

Reducing Parental Conflict Newsletter 10

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Bristol Relationships Matter
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Hello and welcome to
the tenth newsletter
for the Bristol area,
focusing on
relationship distress
and support for
couple parents or
separating or
separated parents

Features

1. One family's experience of mentalisation-based therapy
2. Lived experienced of parental conflict

Training

3. Supporting Families Experiencing Persistent Parental Conflict one day - **14th July**
4. Recognising the Difference Between Parental Conflict and Domestic Abuse Workshop - **13th September 4-5 pm**
5. Supporting Families Experiencing Persistent Parental Conflict one day - **26th September**
6. Save the date: Relationships Matter week w.c. **5th Feb 2024**
7. **E-learning** for practitioners and managers

Content for your social media pages/newsletters for parents/carers available also in power point/word

8. OnePlusOne **digital interventions**
9. Getting on Better and Getting it Right for Children **cards**
10. Supporting Inter-Parental Conflict Project
11. More content: **Animation** aimed at parents and children to explain why [Relationships Matter](#)

Relationships Matter Team – print version postcard for professionals

Double sided print version of the Relationships Matter Team offer attached separately.

1. One Family's Experience of Mentalisation Based Therapy

- Sarah, 18 and Will, 19 have an 18 month old daughter together called Amy.
- They are both from blended families with a history of abuse and domestic violence.
- Sarah suffers from a diagnosed anxiety condition and has previously made attempts on her life at times of extreme stress.
- The referral was made by their social worker due to the arguments between Sarah and Will, and parenting concerns.
- Amy was subject to Child Protection arrangements under the category of neglect.
- Sarah and Will agreed to undertake Mentalisation Based Therapy. At the start of the intervention, they were living together but separated 5 weeks into the intervention. The sessions were then undertaken individually.
- Sarah was able to realise that the relationship she had shared with Will was controlling and was preventing both herself and agencies from seeing that she could - and did – parent extremely well. Sarah grew enormously in confidence and was able to pay positive attention to her mental health and recognise when she needed to seek support for low mood.
- As the sessions progressed both Sarah and Will were able to begin to see past the separation, and instead look at what was best for Amy. They were able to hold each other in mind, and both started to co-parent much more effectively.

What is different now?

- Sarah is effectively co-parenting with Will
- They have shared care of Amy
- Both demonstrate flexibility with this when required
- Amy is reported by the family's health visitor to be thriving and achieving her milestones.
- She is attending nursery provision regularly; they raise no concerns regarding Amy's health or wellbeing.
- Amy transitions between Sarah and Will without anxiety and settles well with both parents.
- The Child Protection status of neglect has been removed and the family stepped down to Child In Need.

2. Lived Experience of Parental Conflict – an interview with actor Larry Lamb

I was recently catching up on episodes of a podcast that I often listen to called 'Off Air' presented by Woman's Hour's Jane Garvey and the journalist and broadcaster Fi Glover. I came across an episode which included an interview with the actor Larry Lamb, you may know him from the show Gavin and Stacey in which he played Gavin's dad. I was surprised when during the interview Larry began to talk about the parental conflict he experienced growing up. Larry is now in his seventies, and he spoke about the negative effect of his parent's conflict that still has an impact on his life today.

"Parents who want to have a bust can do that, but you don't have to have rows in front of the children, it completely wrecks their confidence, and it makes them question their feelings for both parents and it caused me, my brother and sister a great deal of emotional damage..."

"I've spent a long time over the years in psychoanalysis and it did me the world of good, but I just think it's such a shame that other people can't have the benefit of this so that they can gradually understand what's going on inside you and learn to live with it."

Larry was then asked, 'what he thought he would be like if he hadn't been able to access therapy', he replied:

"I'd be in a right state, I mean I'm 75 and I'm just about able to say 'yes, I think I'm on top of it'. But things still put me down very quickly you know I can be extremely emotional. I don't get quite so fired up about things anymore because that's too upsetting.

What I would be like if I hadn't been through what I've been through, in terms of therapy and understanding what it meant to be experiencing what I did as a child from as early as when I was inside my mum listening to the war going on outside, then I don't know."

Hearing Larry be so open about how his experience of parental conflict continued to have an impact on his life made me reflect on my own experiences. I grew up in a household where there was frequent conflict between my parents. These conflicts always involved shouting and ended in one of them slamming doors and then there would be 'the silent treatment'. My parents' arguments happened in the evenings when my dad would arrive home whilst my sisters and I were having our dinner. Therefore, we witnessed these and from a young age I could feel the tension in the air that came before the 'blow ups.'

Lived experience continued . . .

These arguments most often went unresolved, and I felt like I was walking on eggshells a lot, not wanting to make the situation worse or to have the anger directed at me or my sisters. When arguments had happened neither of my parents were emotionally available to us and I would go to bed feeling anxious and upset due to the lack of stability, worrying that my parents would separate.

My parents both had stressful jobs and high expectations of themselves and each other. They worked long hours and arguments were generally about money and/or that my dad wasn't doing enough around the house. However, I don't think it mattered to me what the arguments were about as they all left me with a feeling of dread and uncertainty.

Growing up I thought that this was the way relationships worked and that life as a grown-up was stressful and difficult. It also affected my relationships with my parents because I wouldn't want to do or say anything that might trigger an argument. As a result, I would never talk to my parents about things that I was worried and upset about and I still find it hard to do so today.

As with Larry I have carried these experiences of parental conflict inside me, and they have had an influence on the person that I have become. Unsurprisingly I am very conflict adverse which has made me vulnerable to mistreatment by partners and I have struggled with anxiety since childhood.

My parents are good people and I love them very much, they both had traumatic experiences in their childhoods which were never acknowledged or dealt with. Had my parents understood the damaging effects that their frequent conflicts were having upon my sisters and I, I believe that they would have tried to manage their disputes differently.

All the evidence tells us that there are thousands and thousands of children who will go home from school today to a witness conflict between their parents that is potentially damaging to them. If you are working with families and have concerns about parental conflict, please be curious, be courageous and ask questions.

Follow the link below to listen to the episode, the interview is from 15 minutes onwards.

<https://shows.acast.com/633c203337c97b00125ed1f3/6446b6c9996c17001132f9b6>

3. Supporting Families Experiencing Persistent Parental Conflict

FREE TRAINING

Friday 14th July 9.30 – 4

This multiagency in-person training will support practitioners to identify parental conflict, start a conversation and provide support and comes with a handy toolkit.

It is suitable for Bristol practitioners supporting children and their families and particularly those working within children's social-care, health, education and voluntary sector when their role supports early identification of harmful inter-parental conflict.



It aims to:

- improve understanding about parental conflict, it's impact on children and young people
- help practitioners distinguish between parental conflict and domestic abuse
- help practitioners to identify relationship distress
- equip practitioners to provide initial support and help
- introduce a toolkit packed full of resources to support parents

Book here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/667430200697>

A large, orange, multi-pointed starburst graphic with a black outline. Inside the starburst, the text "Only 5 places left!" is written in a white, sans-serif font.

Only 5 places left!

4. Recognising the Difference Between Parental Conflict and Domestic Abuse Workshop



- Wednesday 13th Sept 9.15am - 10.45am

This workshop explores the language and words used to describe both parental conflict and domestic abuse, the critical difference between the two concerns, why and how they look different from a survivor perspective and what destructive conflict looks like as opposed to constructive. We will not look at domestic abuse legislation or legal remedies.

[Click here to book](#)

5. Supporting Families Experiencing Persistent Parental Conflict

FREE TRAINING

Tuesday September 26th 9.30 – 4

This multiagency in-person training will support practitioners to identify parental conflict, start a conversation and provide support and comes with a handy toolkit.

It is suitable for Bristol practitioners supporting children and their families and particularly those working within children's social-care, health, education and voluntary sector when their role supports early identification of harmful inter-parental conflict.



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Book here:

[26 Sept 2023 supporting families experiencing persistent parental conflict](#)

6. SAVE THE DATE - RELATIONSHIPS MATTER WEEK 5TH TO 9TH FEBRUARY 2024

'Relationships Matter' Week will focus in on all different relationships including couples, ex-partners, parents, children, colleagues, residents and, of course, ourselves. The idea behind this week stems from Bristol's Family Hub programme which seeks to put relationships at the heart of family hubs. Family Hubs are a new 'one-stop-shop' offering a wide range of information and support to all families, from conception through to age 19 (or up to 25 for children with special education needs and disabilities). The new Hubs will also include wider wraparound services that can make a huge difference to people who need extra support, such as advice on getting into work, relationship building and stop smoking services.

They all support families to improve relationships between parents whether they are together or separated. Talking about relationships can often feel personal and seeking help with relationship issues can be tricky for many people. We want to open up the conversation and include our own reflections on relationships to improve our understanding of the families we seek to support and encourage access to our services and interventions in Bristol.

During the week we will be hosting a series of talks, webinars and workshops on the theme of relationships, examining how important they are to our wellbeing, resilience and confidence. Please get in touch relationshipsmatter@bristol.gov.uk if you can offer a workshop or would like to get involved in planning.



7. Practitioner and manager training modules

For BCC staff please access [here](#)



Module 1 – Understanding Parental Conflict and its impacts on child outcomes

https://sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk/sscp-training/module1/story_html5.html



Module 2 – Recognising and supporting parents in parental conflict

https://sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk/sscp-training/module2/story_html5.html



Module 3 – Working with parents in conflict

https://sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk/sscp-training/module3/story_html5.html



Module 4 – Role of the supervisor

https://sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk/sscp-training/module4/story_html5.html

8. OnePlusOne digital interventions*



If you want to understand the impact of parental arguments on children, try this **Arguing Better** online course. Knowing how to argue in a constructive way can make all the difference to your relationships.

[Parent's Access](#)

[Practitioner's Access](#)



Separating can be difficult for everyone involved. **Getting it Right for Children** helps parents develop effective ways to co-operate after separation. When parents separate, it's easy for children to get caught in the middle of their disagreements. Getting it Right for Children is a free online course for parents in Bristol designed to help them parent co-operatively after parting.



Becoming parents can change your relationship. Tiredness and stress associated with parenthood can lead to you and your partner misunderstanding each other. This **Me, You and Baby Too** online course, available for free to parents in Bristol can help you improve communication skills and manage conflict better.

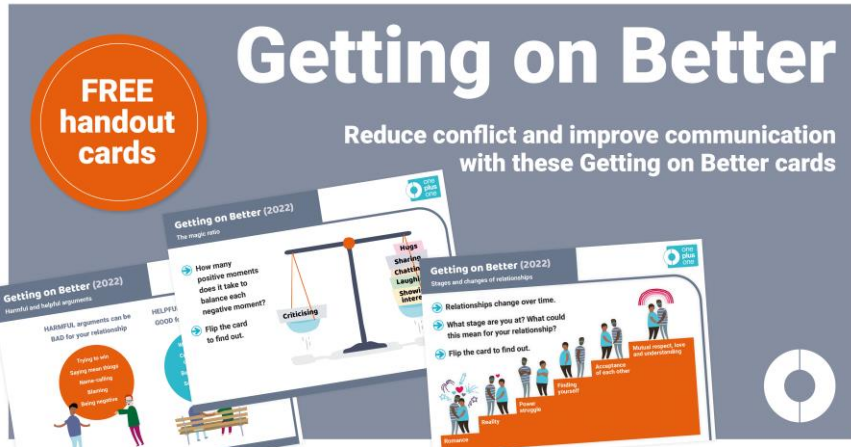
You can register for an account and find support on registration [here](#). Please note you will be asked to enter your name and email address and to set a password. These digital interventions can be completed independently by parents or as blended learning where parents are supported by a practitioner. Practitioners have access to guidance booklets for support. For further information or to arrange practitioner training on how to support families with these interventions please contact: relationshipsmatter@bristol.gov.uk

*The oneplusone digital interventions come with bonus material on debt that supports parents to communicate more effectively about financial stress.

9. Getting on Better and Getting it right for children cards

Arabic, English, Polish and Somali print ready resources

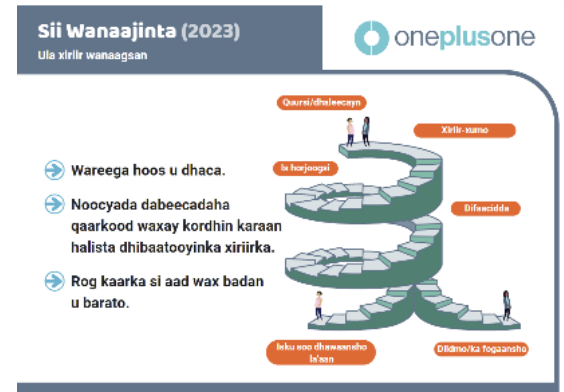
Share these eight *Getting on Better* cards with parents (together or separated) to encourage them to think about their relationship and how they can communicate better or deal with conflict more effectively.



Please contact relationships@bristol.gov.uk if you would like PDFs or printable versions of the Getting on Better cards or Getting it Right for Children cards in Arabic, Polish or Somali found here [Relationship support for parents and co-parents \(bristol.gov.uk\)](#)



Share these five skills cards with parents doing the *Getting it right for children* course. The cards will help remind parents of key communication skills from the course. Please register [Here](#) and download the practitioner guide here [GIRFC intro \(oneplusone.org.uk\)](#)





10. Why relationships matter

Good family relationships are enjoyable for their own sake and they also help your children feel secure and loved. As a parent, you are doing the best you can to care for your children at the same time as juggling work, friends, looking after the home and trying to keep your own relationship strong as a couple. There's also no denying that having children, especially in the early years, puts a huge demand on everyone and relationships can suffer. All relationships have tricky moments, what's important is solving any problems and getting help. There are organisations and services that can provide advice, tips and support to help keep your relationships strong and provide support and guidance if relationships break down. Conflict in relationships is part of everyday life but conflict which is frequent, intense and poorly resolved can lead to distressed relationships and have harmful effects on children. Find out more by watching this short animation <https://youtu.be/3OIHvMHuUN8>

11. Supporting Inter-Parental Conflict Project (SIPCo)

Do you have a child or children aged between 8 and 14? Do you find it hard to get on with your partner or your ex? Do you frequently argue or shout at each other? Or have you stopped talking to each other because it's too difficult? If so, then this SIPCo project could help.



Whether you are with your partner or have separated, are an LGBTQ+ parent, a parent in an extended family, or any other group, we are looking for parents and carers who live in Bristol who:

- have a child aged 8-14
- are getting into conflict with a partner or ex-partner
- are willing to try something new to help reduce their conflict.

This project (called SIPCo) aims to help you learn how to reduce the amount of conflict between you and your partner, or your ex.

The help on offer will either be relationship therapy (delivered by the couple therapy charity Tavistock Relationships) or access to some online resources with local support for reducing parental conflict.

The project is trying to compare the two types of support, so parents will be provided with one or the other. We expect both kinds of support to be helpful for families.

In the relationship therapy sessions (which will take place online), a therapist will help you and your partner/ex to communicate better, while the online resources are programmes that you will work through at your own pace with the support of a locally trained professional.

If you are interested, please get in touch using the details below.

Shopping vouchers are given for families taking part in recognition for their time filling in forms.

For more information contact Gina Pazienza 07721 635376 or email relationshipsmatter@bristol.gov.uk

