

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS®

The current context

There is now compelling evidence that how parents get on – or don't get on – influences children's lives, affecting the health and well-being of the family, and all other relationships including those between parent and child and between siblings.

We know that what parents actually do is influenced by a wide variety of factors including genetic characteristics and their own experiences of being parented. They are also affected by their current mental and physical health as well as the circumstances in which they are trying to look after their child¹.

Poor quality parental relationships, whether parents are living together or not, especially those characterised by dysfunctional conflict, are associated with poor parenting and poor quality parent-child relationships. Poor parenting and disrupted families have been identified as risk factors for social, emotional and educational outcomes for children and for offending and antisocial behaviour.

Recent policy developments acknowledge the important links between the quality of family relationships, parenting and child outcomes and the need for an integrated whole-family approach for practitioners across a range of disciplines.

Brief Encounters® has been developed to help frontline practitioners make timely and effective interventions with the families they encounter routinely. Over 3,000 practitioners have been trained in Brief Encounters®, with outreach to well over a million families, many in deprived circumstances and the vast majority in the early years of parenting.

¹Quinton, D. (2004). 'Supporting parents: messages from research'. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.



Brief Encounters®

Family practitioners are usually 'turned to' when people experience problems at home. This presents an opportunity for the practitioner to make an early intervention by engaging with the client, assessing needs and encouraging them to seek their own solutions. Where underlying relationship and family issues can be identified by practitioners early on in routine practice, there is lesser likelihood of problems escalating to crisis point.

Brief Encounters® has been designed to meet the needs of frontline practitioners in their everyday work with families. Using the guidelines and boundaries of the training, practitioners gain confidence to listen without becoming overwhelmed, to offer effective support and to make an effective referral where necessary.



Outcomes for practitioners

Brief Encounters® training helps practitioners to:

- engage with parents
- recognise signs of relationship distress at an early stage
- understand couple and family relationships better
- use active listening to respond appropriately
- encourage self help and offer support
- make a relevant referral
- use the brief intervention model across a wide range of family issues
- use time skilfully as well as work in a timely way
- be clear about personal and professional boundaries
- develop their own supportive networks.

Brief Encounters® is accredited by the Royal College of Nursing. It is cited as an example of good practice for home visiting in the Sure Start Children's Centres Practice Guidance, Department for Education and Skills, 2006.

Evaluation

An independent evaluation conducted by the University of Greenwich in 1998 showed that "the Brief Encounters® training has been a remarkable success". Six months after training:

- 94% of practitioners trained were using the model, with over half using it daily or weekly
- 91% were more able to manage their involvement in their clients' problems
- 88% learned to manage their time more effectively.



A randomised controlled trial of health visitor support to 1,000 new mothers in Bexley Care Trust found that:

- 21% mothers in intervention clinics were identified with relationship problems compared with 5% in the control group
- 18% of mothers were offered help versus 3% in the control group. About half of these were also identified as having post-natal depression
- At the 12-week visit to clinic for immunisations, the intervention group was twice as likely to report having discussed relationship problems with the health visitor and 75% more likely to report having received help with a problem.

"I'm much more aware of the signals – more importantly I have the confidence to tackle them"
Health Visitor

"I'm actually learning not to bottle things up and to actually talk, which is what me and my partner do now"
Mother

Brief Encounters® evaluation documents

Corney, R. ((1998) Evaluation of the Brief Encounters training course, University of Greenwich.

Simons J., Reynolds J & Morison L. (2001) Randomised controlled trial of training health visitors to identify and help couples with relationship problems following a birth, *British Journal of General Practice* 51, 793-799.

Simons J., Reynolds J., Mannion J., & Morison L. (2003) How the health visitor can help when problems between parents can add to postnatal stress, *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 44 (4), 400-411.

Training options

Brief Encounters® 3-day course

A comprehensive training programme giving professionals a deeper understanding of the importance of relationships, enabling them to have the confidence and skills to offer support when it is needed. The course is led by two experienced trainers with the first module run on day one, and the second and third modules run a week later over two consecutive days. During the course, participants receive a considerable amount of time for in-depth skills practice as well as evidence-based information on relationships. Participants leave the course with the knowledge of the brief intervention model as well as having a sound level of skills that can be used in their everyday work.

£350 per person

12-16 participants

Brief Encounters® I-day workshop

The one-day workshop is an overview of the Brief Encounters® framework supported by evidence based materials, together with basic skills practice. It is particularly useful for groups with a diverse knowledge and skills base, where information about relationships will add value to their work. This programme is facilitated by a One Plus One trainer and is tailored specifically to the participants' needs.

£90 per person

12-20 participants

Brief Encounters® video resource

An off-the-shelf half-day programme for professionals who are interested in gaining an introduction to the Brief Encounters® framework and cannot access the training and skills-work delivered by One Plus One. The workshop is designed around a specific scenario between a family and a health visitor and can be delivered by an in-house trainer. The pack includes a video, a guide for facilitators and a workbook for participants. Copies of participants' manuals must be ordered separately for workshop attendees.

£50 for trainer's video resource pack, plus £3.50ea per participant's manual

To purchase training, or to discuss your requirements contact us by emailing training@oneplusone.org.uk

