dashboard provides a vehicle for monitoring outcomes. Over time it will provide unique insight into trends, highlight good practice and signal areas for improvement.

"We are having conversations with partner schools that are informed by this data - these are feedback rather than performance management conversations. Professionals tell us that having access to this information helps them work better in partnership with other agencies. They say they now know what they need to do and don't need to refer to other professionals. They are talking together rather than referring to each other."

- Claire Shiels, Business Intelligence Manager, Dorset County Council



DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

Leading change from the top: Newcastle

Leading change from the bottom up: Hertfordshire Ambassadors

Making assessment focus on relationships in Blackburn

Using data to inform strategy and delivery in Dorset and Croydon.

A system approach to prevention: the role for relationships in Croydon's offer for families at risk of financial instability

Relationships at the heart of a whole system approach in Dorset

Changing culture and practice: measuring the impact of Hertfordshire's Relationship Ambassadors

Tracking the use of couple relationship questions in the Early Help Assessment in Blackpool



BACK TO INDEX

CASE STUDY

A system approach to prevention: the role for relationships in Croydon's offer for families at risk of financial instability

As part of their analysis as a pilot site for universal credit, Croydon realised that the same people were coming into contact with council services about rent arrears, tax arrears and benefit queries. They created Gateway to address all these issues, and more, under one roof.

Drawing from the evidence on inter-parental conflict, they also identified financial instability and homelessness as major risk factors for the quality of couple and co-parenting relationships and contributing factors to negative outcomes for a significant number of children within the borough.

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

The hypothesis underpinning Croydon's Family Offer is that if parents are helped to identify and address relationship stressors at the same time as tackling financial instability, this may have a greater impact on longer term outcomes for children and young people than when addressing financial instability as a separate factor.

The pilot increased the integration of Gateway Services with the council's Early Help Hub so that families would be able to access support or advice in relation to wider family needs.

"We want to create opportunities for our services to come together and provide support around a family rather than from separate perspectives. We are working towards a whole system approach, where all parts of the system work effectively together with the family at the heart of services."

- Mark Fowler, Director for Gateway and Welfare, Croydon Council

A HUB TO SUPPORT RELATIONSHIPS

Croydon established a Parenting and Relationships Hub to be the first point of contact or queries related to Croydon's family offer. The Hub coordinates workforce development activity and the development of a graduated offer. It also provides quality assurance on the delivery of evidence based interventions.

The Hub plays an instrumental role in embedding and sustaining the relationships offer across the system.

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

Leading change from the top: Newcastle

Leading change from the bottom up: Hertfordshire Ambassadors

Making assessment focus on relationships in Blackburn

Using data to inform strategy and delivery in Dorset and Croydon.

A system approach to prevention: the role for relationships in Croydon's offer for families at risk of financial instability

Relationships at the heart of a whole system approach in Dorset

Changing culture and practice: measuring the impact of Hertfordshire's Relationship Ambassadors

Tracking the use of couple relationship questions in the Early Help Assessment in Blackpool



BACK TO INDEX

CASE STUDY

Amongst her other functions, the Hub Coordinator is supporting a 'virtual team' of parenting experts drawn from across different services (health visitors, family support workers, etc.), who are deployed to deliver group parenting support with a focus on parental relationships and how they affect child outcomes.

You can find a presentation on the functions of Croydon's Parenting and Relationships Hub in the [Appendix](#).

A monitoring system and referral pathway to Early Help were also established. The Parents as Partners programme was set up as part of the pilot, with a cohort of Early Help, social work and health visiting workers trained to deliver the programme.

WHAT HAS CHANGED

Early findings suggest that members of staff feel better equipped to spot the signs of relationship distress and more confident about asking questions on couple and co-parental relationships. Records indicate that inter-parental relationships now feature in practitioner conversations with families and that people are accessing self help resources on relationships.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Croydon's ambition for the next phase of development of their Local Family Offer includes:

- extending the training offer on inter-parental relationships to more Gateway advisors and to the wider workforce;
- developing a graduated support offer from self-help resources to evidence based programmes;
- establishing a monitoring and evaluation framework that identifies the impact on families, the workforce and budget;
- embedding a systemic approach, where inter-parental relationships are considered across the whole family system.

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

Leading change from the top:
Newcastle

Leading change from the bottom
up: Hertfordshire Ambassadors

Making assessment focus on
relationships in Blackburn

Using data to inform strategy and
delivery in Dorset and Croydon.

A system approach to prevention:
the role for relationships in
Croydon's offer for families at risk of
financial instability

Relationships at the heart of a
whole system approach in Dorset

Changing culture and practice:
measuring the impact of
Hertfordshire's Relationship
Ambassadors

Tracking the use of couple
relationship questions in the
Early Help Assessment in Blackpool



BACK TO INDEX

CASE STUDY

Relationships at the heart of Dorset's whole family approach

THE LOCAL CONTEXT

When analysing their data, Dorset identified Weymouth and Portland as areas with the highest level of variation in outcomes compared to the rest of the county. Moreover, the rates of children who have additional needs and rates of pupils with behavioural and emotional issues, and the data on teenage pregnancy, ill-health and homelessness suggest that families in these areas are experiencing stressors that put significant pressure on couple and co-parenting relationships.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Dorset chose to focus the pilot on a specific, high-need area, so that they could see clearly the impact of the work and draw out learning for replicating and spreading the approach more widely.

The partnership that was formed to support the pilot included: schools, provider health services, parent carer council, the local authority and the local voluntary and community sector. From their different perspectives, the partners shared a clear understanding that, in order to maximise the impact they each were trying to have on children's outcomes, they needed to work with

parents and that the quality of inter-parental relationships was a very important piece of the jigsaw.

"We are acutely aware of the fact that negative co-parenting negates the effectiveness of the work of schools. We need to use all of our collective resources to the best effect - and working together creates more value."

- Vicky Prior, Chair, Chesil Education Partnership

A NEW RELATIONSHIPS NAVIGATOR ROLE

Dorset's mapping of services and their engagement with practitioners identified a gap in knowledge about the relationship support offer, and in the skills and confidence of practitioners in talking with parents about relationships.

So, alongside a training offer on inter-parental relationships for frontline staff, Dorset created a Relationship Navigator role, part-funded by the Chesil Education Partnership, to offer help and advice to practitioners in schools who identify relationship strain or issues of co-parenting, and to make connections with available support services.

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

Leading change from the top: Newcastle

Leading change from the bottom up: Hertfordshire Ambassadors

Making assessment focus on relationships in Blackburn

Using data to inform strategy and delivery in Dorset and Croydon.

A system approach to prevention: the role for relationships in Croydon's offer for families at risk of financial instability

Relationships at the heart of a whole system approach in Dorset

Changing culture and practice: measuring the impact of Hertfordshire's Relationship Ambassadors

Tracking the use of couple relationship questions in the Early Help Assessment in Blackpool



BACK TO INDEX

CASE STUDY

The Navigator plays a pivotal role in creating connections between frontline staff in schools and the Early Help and relationship support provision.

The Navigator's role has been changing in response to emergent learning from the pilot and, while it initially only worked with professionals, it has evolved to include some direct support to families.

FAMILY PARTNERSHIP ZONES

Dorset have also made relationship quality a key component in family action plans through the Dorset Troubled Families programme and established a connection between this programme and the Relationship Navigator.

Family Partnership Zones provide family support (including relationship support) structured around the seven geographical areas linked to Dorset school pyramid areas. Each zone takes a multi-agency partnership approach in proactively identifying children and families that may benefit from preventive or early intervention.

Children's Centres, early intervention and targeted youth services have been brought together as Family Partnership Teams within

each zone. They work together with a wide range of partners and community groups on shared outcomes for children and families in their zone.

WHAT IS CHANGING

Early findings indicate that the pilot has raised awareness of the importance of inter-parental relationships and made routes of support more visible to practitioners. Feedback from practitioners indicates that the Relationships Navigator is improving their confidence in addressing inter-parental relationship issues and early family feedback indicates reduced relationship stress.

LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

Dorset's ambition for the next phase of development of their Local Family Offer includes:

- further embedding the focus of inter-parental relationships in the work of Family Partnership Zones;
- enhancing the way they use data to inform better prevention;
- expanding workforce training on inter-parental relationships;
- extending the reach of the Relationship Navigator role.

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE, SYSTEM & PROCESSES

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

Leading change from the top: Newcastle

Leading change from the bottom up: Hertfordshire Ambassadors

Making assessment focus on relationships in Blackburn

Using data to inform strategy and delivery in Dorset and Croydon.

A system approach to prevention: the role for relationships in Croydon's offer for families at risk of financial instability

Relationships at the heart of a whole system approach in Dorset

Changing culture and practice: measuring the impact of Hertfordshire's Relationship Ambassadors

Tracking the use of couple relationship questions in the Early Help Assessment in Blackpool



BACK TO INDEX

CASE STUDY

Changing culture and practice: measuring the impact of Hertfordshire's Relationship Ambassadors

Hertfordshire created a team of Relationship Ambassadors drawn from across its Early Help workforce to champion relationship issues amongst their colleagues, signpost to relationship specialist services and, in some cases, provide more in-depth support themselves.

Each Ambassador makes a pledge setting out what they will do in their role. In order to assess the impact of their initiative, Hertfordshire have developed a flexible evaluation framework that enables them to assess the impact of the different approaches each ambassador takes. Each ambassador's progress against their pledge is measured at one, three and six month intervals.

The team are also monitoring the number of referrals to counselling and mediation from Ambassadors and will be gathering data from the case studies that each Ambassador has been asked to write.

You can find Hertfordshire's evaluation framework and evaluation form for Relationship Ambassadors in the [Appendix](#).

DEVELOPING
THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A
PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE,
SYSTEM & PROCESSES

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

Leading change from the top:
Newcastle

Leading change from the bottom
up: Hertfordshire Ambassadors

Making assessment focus on
relationships in Blackburn

Using data to inform strategy and
delivery in Dorset and Croydon.

A system approach to prevention:
the role for relationships in
Croydon's offer for families at risk of
financial instability

Relationships at the heart of a
whole system approach in Dorset

Changing culture and practice:
measuring the impact of
Hertfordshire's Relationship
Ambassadors

Tracking the use of couple
relationship questions in the
Early Help Assessment in Blackpool



BACK TO INDEX

CASE STUDY

Tracking the use of couple relationship questions in the Early Help Assessment in Blackpool

Blackpool embedded a requirement to ask three key questions in outcome assessments:

- Has the couple relationship been considered by the case holding practitioners?
- Have both co-parents been involved in the assessment, planning and intervention?
- Has any relationship distress been identified at the earliest opportunity?

In doing so, they created a mechanism for measuring how practice in their Local Authority is changing around supporting couple relationships. The data to answer these questions came from: case files, audits and case closure records. They also measured referrals to relationship support services; rates of father engagement with local Children's Centre; increase in cases stepped down; and practitioner self-evaluation feedback on the new tools

WHAT ELSE COULD YOU DO?

You could also get feedback from parents on whether relationship issues were raised and their views on it. What did they think? Was it helpful? Could it be done differently? Similarly, you could ask practitioners what difference the new assessment approach is making for them. Are they more confident? Are they asking questions more often?

DEVELOPING
THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOPING A
PATHWAY

CHANGING CULTURE,
SYSTEM & PROCESSES

The challenge

Things you can do

Measuring Changes

Key Learning

Case Studies

Leading change from the top:
Newcastle

Leading change from the bottom
up: Hertfordshire Ambassadors

Making assessment focus on
relationships in Blackburn

Using data to inform strategy and
delivery in Dorset and Croydon.

A system approach to prevention:
the role for relationships in
Croydon's offer for families at risk of
financial instability

Relationships at the heart of a
whole system approach in Dorset

Changing culture and practice:
measuring the impact of
Hertfordshire's Relationship
Ambassadors

Tracking the use of couple
relationship questions in the
Early Help Assessment in Blackpool



BACK TO INDEX

WHAT NEXT

EIF's recent publication about the evidence on the impact of parental conflict on children's outcomes has prompted a much-welcomed surge of interest for the inter-parental relationships agenda.

While lots of evidence based interventions to reduce parental conflict have been studied in the United States, there are fewer examples of programmes and approaches that have been tested in the UK.

The 12 LFO pilots have been pioneers in developing systems, processes and a culture that underpin a cohesive local support offer to reduce parental conflict. These are still early days in the development of this field of practice in this country. Some have also tried out a small number of programmes, such as Parents as Partners, in their localities and are learning about what it takes to implement these types of programmes in a UK community setting.

There is a strong commitment to growing the evidence base for interventions aimed at reducing inter-parental conflict in the UK. The evaluation of the LFO programme, which will be completed over the coming months will no doubt bring an invaluable contribution towards this.

The emergent learning from the LFO programme suggests that pilots are moving towards:

- Embedding relationship support at the heart of the existing service offer
- Building the capabilities of practitioners across different services to provide the appropriate relationship support as part of more integrated cross-service models of delivery
- Creating hubs and new roles that lead on the development of new practices and capabilities for relationship support across the system
- Developing a more sophisticated understanding of the impact that the relationship offer has on outcomes and costs at the local level

We hope that you, who use the Local Family Offer Resource Pack will be part of developing the practice and evidence of interventions that reduce inter-parental conflict to improve outcomes and life chances for children in the UK.



THE LFO PILOTS' THEORIES OF CHANGE

Over the course of the LFO programme localities have developed Theories of Change for their emergent Local Family Offers.

The case studies in this guide illustrate elements of the offers and journeys of each LFO locality. The 12 Theories of Change that follow provide a comprehensive picture of the vision for each Local Family Offer, at the time at which they were developed.

These should be seen as a snapshot in time as part of work in progress and are included here to help your thinking about the big picture of your Local Family Offer.

Creating their Theories of Change, Local Authorities and their partners asked themselves:

- What the local opportunity for change was
- What were the changes they intended to make in practice and in the wider system
- What was the impact they were hoping to generate through these changes in the medium and long term
- And how they would measure this impact.



Blackburn with Darwen Local Family Offer

To unlock the impact of positive, collaborative and respectful relationships on parenting/co-parenting through our network of children’s centres and champions

Source documents: Opportunity Assessment and Strategy Document
Local Family Offer Theory of Change
Local Family Offer Funding Application

Local
Family
Offer

1/NOW

Opportunities

- A large proportion of our children are likely to experience poor health, including emotional health and wellbeing and poor educational outcomes
- Intergenerational cycles of poorer outcomes
- Higher than the national average of lone parent birth registrations
- High percentage of relationship break ups
- Higher levels of lone parent birth registration
- High levels of domestic abuse and violence
- High levels of substance misuse

Focus areas



- Key focus on pregnancy period and early childhood (Universal and targeted) and opportunity to promote parental behaviour change prior to birth



- Couple relationships questions embedded in CAF assessments and linked to Ace and Think Family



- Clear pathways and signposting to support provision across a CoNR and developing awareness raising and marketing materials



- Multidisciplinary group of practitioners confident to ask key relationship questions and understand the impact of their findings



- Relationship support available in borough for individual couples and for groups

2/CHANGES

Changes to the local system



- Universal and targeted service provision map developed and pathways for access to support



- Embed routine enquiry about couple and co-parental relationships in all pre birth and early childhood work/early help conversations across the universal and targeted services



- BWD parenting/co-parenting relationship programme delivered alongside increased delivery of Think Family programmes

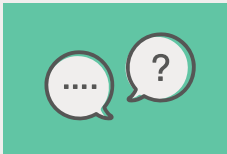
Changes to practice



- Embed couple relationships questions into universal offer of Birth, Bump and Beyond, Positive Parenting programme and breastfeeding support work.



- Continue to embed routine enquiry about the couple/parent/co-parent relationship by practitioners undertaking Early Help conversations and CAF assessments



- Embed routine enquiry about couple and co-parental relationships in all pre birth work across the CoNR

3/INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

Intermediate outcomes

What impact do you expect to see in the medium term as a consequence of the changes you are making?



- Increase in the number of CAF's that feature parents relationship in the assessment process and SMART planning
- No of CAF practitioners reporting they feel a confident asking questions about parents relationships
- No of CAF practitioners report they have improved knowledge of service available to support addressing any issues identified
- No of group sessions delivered to parents
- No of parents accessing individual couple support
- No of parents asked parenting/co-parenting questions in the pre-birth period.

4/INDICATORS

Measuring progress and impact

How can you show that you are delivering this impact?



- No of parents reporting improved awareness and understanding of issues through a because of a routine enquiry
- No of parents reporting they are working more collaboratively, reduced tensions within and across families as a result of a routine enquiry and intervention.
- No of parents reporting in the pre-birth and early childhood phase improved awareness and understanding of issues through a because of a routine enquiry
- No of CAF practitioners that report that by asking parenting/co-parenting questions enables more helpful support plans to be detailed
- No of parents that report an improvement in their relationship as a result of attendance at a group/counselling

5/MEASURES/SOURCES

Measuring progress and impact

How will you measure this progress?



- Your journey tool for individuals (parents) and couples to measure distance travelled and support reflections (beginning, middle and end)
- Your journey tool for CAF practitioners to measure confidence and knowledge (beginning, middle and end)
- Lead professional / worker feedback tool to demonstrate questions asked, responses, support offered progress and impact
- No of couples (whether they live together or not) attend parenting programmes together, or involved in CAF processes.



Our long term outcomes

- Reductions in incidences of domestic violence
- Reduced demand on children's social care
- Reduction in family breakdown
- Reduction in repeat CAF episodes
- Reduced child protection registrations for domestic abuse

6/LONG TERM OUTCOMES

Blackpool Local Family Offer

Good quality personal and social relationships are central to the Health and Wellbeing of parents and children

Source documents: Opportunity Assessment and Strategy Document
Local Family Offer Theory of Change
Local Family Offer Funding Application

Local
Family
Offer

1/NOW

Opportunities

Family Conflict

- Domestic abuse is significantly higher when compared with Lancashire and England as a whole

Family Structure

- High levels of relationship breakup and family separation

Poor outcomes

- High levels of children in poverty, children in need, children with child protection plan, looked after children, poor emotional and behavioural health and substance misuse

Focus areas

- A greater focus on couple/coparental relationship in the Family Assessment

- Provide the workforce with tools to support the initiation of conversations about the quality of the couple and co-parenting relationship

- Identify gaps for practitioners (why are they referring to CSC inappropriately? What support do professionals need to casehold?)

- Raising awareness of the impact the quality of the inter-parental relationship on children's future life chances across the wider workforce

2/CHANGES

Changes to the local system

- Couple/Coparental relationships become a key part of the Family Assessment Process

- Roll out tools to support practitioners have the conversation re couple/coparental relationships

- Develop relationships that support cross agency supervision

- Roll out and embed reflective supervision

- Make available tools to support interventions

Changes to practice

- Practitioners, parents and partners see the relevance of relationships and the impact on children. This contributes to planning and doing

- A wider range of practitioners have the confidence to conduct meaningful conversations regarding relationships and conflict

- Training to external champions to support the roll out to wider partners including Health Visitors and Schools, and practical support

- The tools for practitioners will support them to routinely attempt to engage Fathers/ Partners at the earliest opportunity in the assessment process, planning and required interventions

3/INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

Intermediate outcomes

What impact do you expect to see in the medium term as a consequence of the changes you are making?

- Increased awareness of the impact the quality of the inter-parental relationship on children's future life chances across the wider workforce
- Greater workforce Confidence in surfacing the quality of the inter-parental relationship
- Early Identification and response to Inter-parental distress
- Appropriate Early Support regarding Inter-parental distress provided by case holding practitioners
- Reduction in inter-parental distress
- Reduction in inter-parental conflict
- Involvement of both parents will lead to more appropriate interventions

4/INDICATORS

Measuring progress and impact

How can you show that you are delivering this impact?

- Practitioners report increase in confidence
- Practitioners report increase knowledge of the impact of relation quality of children's outcomes
- Increase in discussions regard inter-parental relationship whereby issues identified
- Increase in discussions regard inter-parental relationship whereby positive difference made
- Increase in discussions regard relationship difficulty
- Father- Child relationship Strengthened

5/MEASURES/SOURCES

Measuring progress and impact

How will you measure this progress?

- Workforce development: Outcome questionnaire – baseline and 3 month follow up
- Multiagency Audit
- Parent interviews to measure impact at a family level
- Practitioner feedback from multi-disciplinary reflective supervision.
- Case File Audits

6/LONG TERM OUTCOMES

Our long term outcomes

- Reductions in incidences of domestic violence
- Reduced demand on children's social care
- Reduction in family breakdown
- Reduced child protection registrations for domestic abuse

Croydon Local Family Offer

To improve family stability through growing the resilience of couples or coparents in the face of financial instability

Source documents: Opportunity Assessment and Strategy Document
Local Family Offer Theory of Change
Local Family Offer Funding Application

Local
Family
Offer

1/NOW



Opportunities

High numbers of families at risk of financial instability

- A higher than average number of families out of work
- A higher than average number of children living in poverty
- 10,000 families known to Gateway on benefits / 2676 families in receipt of income related benefits / A further 900 families in arrears to the council (2015-2016)
- 300 families subject to loss of more than £200/ week due to benefit cap

Relationship quality

- A higher than average number of sole registrations
- A higher than average number of lone parent households

Poor outcomes for children

- A higher than average number of pupils subject to persistent absence at school
- A higher than average number of pupils with behavioural, emotional and social support needs
- A higher than average number of lone parent households



Focus areas



- Recognising the impact of financial instability on the quality of couple/ coparenting relationships



- Working through People's Gateway to identify those couples or coparents for whom financial instability is placing a strain on the quality of their relationship



- Providing appropriate relationship support to those families through an integrated early help offer that increases the resilience of relationships in the face of financial instability

2/CHANGES



Changes to the local system



- Building capacity within gateway teams to incorporate sensitive questioning about relationship quality within assessments



- Building capacity within early help teams to spot the signs of poor quality relationships



- Increase the focus on the parental relationship from the whole family support system through communicating evidenced research



- Development of parenting and parental relationship hub through early help



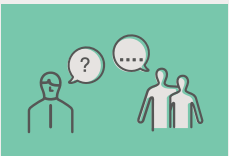
- Training of expert practitioners, able to recognise the signs, respond effectively, and refer to more specialist services



Changes to practice



- Provision of graduated services to parental relationship conflict



- Widen and deepen use of conversations on parental relationship access Gateway services to strengthen use of self-help and peer support



- Review existing assessment process with a view to identifying opportunities to strengthen parental relationship

3/INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES



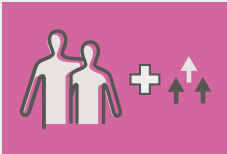
Intermediate outcomes

Your short term outcomes

- Improved help seeking behaviours

Your medium term outcomes

- Improvement in the quality of couple/co-parental relationships
- Improvements in levels of financial instability



Improvements:

- In self help behaviours of parents
- In the quality of parental relationships
- In numbers of financial & housing stability
- In work readiness/ take up of employment

4/INDICATORS



Measuring progress and impact

How can you show that you are delivering this impact?



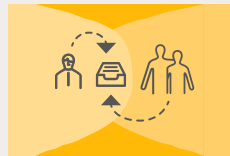
- Number of conversations on quality of parental relationship
- Take up of resources to support parents relationships outcomes
- Increase numbers assisted with budget & income maximisation
- Number assisted with employment journey
- Number assisted to find employment

5/MEASURES/SOURCES



Measuring progress and impact

How will you measure this progress?



- Measured by CRM (client record management system)
- Measure of improvement in quality of relationship & reduction in conflict
- Number re-referred to Gateway
- Customer report job ready
- Numbers in employment



Our long term outcomes

- Reduction in single parents
- Decrease in the number of children experiencing social and emotional difficulties
- Parental mental health/maternal mood improved
- Improved health & wellbeing of children of young people
- Improvement in number of children in need experiencing poor wellbeing

6/LONG TERM OUTCOMES

Dorset Local Family Offer

We want to develop the skills, attitude, knowledge and behaviour of a cohort of practitioners who interface with families to enquire and support parents in their co-parenting responsibilities

Source documents: Opportunity Assessment and Strategy Document
Local Family Offer Theory of Change
Local Family Offer Funding Application

Local
Family
Offer


1/NOW

Opportunities


Poor outcomes for children and young people and their family in Weymouth and Portland, where the areas have some deprivation and disadvantage

- High levels of Children living in Poverty
- High levels of Homeless Families
- High levels of Sole Registrations
- High numbers of Families with Health Problems
- High levels of Persistent Absenteeism
- High levels of Relationship Breakup
- High rate of Child Wellbeing Index

Focus areas




A relationship support navigator who can help a range of practitioners to better support couples and families



A workforce development programme

- A cohort of practitioners (universal and early help) to identify signs and symptoms
- Build confidence in working with children and families (brief intervention)




Pathway of support (graduated offer) in place

- Identification
- Brief intervention
- Safer relationships
- Conflict
- Breakdown


2/CHANGES

Changes to the local system




Relationship support navigator to target schools

- Equip practitioners with knowledge about the couple/co-parenting relationship
- Make it easier for practitioners to find support families to access support
- Taking referrals from practitioners and directing people to appropriate services



Proactive identification of those who need help in Family Partnerships Zones using stressors information


- Make support available earlier via children's centres, living and learning centres and family hubs
- Develop predictive data set
- Team around the child conversations focus on relationships




Pathway of support

- Relationship education
- Web based self help
- Graduated offer (level 1 to level 3)
- Influencing existing system to include relationship support (including):
 - CAMHs
 - Adult IAPT
 - Health Visiting


Changes to practice



- Make relationships a feature of our assessment practice




- Equip practitioners with the skills, knowledge and confidence
 - Level 1 e.g. Brief Encounters
 - Train the trainer for sustainability



- Develop a continuum of relationship support that is understood and used by practitioners

3/INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

Intermediate outcomes




- A trained workforce
- The confidence, knowledge, skills and willingness of frontline workers to ask questions related to the quality of relationships
 - Team around the child/setting conversations explore relationship issues
- A new graduated service offer
 - Existing providers integrate relationship support into their offer or develop new support offer
 - Deliver co-parenting outcomes
 - More help seeking behaviours
- Development of predictive tool to identify those who may benefit from relationship support

4/INDICATORS

Measuring progress and impact

How can you show that you are delivering this impact?




- Take up of training and satisfaction with quality of training
- Changes to knowledge and skills and confidence
- Number of services offered:
 - by others
 - Newly commissioned
- Number of families identified and supported:
 - Through Team around the setting/child meetings
 - With predictive tool
- Impact of offer:
 - Improved quality of relationships
 - Improved co-parenting
 - Reduction in family stress
 - Impact on child's wellbeing

5/MEASURES/SOURCES

Measuring progress and impact

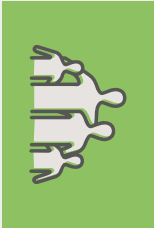
How will you measure this progress?



- Training feedback
 - Self assessment
 - Pre and post Qu with 3 month follow up
- Management information
 - Referrals
 - Parental Enquiries
 - Take up from targeted groups
- Relationship Quality Scale
 - QMI
- Co Parenting
 - Co-parenting communication scale/relationship scale
 - Parental stress scale
- Child wellbeing
 - SDQ

6/LONG TERM OUTCOMES

Our long term outcomes



Outcomes Based Approach (Changes in data set across localities. Performance measured through source of referral, level of support provided, quality of support provided and comparison across different interventions)

- Family Stability
- Economically stable families
- Higher level of co-parenting
- A system focussed on relationship stability

1/NOW

Opportunities

Parental mental health problem

- One in 4 children grows up with parental mental health problems
- Mental health needs are not recognised by the parents/ carers
- Parental mental health and couple relationships are having the biggest impact on children
- Mental health needs can lead to conflict between parents/carers

Multiple causes

- High levels of need caused by issues such as

Focus areas



Identifying mental health needs and vulnerabilities in first/new parents/couples particularly for those that have low level non clinically diagnosed need




There will be provision to train the workforce in relational capability




Working with experts in the field we will design a bespoke response taking the form of a parenting/ relationship programme and therapeutic couples coaching, both of which will be based on the evidence of what works

2/CHANGES


Changes to the local system




- Targeting one high need geographical areas in Essex




- Maximising the best start in life for their children by promoting healthy relationships



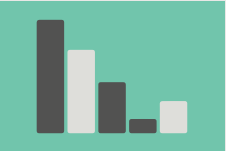
- A pathway will be designed to access healthy relationship advice, guidance and support through a bespoke couple relationship/parenting programme and/ or therapeutic couple coaching



- Having a shared vision and understanding of outcomes and success




- Essex based voluntary and community sector organisation to design a bespoke new/first time parent programme for parents with mental health issues AND provide therapeutic couples coaching




Work with our organisational intelligence representatives from respective partner agencies to design the evaluation

Changes to practice



- Practitioners will work to families’ strengths and work to help build the resilience of parents
- Parents/carers experience a strengths based approach that aims to develop resilience with a workforce context where practitioners are skilled and experienced in relational capability



- Front line practitioners are capable of identifying and responding to the needs of the first time/new parents through support and guidance, or referral to the programme
- Appropriate responses to support parents and couples

4/MEASURING IMPACT

Measuring progress and impact

Evaluators will seek to understand

- Effectiveness of the workforce training
- Effectiveness of the tools employed for referral assessment and capturing outcomes
- Effectiveness of the interventions and support during and after
- Impacts for individuals/couples and children

A range of outputs and outcome measures and evaluation techniques

- Demographics of the workforce engaged in training and delivery of project
- Demographics of the parents/couples involved in the project
- Type of engagement e.g. information, advice, support through the bespoke programme
- Outputs of the bespoke programme e.g. starters and finishers
- Bespoke outcomes star tool to measure distance travelled
- Follow up parental/couple evaluation and tracking
- Workforce evaluation
- Lessons learned/benchmarking

Sharing best practice

- Public - developing short public information films and learning from this for parents/couples
- Partnerships
- Workforce - Learning sets and working groups and panels
- Networks

5/LONG TERM OUTCOMES

Our long term outcomes

Better outcomes for CYP, safer families and communities; better value for money

- Stable resilient families with children developing good early attachments and getting the best start in life by being physically and emotionally healthy, resilient to learn and able
- There will be more of - Making good decisions and choices to participate and make positive contributions to family and community
- There will be less of - Emotional distress
- Value for money - Reduction in system costs

Our existing strategies/plans

Children and young people’s plan

- An overall strategy for families in Essex
- “Family Functioning”, acknowledging parent relationship as the key to children and young people’s success

The Essex Early Help Offer Strategy

- Illustrating how our system works together to enable better outcomes for the most disadvantaged families through culture, behavioural and organizational change

Key programmes

- Early Help Family Innovation Fund - Family stability is the overarching outcome. Largely targeted at parents to support couple relationships and increase parenting capacity
- The CAMHS redesign - Opportunities for earlier identification and response to children and young people living with parents with mental health needs
- The prebirth-19 pathway redesign - incorporates children’s centres, school nursing and health

visiting, and the learning from this LFO Project could significantly influence the principles for cultural, behavioural and organisational changes

- Our health education and social care integration programme - provides new opportunities to join with GP Practices and to develop joint working through locally designed systems of response for families

Gateshead Local Family Offer

We are seeking to develop the ‘strengtheners’ of timely and targeted advice and support from frontline family support services and to simplify the referral pathway to specialist relationship support services

Source documents:

- Opportunity Assessment and Strategy Document
- Local Family Offer Theory of Change
- Local Family Offer Funding Application

1/NOW

Opportunities

Break-down and transience of relationships

Financial exclusion and child poverty

- Mental health disorders among children
- High persistence of absences, first time entrants to the youth justice system, teenage pregnancy

Focus areas

- Families are empowered to take responsibility to manage their own resolutions and outcomes. Relationships are embedded in our understanding of their impact on key outcomes for children and adults
- Improving measurement and audit of relationship quality
- Build on the existing strengths of our early help and troubled families approaches by transforming frontline practice
- Building new referral pathways to available support

2/CHANGES

Changes to the local system

- A new ‘family stability’ measure for the Troubled Families Outcomes Plan
- Introduce a recognised relationship measurement tool to pre/post intervention (The Relationships Dynamics Scale or the Couple Satisfaction Index)
- A new prompt on relationship quality to the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) documentation
- Making changes to the case audit tools
- A workforce development programme for frontline LA support services
- Create an A5 directory of local relationship services and selected online options to assist LA key workers

Changes to practice

- Integrate couple and co-parenting content into group parenting programmes and develop a new programme (a toolkit resource for working with fathers)
- Create a new spot-purchase arrangement with local providers of relationship counselling to simplify the referral process for frontline practitioners and remove financial barriers to families accessing this supports
- A new Parents as Partners Programme as a new referral pathway

3/INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

Our medium term outcomes

- Improved standards of professional practice
- Increased understanding of specialist relationship support services
- Bespoke resources to help engage fathers and avoid/limit mother-centric casework approaches
- Increase the timeliness, number and quality of referrals to relationship counselling services
- Maximise opportunities to strengthen relationship quality through existing psycho-educative group (parenting) programmes and embed the Parents as Partners programme
- The couple and co-parenting relationship is reflected in strategic plans and policies
- Develop, refine and embed a family stability measure/articulate a clear, shared definition of relationship quality and how this can be measured

4/MEASURING IMPACT

Measuring progress and impact

Short to medium term, we will measure/evaluate the impact of workforce development by reporting specifically on

- % of staff understanding the importance of the parent/couple relationship to outcomes for children
- % of staff trained will feel confident to recognise and respond appropriately to relationship issues among families
- % increase in appropriate referrals to specialist relationship support pathways, including Parents as Partners

The impact of changes to practice and systems will also use the following measures

- Indicators set out in the Phase 2 Families Gateshead Outcomes Guidance for Payment By Results (PBR) document across the six national troubled families headline areas
- Self-reported improvements in relationship quality provided direct by families through use of an established relationship measurement tool and qualitative feed-back provided as part of the CAF/ TAF process
- Participant evaluation of the Parents as Partners programme and group parenting programmes

5/LONG TERM OUTCOMES

Our long term outcomes

- Reductions in families needing further assessment and support from Tier 3 services
- Reductions in the numbers subject to costly, reactive measures

Our existing strategies/plans

Hertfordshire Local Family Offer

Every Hertfordshire resident to have the opportunity to maximise their potential and live full lives as confident citizens

- Source documents:
- Opportunity Assessment and Strategy Document
- Local Family Offer Theory of Change
- Local Family Offer Funding Application

Local

Family

Offer

1/NOW



Opportunities

Population

- There are approximately 278,000 children and young people in Hertfordshire with under 18s making up 25% of the total population.
- Rising child population: age groups 5-9 and 10-14 both projecting increases of over 20% between 2012-2022.

Outcomes which can be impacted by the quality of couple/ co-parenting relationships: educational attainment in children, mental health in adults, child wellbeing, lone parent households



Focus areas

Addressing couple conflict to improve the quality of inter-parental relationships



Strengtheners

- Our workforce and community and voluntary groups. We will improve their knowledge and skills



Stressors

- Families needing early help and living in areas of deprivation
- Families undergoing transition at diagnosis of a child with SEND, Families involved in fostering and adoption. Families considering separation

2/CHANGES



Changes to the local system

Hertfordshire's holistic approach for this trial means making changes to system and practice



- Improved awareness:** everyone working with families understands that improving inter-parental relationships is important and why



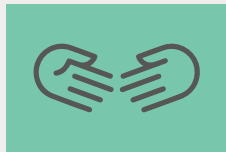
- Culture change:** asking families about their relationships and supporting them is part of the 'way we do things' across Children's Services and in local communities



Changes to practice



- Improved practitioner skills:** those working with families are confident and skilled to recognise relationships issues, respond appropriate and refer if they need to



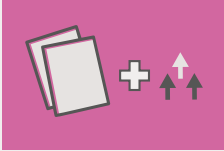
- Support for families:** additional support services are available for families who need more help to improve inter-parental relationships

3/INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES



Intermediate outcomes

Improved awareness and culture change:



- High number of Ambassadors for inter-parental relationships in place with good coverage and in relevant organisations
- A toolkit receiving good feedback and usage
- High level of awareness among workforce of inter-parental relationships and 'the way we do things'

Improved practitioner skills:

- Ambassadors have good level of skills
- High number of professionals attending training
- Professionals have confidence in working with couple conflict following attending training and are using their new skills in practice

Support for families:

- High number of good referrals to counselling and mediation
- Positive change in outcomes for parents following interventions
- Positive change in parental view of outcomes for children following interventions

4/INDICATORS



Measuring progress and impact

How can you show that you are delivering this impact?



Improved awareness and culture change:

- Number of Ambassadors in place
- Number of visits to the toolkit
- Awareness levels of inter-parental relationships among workforce

Improved practitioner skills:

- Self-reported knowledge/skills of Ambassadors
- Number of professionals attending training courses
- % increase in confidence of professionals in working with couple conflict following attending training
- Number of interventions delivered by practitioners following training

Support for families:

- Number of referrals to counselling and mediation
- Following mediation or counselling: % change in professional assessment of relationship, % change in relationship status (together/apart),
- % change in outcomes star scores following early intervention

5/MEASURES/SOURCES



Measuring progress and impact

How will you measure this progress?



Improved awareness and culture change:

- Ambassador's network feedback
- Website statistics
- Workforce survey

Improved practitioner skills:

- Ambassador's network feedback
- Training evaluation questionnaires

Support for families:

- Commissioned services outcomes tracker
- Families First data (Early Help Module)



Our long term outcomes

6/LONG TERM OUTCOMES

- Better outcomes for children, young people and families
- Reduced mental health difficulties and anxiety
 - Reduced mental health difficulties
 - Decreased social and emotional problems for children and young people
 - Increased parental awareness of the impact of relationship conflict on children
 - Increased family stability

Lambeth Local Family Offer

We aim to develop healthy couple relationships which promote a child centred approach to parenting involving both mum, dad and the wider family network

Source documents:

- Opportunity Assessment and Strategy Document
- Local Family Offer Theory of Change
- Local Family Offer Funding Application

Local

Family

Offer

1/NOW



Opportunities

- A high percentage of pupils with identified behavioural, emotional and social support needs
- A high percentage of first time entrants to the youth justice system
- A high percentage of Lambeth's children live in lone parent household
- A high proportion of sole birth registrations
- 75% of the teenage and young parents are involved in abusive and violent relationships
- A significant number of young parents require very high and intensive levels of support



Focus areas



- Improving the quality of the co-parenting relationship between young parents in relationships



- Developing healthy couple relationships which promote a child centred approach to parenting involving both parents and their wider family networks



- Development and dissemination of a toolkit of key messages about the importance and value of respectful relationships between couples

2/CHANGES



Changes to the local system



- A review of core documents used by practitioners delivering early help interventions across the partnership
- A review of the early help assessment to increase the emphasis on couple relationships in identifying strengths and needs
- A review of supervision templates and processes to ensure that managers demonstrate a routine expectation



- Wider systems change - workforce development with regards to couple relationships and the interventions + clients to support



Changes to practice



Caring Dads programme

- The programme is a highly targeted intervention, and this ongoing support for both parents
- A range of referral pathways
- Intensive 1:1 support from a skilled young parents' worker
- Building of trust between the parents and the organisation
- Requiring fathers to identify and change the negative and violent behaviour in their couple relationship
- Requiring mothers to identify her own behaviour and to commit to positive change
- The intervention will play a role in safeguarding the well-being of the child(ren) during a period of change and transition



A tool kit of key messages relating to healthy couple relationships and their impact on the child

- The tool kit will be disseminated through a series of workshops and will contribute to wider system change

3/INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES



Our medium term outcomes

Four key intermediate outcomes for the Caring Dads programme

- Caring dads' participants have developed sufficient trust and motivation to participate in the process of examining their behaviour within their relationship
- Caring dads' participants and their partner / co-parent have an increased understanding of the beneficial and protective factors of a healthy couple relationship of a healthy couple relationship
- Caring dads' participants have an increased understanding of and responsibility for their abusive and neglectful relationship behaviours and the negative impact on their children
- Caring dads' participants establish trusting relationships with their partner / co-parent and the wider family network

The development and dissemination of the key messages tool kit

- Parents have a greater understanding of the importance of the couple and co-parenting relationship and the impact on outcomes for their child
- Professionals have a greater understanding of the importance of the couple and co-parenting relationship and the impact on outcomes for children

4/MEASURING IMPACT



Measuring progress and impact

We will measure positive change in family relationships

- A reduction in the number of violent incidents between the couple
- An increase in the number of families with both parents having unsupervised contact with their child
- A reduction in the number of families participating in the programme whose children have a child protection plan

Lessons learnt and key messages for partners and professionals will be captured through the toolkit development and dissemination

5/LONG TERM OUTCOMES

- All parents sustain healthy relationships which protect and promote positive long terms outcomes for adults and children without the need for ongoing professional involvement
- Parents and the professionals are known to report a behaviour change in their co-parenting relationship
- Professionals across the early years workforce actively promote the value of the couple relationship and a child centred approach to parenting



Our existing strategies/plans

The Lambeth Community Plan

- Focusing on improving outcomes for children and families include the Early Help and Prevention Integrated Commissioning Strategy and the Child Poverty Strategy

- The importance of the home environment on parenting and family stability in achieving positive outcomes

1/NOW

Opportunities

Luton offers one of the most vibrant and diverse environments in the country (122 languages and dialects are spoken in Luton) + A young and growing population (28%), compared to national averages (23.8%)

Impact on couples' relationships with young children

- High levels of deprivation
- High levels of child poverty
- High levels of family instability
- High numbers of young parents
- High levels of perinatal mental ill-health
- High levels of domestic abuse
- High percentage of children subjects of a Child Protection Plan (CPP)

Poor outcomes for our youngest children

- A low percentage of children achieving a Good Level of Development
- A low percentage of pupils achieving expected levels in Communication and Language
- A low percentage of pupils achieving in Personal Social Emotional elements

Focus areas



Focusing on the couple's relationships in the early years to further improve child outcomes

- Build a consistent narrative promoting the couple relationships and the role of fathers throughout Flying Start
- Significant opportunities to



List of opportunities

- Relationship support services through its IAPT services, the Luton Wellbeing Service
- Family counselling / Luton's Family Information Service



- No specific mention of couples' relationships in any of the parenting provision
- No specific training on couples' relationships and the issue of couples' conflicts in Luton
- A better understand of referrals into the services at Children's Centres
- The important role of fathers
- Luton Customer Services are developing a Social Impact

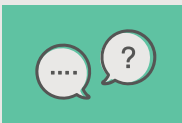
2/CHANGES

Changes to the local system

Identify an integrated model of primary prevention and early help support from pregnancy to five years which will impact on the whole of Luton



- Early years pathway / service development including parenting and perinatal mental health



- Communication for both parents and professionals



- Workforce development

Changes to practice



- Train the workforce in the key skills, knowledge and behaviours to ensure an increased focus on primary



- Make a change to the mind-set of staff both in the Children's but also in the Adult workforce of

Training programmes:

- An introductory course - Generic wide scale training to raise awareness and understanding the "parental couple relationship"
- A skills based course - The "Think couples relationship awareness" is designed to equip key frontline staff with the skills to work with their families
- Reflective practice support for a small cohort of staff - These sessions will support the integration of participant's learning from the training into their everyday practice

Flying Start interventions:

- Me, You and Baby Too perinatal pilot
- Couple relationship counselling
- Four cohorts of the Parents as Partners evidence based parenting programme

3/INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

Our medium term outcomes

Work stream one - workforce development (Interim outcomes for generic training, skills based course and reflective practice)

- Increase in understanding of the nature of the 'couple and parental couple relationships' and 'impact on the child of parental conflict'
- Increase confidence in the skills of practitioners in how to develop a "Think Couple" approach to their work
- Increase in confidence for the use of relational techniques such as asking particular types of question
- Develop skills and confidence in working with couples, and talking to them about their relationship + helping parents recognise the impact of their conflict on their child
- Develop awareness of the impact of couple disputes/conflict on individual practitioners + insight into methods of self-care

Work stream two - Me, You and Baby Too Perinatal pilot

- Increase the knowledge and skills and the confidence of midwives and health visitors
- Increase in confidence of midwives and health visitors who deliver antenatal parenting interventions

Work stream three - the couple's relationship counselling

- Improvement in quality of the couple's relationship and parents' approach to child rearing
- Reduction in conflict between the couple

Parents as Partners

- Improvement in the quality of the couple's relationship, the sharing and negotiation of everyday tasks and the child's social and emotional behaviour
- Reduction in the likelihood of child abuse in the family and the level of parental stress in the family

4/MEASURING IMPACT

Measuring progress and impact

- Monitoring and evaluation of both the take up of support and the progress made by families in achieving the outcomes of their engagement with the programme
- Measures to assess improvements in the socio-economic circumstances of the families, using the Family Outcomes methodology

Our long term outcomes

- Flying Start ten years outcomes
- More children, by their 5th birthday, will have age-appropriate communication skills
- More children are securely attached and emotionally resilient, with improved school readiness
- Babies will have improved birth outcomes

5/LONG TERM OUTCOMES

Our existing strategies/plans

The Flying Start strategy

- Improve outcomes for children from pregnancy to their 5th birthday as a foundation to a healthy future
- All young children in Luton have a "flying start"
- Aims to give Luton Children the very best start in life by reducing the impact of disadvantage on their

future life chances

Flying Start programme

- Flying Start is Luton's Early Years vision, which aligns with a number of other local key strategies and plans
- Focus on primary prevention and the integrated delivery of the Healthy Child Programme 0-5

years

- Working closely with our key partners and with Children's Centres, we will deliver a core offer of evidence and science-based interventions
- Highly trained key workers will work alongside professionals + volunteers who will be trained to work alongside professionals and with parents

Manchester Local Family Offer

Our offer will promote the independence and self-reliance of children, young people and their families by providing supportive relationships and connections within local communities that can help people or families continue to survive and thrive

- Source documents:
- Opportunity Assessment and Strategy Document

Local Family Offer Theory of Change

Local Family Offer Funding Application

Local

Family

Offer

1/NOW

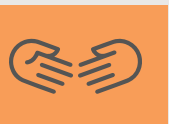
Opportunities


The primary challenge for families in Manchester is unemployment accompanied by related socio-economic factors such as poverty and homelessness


- Worklessness
- Mental health
- Domestic violence
- Debt
- Safeguarding Children
- School attendance (1 in 3 families reported problems with school attendance and risk of eviction)
- Housing Issues
- Anti-social behaviour
- Drug and alcohol misuse (over 1 in 4 families experience alcohol and drug misuse)


Focus areas

Families and parents gaining employment, becoming more independent and moving towards family

- 

- Identify a clear opportunity to pilot an approach where the focus on the couple and coparent relationship is strengthening existing work with key cohorts
 - > ‘Parents as Partners’ to support individual couple relationships
 - > A Working Well programme in order to identify the barriers and additional support required for a cohort of workless claimants
- 


- Understand the couple/co-parent relationship and the impact it has on all aspects of life from employment to health and wellbeing
- 


- Our early help assessments - both parents participate in the assessment process so that plans will reflect the issues relating to the couple rather than the individual
- 


- An opportunity to use the evidence from the pilot to influence future service delivery, strategy and commissioning


2/CHANGES

Changes to the local system

- 


- The pilot would promote the benefits of including the couple/co-parent dynamic in work with families and Working Well cohorts
- 


- Proving the benefits of including the couple/co-parent dynamic could lead to including this focus within early help assessments for all age groups
- 


- All age assessment tools would reach a large number of frontline practitioners
- 

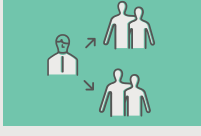
- Couple interventions - a number of the activities within the pilot are also aimed at developing the range of interventions available to couples


Changes to practice

- 

- Train 72 key workers to understand the dynamics of the couple/co-parent relationship
- 

- Build the couple/co-parent relationship into their assessments and work with couples/co-parents
- 

- Hold a strengths-based conversation to inform the resulting plan for the families
- 

- Each key worker to work with a minimum of 2 couples, with at least 1 reporting relationship issues, in order to test the impact of interventions and also the availability of interventions
- 

- Early help advisors within the hubs will then be in a prime position to support other professionals to focus on strengthening the couple/co-parent relationship

3/INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

Our medium term outcomes

- Couples/co-parents will be approached to take part in the pilot
- Gain a better understanding of the couple dynamic within the relationship, and the impact they have on each other and all other aspects of their life
- Skills including their confidence to have conversations about their relationship
- Signpost or refer couples to the right couple intervention

4/MEASURING IMPACT

Measuring progress and impact

Evaluation will demonstrate the realisation of better outcomes

- Key workers views on how their skills and confidence has improved with a focus on the couple/ co-parent relationship and the impact they have had
- Outcomes from any interventions which couples are signposted to e.g. parents as partners
- Change in the quality of the couple relationship overall
- Any changes in outcomes which are being measured as part of the intervention

Our long term outcomes

- Develop an evidence base to influence changes to the Early Help strategy, the Work and Skills strategy, service delivery and commissioning models
- Keyworkers will build the couple/co-parent relationship into their assessments (all age early help assessments, as well as more specialist assessments)

5/LONG TERM OUTCOMES

Our existing strategies/plans

Confident and Achieving Manchester (CAM) programme

- CAM aims to integrate reform programmes
- increase effectiveness and improve outcomes for families and individuals
- developing appropriate pathways
- links with joined up approaches to assessment
- streamlined referral processes
- the development of community assets

Troubled Families, Early Help (one of the key cohorts)

Three key principles for public service reform

- Taking a whole-family approach
- Choosing interventions on the strength of the evidence base
- Delivering integrated, co-ordinated and sequenced services at the right time and in the right order

Early Help Strategy in 2015

- A new strength based approach to assessment,
- A refreshed Levels of Need and Response Framework and a new delivery model delivered via Early help Hubs.
- Early Help Hubs offer practitioners support and advice to enable them to work together with families
- Aims for improving life outcomes and reducing the need for statutory intervention

Newcastle upon Tyne Local Family Offer

Increasing the life chances of children at risk of poor outcomes in our more deprived communities, by strengthening the resilience of their families

- Source documents:
- Opportunity Assessment and Strategy Document
- Local Family Offer Theory of Change
- Local Family Offer Funding Application

Local

Family

Offer

1/NOW

Opportunities



- Higher than average **relationship breakdowns** in Newcastle
- Wider **stressors** in families already identified using Early Help Plan



- High levels of **poverty**, worklessness etc in CFH
- New **baby** automatically seen as a possible **stressor** within relationships
- Higher than average number of **adults living with mental health difficulties** within CFH

Focus areas



- Widen cohort to all **families** with a new baby (not just a first child)
- Build on current **services** who have contact with new parents

- Early identification and intervention as part of an **Early Help Plan**
- Highlight a new baby** is likely to lead to added stress to all or at least the majority of couples

2/CHANGES

Changes to the local system



- Families identified through an Early Help Plan. Inter-relationship difficulties added as a specific section to assessment documents
- Develop a relationship navigator within health visiting



- Increase in capacity of CFH to respond
- Consultancy support available to staff
- Joint working with Gateshead
- Tiered approach to support
- Additional workforce development opportunities
- Outcome monitoring processes agreed

Changes to practice



- Relationship Navigator to help early identification / intervention and provide workforce development



- Extended capacity for Relate group work and 121 approach
- Advanced Incredible Years offered across city
- Increase in capacity of Incredible Years Parents
- Practice workshops offered to staff and Babies

3/INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

Intermediate outcomes



- Services / workers aware of tiers of support available.
- More parents able to access Relate / parenting support.
- Health visitors routinely enquiring about inter-parental relationships.
- Consultancy service established for staff.
- Questions about inter-parental relationships incorporated into Early Help paperwork.
- Outcome monitoring established.
- Practitioners have increased confidence/competence in enquiring about inter-parental relationship difficulties and respond with low level interventions.
- Parents / families able to access appropriate services at appropriate time.
- Parents able to manage / contain conflict

4/INDICATORS

Measuring progress and impact

How can you show that you are delivering this impact?



- Specialist services running at or near capacity.
- Increase in number of assessments including inter-parental difficulties as an identified issue.
- Increase in numbers attending training / practice workshops.
- Increase in number of dads accessing a service.
- Parents identify increase in quality of their relationships and their co-parenting.

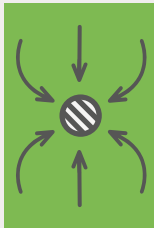
5/MEASURES/SOURCES

Measuring progress and impact

How will you measure this progress?



- Relate pre and post questionnaires for their group / 121 counselling.
- Parenting support groups – SDQs, Parenting Scale, WEMWBS.
- Workforce development – pre / post training questionnaires.
- Monitor against wider Newcastle Families Programme Outcomes.
- Steering group responsive to issues raised.



How to measure long term outcomes Reductions in incidences of domestic violence

- Reductions in incidences of domestic violence
- Reduced demand on children's social care
- Reduction in family breakdown
- Reduction in repeat CAF episodes
- Reduced child protection registrations for domestic abuse

6/LONG TERM OUTCOMES

Westminster Local Family Offer

Our vision is to improve life outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people through enabling their families to successfully and sustainably look after them into adulthood

Source documents:

- Opportunity Assessment and Strategy Document
- Local Family Offer Theory of Change
- Local Family Offer Funding Application

Local

Family

Offer

1/NOW



Opportunities

The couple co-parenting relationship can impact greatly on outcomes for children and adults

We have higher than average rates of:

- Families out of work
- Pupils with SEN or on school action plans
- Children with mental health disorders
- Pupils with behavioural, social and emotional needs
- First time entrants to youth justice system rate
- Relationship breakdown



Focus areas



- A model of networked collaboration and cohesive partnerships; working closely together to achieve common outcomes and developing stronger focus on relational ways of working



- Increasing confidence and skills in our workforce through an effective training and development programme to ensure parenting and couple relational work is embedded into our practice



- Practice skills to engage with couples with relationship difficulties more confidently and awareness of specialist help and support available

2/CHANGES



Changes to the local system



- 3 children and family hubs - The hubs will provide a base for bringing together a range of practitioners supporting close collaboration and alignment of services



- A fortnightly early help partnership action/allocation meeting - The meetings will take place fortnightly in each locality to co-ordinate the allocation of work



- An early help partnership - A commitment from each partner to shared processes, systems and information



Changes to practice



- Everybody's responsibility in being able to 'think couple' in their work



- Working with whole family - Hub becomes focal point in community where whole family can get help, advice support



- Responding confidently, engaging, signposting to specialist support and group work interventions



- Providing range of family support services - Parents as couples access support, more inclusive father services, more engagement of fathers

3/INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES



Our medium term outcomes

- An increase in the number of absent parents that are engaged, participating and have a greater voice
- An increase in the number of CAF's that feature parents relationship in the assessment process and SMART planning
- An increase in the number of CAF practitioners who are confident in asking questions about parents relationships and have improved knowledge of services available to support, addressing any issues identified
- An increase in the number of couples attending parenting programmes

4/MEASURING IMPACT



Measuring progress and impact

- We will measure our effectiveness by developing a set of indicators and quality assurance mechanisms which may include using the Troubled Families outcome framework
- We would also want to focus our evaluation on our day to day delivery and changes to frontline practice
- As part of an overall evaluation of the service being offered we would seek consent from couples in a co-parenting relationship to participate by gathering their feedback
- We would work closely with our training provider to devise this and agree reporting timescales
- The final evaluation would provide analysis on the data gathered and qualitative feedback

5/LONG TERM OUTCOMES

- The service is recognised and valued in the local community and can demonstrate quality of service and effective outcomes reducing the need for higher intensity interventions



Our existing strategies/plans

Building independence in families and capacity in communities to problem solve and be resilient to challenge

- Collaboration and co-production: Working closely with universal services and communities to increase their capacity to offer support to families at the earliest point
- Strengthening Communities: Communities, families, young people and children have a significant role to play in outcomes

- Independence and resilience: Help families to help themselves through developing new ways of delivering services
- Focus on Practice: Working with the whole family context to strengthen family relationships
- Integration: Multi-agency working that ensures a consistent approach to the application of levels of need and has agreed response frameworks
- Targeted: We will target resources to those at risk of the poorest outcomes

- Evidence of impact: Choosing interventions based on acknowledged evidence of what works
- Partnerships: to develop new partnerships with philanthropists, national and local organisations to enable new early help developments

APPENDIX

You will find in the Appendix examples of tools, questionnaires, job descriptions and presentations that illustrate some of the innovations and processes described throughout this guide.

Click [here](#) to access the full content of the Appendix.

- Hertfordshire's 'Parents at War' course summary & learning outcomes
- Hertfordshire's Practitioner Toolkit
- Blackpool's Practitioner Toolkit
- Gateshead's service directory
- List of online relationship support resources
- Dorset's Relationship Navigator Job Description
- Hertfordshire's Ambassadors Job Description
- Blackburn's CAF assessment form
- Presentation on Croydon's Parenting and Relationships Hub
- Presentation on Dorset's Dashboard
- Overview of impact measures
- Brief Encounters® pre and post training questionnaires
- Newcastle's training evaluation form
- Relate Newcastle's pre and post counselling questionnaire
- Manchester's LFO relationship questionnaires
- Hertfordshire's Ambassador evaluation framework
- Hertfordshire's Ambassador evaluation form



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This guide was created by Innovation Unit and One Plus One.



About Innovation Unit

Innovation Unit is a not for profit social enterprise.

We create new solutions that enable more people to belong and contribute to thriving societies.

We develop alliances for change with places, organisations and systems, to ensure that innovation has lasting impact at scale.

www.innovationunit.org



About OnePlusOne

OnePlusOne is a research and innovation charity that is all about helping people to build stronger relationships. We do this by equipping them with the skills and knowledge they need, so that couples, parents and children can be happier, healthier and more successful.

Everything we do starts with monitoring relationship science across a range of sources such as primary research, data gathering and practice based intelligence to generate knowledge and insight about relationships. We use this to provide evidence based digital resources for the public, continuing professional development for practitioners and support to local authorities in developing services.

www.oneplusone.org.uk

Together we combine evidence with experience to create resources that help people improve their relationships, and empower them to make positive choices for themselves and their children.

CREATING A LOCAL FAMILY OFFER: LESSONS FROM LOCAL AUTHORITIES PIONEERS



THIS GUIDE IS PART OF THE RESOURCE PACK
FOR CREATING A LOCAL FAMILY OFFER