



Funded by  
UK Government

## Case study title: Relationship Support for Parents

**Date: 15<sup>th</sup> October 2024**

Parental conflict, whether between together or separated parents, can significantly impact children's outcomes. The Family Hub and Start for Life Programme stipulates the provision of support for parental conflict:

*“Staff identify conflict, distinguish it from domestic abuse, and provide universal and early support, connecting parents to additional resources as needed.”*

### Foxstones Training Ltd, Northumberland Local Evaluation

Northumberland has strong strategic and operational commitment to reducing parental conflict, set out below are some the things we have done to achieve this.

#### Training and Support Development

Healthy Relationships training is now part of the core training for various professionals, with over 1200 staff trained.

A digital learning package, including resources for expecting parents and separating couples, was introduced in October 2021. Feedback indicated that many parents desired more interactive support, leading to practitioner led creation of group and one-on-one sessions.

A Relationships Summit in February 2023 brought together 160 partners to highlight the importance of healthy relationships.

Mini bite sized training sessions began in May 2023, focusing on engagement barriers and practical communication strategies. Over 500 staff are invited to these sessions and attendance is upwards of 70 - 100.

#### Referral and Assessment Improvements

In 2022, funding helped recruit two Practice and Project Leads to oversee the program's implementation and evaluation.

A Healthy Relationships Panel was established to ensure appropriate referrals, as initial data showed over 60% were inappropriate, the majority due to evidence of domestic abuse. A new screening tool was implemented, enhancing practitioners'



**Funded by  
UK Government**

ability to assess relationship quality / risk before making referrals. This has improved understanding of family needs, reducing inappropriate referrals to 18%.

See table below Course uptake from October 2021 to 27<sup>th</sup> February 2024:

1.

Project	Projects Started	Clients Enrolled	Clients Starts	Retained	% Retained	Milestones	% Milestones
Arguing Better	13	41	34	28	82%	22	79%
Getting it Right for Children	11	27	24	23	96%	23	96%
Me, You and Baby Too	5	13	10	10	100%	10	100%

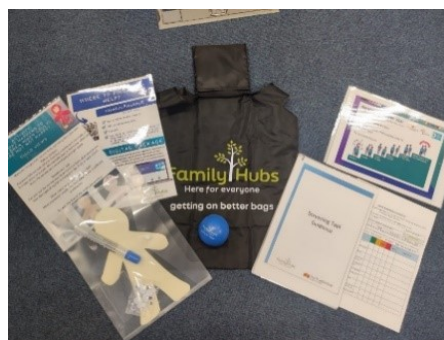
### Communication Strategy

A dedicated communication plan was launched, including a Healthy Relationships webpage and a social media campaign, which reached over 11,000 people.

### Facilitating Conversations with Parents and Children

To address the sensitivity around discussing parental conflict, “Getting on Better” bags were developed to help practitioners engage parents in conversations. By October 2024, over 100 bags were distributed to various professionals. An activity within this bag focuses on the voice of the child, this has been used by practitioners to highlight to parents the effect of their conflict on their children.

2.





Funded by  
UK Government

## Regional Collaboration

Regional coordinators collaborate to share practices and resources. A joint initiative, Parenting when Separated, began in May 2023, providing co-parenting skills for separated parents.

## New Healthy Relationships Offer

As the digital offer concluded in September 2024, feedback indicated a preference for group and one-on-one support. A two-week “Getting on Better” workshop, Parenting When Separated and the COPE programme (for couples) form part of the Healthy Relationships Pathway to better meet parents' needs.

From 30<sup>th</sup> June - 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024, we had 36 referrals (5 inappropriate) 22 went on to access some support.

Overall, the initiative continues to adapt and thrive, increasing appropriate referrals and promoting a culture where seeking help for relationship issues is normalised.

For more information, contact Vicki Collins at [vicki.collins@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:vicki.collins@northumberland.gov.uk).

- 
1. *Table to show the uptake numbers for each program from October 2021 to February 2024.*
  2. *Photo of a Getting on Better bag with contents included.*