



Early Help



Early Help Systemic Model

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www.rbkc.gov.uk/earlyhelp



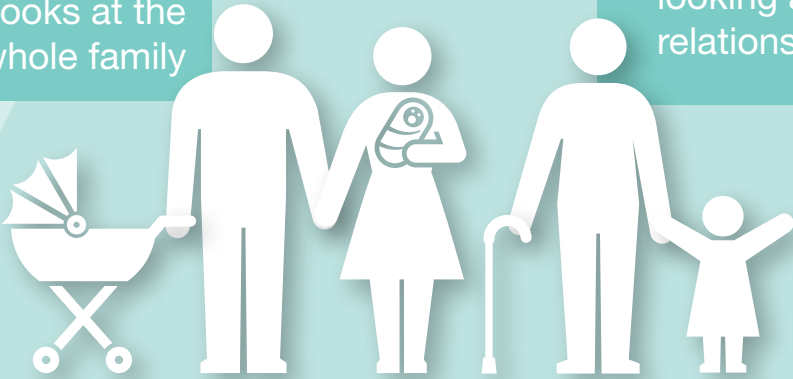
THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA

The Early Help Model of Support

> Looks at the whole family

> Builds on the strengths of a family

> Works in a systemic way looking at relationships



> Follows a team around the family (TAF) approach so that support is coordinated across a number of agencies

> Includes the voice of the child and engages them in the process

Staff Skills and Training

Family and Children's Services in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has undertaken a far-reaching programme of change and innovation that is called 'Focus on Practice'. One part of this programme has involved staff undertaking a 10-month course delivered by the Institute of Family Therapy. All Early Help Practitioners now have or are working towards the **Advanced Certificate in Systemic Practice with Families in a Safeguarding Context** and this forms the basis of their approach with families.

In addition, Early Help practitioners have training in a number of areas including **parenting, Signs of Safety** and **motivational interviewing**.

Early Help - Theory of Change

We believe that the resources to make positive change lie within each individual family system. Early Help Practitioners use systemic skills to help families identify patterns in how they relate to each other and the problems they are facing and then enables them to take different positions and see other opportunities for action. This process builds new possibilities for change and mobilises the resources within the family to function in a different way, thus reducing or diminishing problematic symptoms (such as poor behaviour, family arguments, mental wellbeing, school attendance etc).



What is Systemic Practice?

Systemic practice is a way of working with people, which takes as its fundamental frame of reference the relationships that we are all a part of. It sees these relationships as the context in which we all make sense of our lives, and in which any particular problems or challenges are both created and then resolved. Put simply the individual person ceases to be seen as problematic in and of themselves (for example an abusive parent or a naughty child) and the relational world which they inhabit is seen to be contributing to and maintaining the particular struggles that the individual is facing. The site of intervention to make change for any person then is the relationships in which they are in: a change in one part of a relationship will lead to change in another, and, focused in the right direction, will alleviate an individual's apparent problems.

Systemic practice may be with an individual, a couple, a family, a group of families, professional systems and other wider contexts (Stratton, 2011). It has been widely recognised that systemic interventions are effective for school-based problems such as learning and reading difficulties and school phobia, as a stand-alone treatment or in conjunction with other treatments in a wide range of different conditions and presentations¹.

There is also a growing evidence base that systemic interventions are effective in addressing issues including abuse/neglect, familial violence and conduct disorders.

Working systemically, practitioners hold in-depth conversations with families, using techniques such as circular questions and motivational interviewing, to understand the concerns and the family's views of these. Our work is intensive and it is important to develop good engagement with parents in order to address family issues and behaviour that may be very entrenched. During engagement the practitioner works with the family to help them change their patterns of interaction, building on the family's own strengths and ways of doing these differently.

Strong engagement between the worker and family is crucial to the success of any intervention. It can be especially valuable to families who may have struggled forming relationships in their past and/or those who have past negative experiences with professional agencies, or where more traditional 'directive' interventions have had little sustained success. Therefore, in cases where families engage with us fully we are confident that we are able to have some success in improving the relationships and/or circumstances within that family.

¹ (AFT, 2012, Carr, 2009a, Carr, 2008; Ng, S.M et al., 2008; Stratton, 2005; Asen, 2002; Shadish et al, 1993)