



relate  
the relationship people

# Putting relationships at the heart of family hubs

Be human | Be connected | Be smart

# Menu of services:

**01**

Counselling services for children, young people and adults

**02**

Reducing Parental Conflict

**03**

Mediation

**04**

Training provision

**05**

Supervision, support and wellbeing services for staff

**06**

Coaching, funding proposals and strategic support

# Why Relate?

**Relate is the leading relationships charity and the Relate Federation is the largest provider of relationship support in England and Wales. Offering counselling, information, mediation and support to individuals, couples and families, we work face-to-face, online and on the phone with people of all backgrounds and sexualities, at all stages of life.**

We also provide expert training for relationship support practitioners. Our vision is a future where healthy relationships are actively promoted as the heart of a thriving society. Our mission is to make expert information and support for healthy relationships available to everyone. We value being human, connected and smart in the way we work.

Here at Relate we are passionate about healthy relationships. In fact, there are few relationship issues we haven't come across. We believe in **accessibility** and **flexibility**, on the understanding that everyone is different, and that we have distinct and sometimes complex needs. As well as delivering our first-class relationship counselling, we offer **individual support, mediation services, sex therapy and support for parents in conflict.**

We offer families bespoke tools to help them through divorce and separation, and we support children and young people to manage change, cope with transitions to adolescence and adulthood, and increase their resilience and emotional wellbeing.

Relate is leading on the delivery of the North East of England's **Reducing Parental Conflict Programme**, working in partnership with ten local authorities, and two other voluntary sector organisations, as well as front line practitioners and referral agencies. We have direct experience of working with families where conflict is frequent, intense and poorly resolved, and we have witnessed first-hand the positive impact the RPC interventions have had on family resilience. We have learned significant lessons, and have a wealth of knowledge, understanding and skill in designing and delivering these evidence-based services aimed at reducing conflict between parents.

“Strong and healthy relationships are vital to emotional wellbeing, physical health, family resilience, and children's long term outcomes.”

**18% of partners in the UK are in distressed relationships, rising to 22% for parents with children under 16.**

We have worked with many high profile corporate brands and we are also used to delivering services in partnership with other charities, such as Action for Children, to support parents and families. We have connections with Women's Aid and the Prison Service, and we deliver programmes addressing maternal mental health in partnership with Comic Relief, which include training practitioners in this area.

# Why Relate?

During the Covid-19 pandemic we created a brand new short intervention service called RelateHub, which offers free thirty-minute web chats with Relate counsellors. As well as securing funding from the government via the National Lottery Community Fund for this service, we also received funding from the NHS to provide free web chats, phone chats, and counselling to their staff members via RelateHubNHS.

Our services have continued to deliver impressive outcomes – for example: **77% of Adult Relationship Counselling clients said their communication had improved and 72% said their ability to manage conflict had improved.**

We have a skilled workforce specialising in issues like mental ill health and domestic abuse, as well as relationship support. We deliver the ‘Choose to Change’ intervention for men who have been abusive, and the Separated Parents Information Programme which is a half-day intervention on improving cooperative co-parenting. This complements the successful pilot DWP programme we have delivered as mentioned above; Relate have been a prime provider over the last three years around Reducing Parental Conflict.

**The Covid 19 pandemic has put many families under increased pressure.**

**A 2020 survey of Relate counsellors found that 79% reported a rise in clients concerned about arguments. Linked to this, disagreements about managing responsibilities at home (60%) and parenting were on the rise (62%) along with communication as a whole (62%).**

“ My observations at the home are always positive, and I no longer have any worries.

*Referring social worker, Reducing Parental Conflict*

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# The Relate approach

## Collaborative

As well as our partnership approach with the agencies already mentioned, we are also passionate about the need to collaborate and co-design with the communities within which we work. We understand the need to safeguard adults and children, and we advocate for the 'Team Around the Family' approach.

## Accessible

Most of our services are available online as well as face-to-face. We can blend our digital products such as web chat and online self-help with face-to-face services too. We are open and inclusive, and pride ourselves on being an enabling organisation. Our RelateHub is a great example of this.

## Strengths-based

We treat our clients and service users with the utmost respect, and believe in supporting families to find their own solutions, building on what they're good at, rather than focusing on "failure." We exist in an organisational culture of development, growth and compassion for those using our services.

## Whole family approach

Our delivery of the Reducing Parental Conflict Programme puts the child at the centre of each intervention, whether parents are together, separated or in the process of separating. We recognise that conflict between parents can cause serious harm, and we are skilled at helping families to recognise and act upon this.



### Despite the pandemic, in 2020/21:

- **2,398,537 people used our online self-help services**
- **30,528 people attended Adult Relationship Counselling**
- **4,613 children and young people received counselling**

# Being part of the solution for families

We have long believed that **families of all backgrounds and make-ups** would benefit from having access to a wide range of relationship support options. These services are not always accessible to families facing disadvantage, and in a world where the cost of living is squeezing families even further, relationship support can be considered an affordable luxury rather than a crucial service available to all.

We want to help overcome the barriers and the stigma associated with relationship counselling and conflict management by moving away from the idea of relationship failure towards solution-focused practice, and **relationship support being available to everybody**.

## Amy's story



“ My ex-boyfriend was into drugs and had mental health issues. When I tried to end the relationship he would emotionally blackmail me. I became isolated from my friends and felt unable to socialise or concentrate at school.

At Christmas time I felt so alone that I tried to take my own life. The GP referred me to Relate and after attending counselling sessions for a few months, I began to find myself again. My counsellor, Kathy, was amazing. She helped me to understand what a healthy relationship should look like and I realised I definitely wasn't in one.

We worked on my self-esteem and came up with coping mechanisms which helped me to deal with my anxiety and emotions.

I found the strength to end my relationship without feeling guilty and was able to move on with my life. I'm now confident, surrounded by friends and family, have passed my A levels and am off to university. At one point I was worried I wouldn't even pass my A levels let alone get into uni. I can't put into words how much the counselling helped me.

Having somebody completely separate to talk to made me realise for myself what needed to change. I'm forever grateful for what Kathy helped me to overcome and am now in a really good place. ”



# The Relate offer

*We are pleased to set out below a detailed menu of services which we can make available to **Local Authorities, Combined Authorities, and Family Hub Partnerships** who are developing or providing models of delivery where family relationships are central to the offer. These Relate services can be tailored and adapted to meet local need and budgets, and we have included how we think they will help deliver support to the communities you serve.*

## **Relationship Support and Counselling**

Our most popular service, and used by 30,528 people in the year 2020-2021. During the Covid-19 pandemic we moved much of our service online, delivering via platforms like Zoom or Microsoft Teams. We are now moving towards a hybrid model of delivery, and demand remains high for this service.

We have over 1200 qualified and experienced counsellors available nationally to deliver therapeutic interventions to adult couples, individuals, children, young people and families.

## **Reducing Parental Conflict**

### **Mentalization Based Therapy for Parenting Under Pressure (MBT-PP)**

Delivered in partnership with Tavistock Relationships, this is an evidence-led intervention that works particularly well when delivered with co-parents who are willing and able to work together, even if separating or separated. This intervention is delivered over 9 sessions of 1 hour each with a specially trained intervention worker. The therapeutic nature of the sessions encourages parents to be curious about how the conflict impacts upon their co-parenting and family relationships.

## **Reducing Parental Conflict**

### **Parenting When Separated**

Another evidence-led service which is delivered in partnership with Parents Plus over six weeks. This group intervention supports separated co-parents to refocus on the needs of their children, helping them to manage the co-parenting relationship. Two or more groups run concurrently, each consisting of a mixture of resident and non-resident parents, with co-parents always being in different groups.

This intervention can be delivered in person or online, with groups running at different times of the day or evening to maximize engagement from parents who work or have other responsibilities.

# The Relate offer

## Relationship Solutions

This is a solution-focused, strengths-based programme of relationship support for co-parents designed and delivered by Relate, which we have created using the learning from the DWP specialist interventions pilot.

The Relationship Solutions service is based on approaches such as Mentalization, solution-focused therapy, and psychoeducational group work with parents. The aim of our Relationship Solutions Programme is to bring together the approaches used throughout the DWP Pilot to offer a service that aims to address the gaps that parents and practitioners have told us are there when trying to improve co-operative co-parenting.

It can be delivered in person or online to parents experiencing conflict. The eligibility criteria for parents is:

- Co-parents experiencing relationship distress where someone in the family has additional needs (SEND) or neurodiversity
- Male carers in need of relationship support in relation to co-parenting

### The Relationship Solutions co-parenting offer

10 sessions covering:

One individual assessment (including screening for DVA) and joint sessions exploring:

- co-parenting and SEND
- causes and triggers of family conflicts
- communication styles
- attachment needs of parents and children
- 'tuning in' to the impact of conflict on children
- potential barriers and solutions planning
- reflections for future relationship maintenance

### The Relationship Solutions 'Dads Club' offer

The 'Dads Club' is an intervention for men in parenting roles where conflict has been identified, including stepdads, kinship carers and foster carers; a piece of community group work aimed at fathers and male carers, in which they co-produce/facilitate group work in their local area. This could be around issues such as co-parenting while separated, support for fathers/male carers of children with additional needs, mental ill health or support with isolation/loneliness.



# The Relate offer

It includes:

One individual assessment (including DVA screening) and 6 group sessions including:

- goals and thinking about challenges
- frames of reference and the male experience
- attachment needs of parents and children
- 'tuning in' to the impact on children
- coping strategies and self-care

The aim would be to embed the Dads Club in communities where mental ill health and isolation of fathers/male carers has been specifically identified. Relate actively encourages service-user involvement and co-facilitation where appropriate, as we believe peer support forms a huge part of the success for the RPC programme, especially for male carers.

## RelateHub

This is an accessible, flexible and immediate web chat or phone service which Relate has delivered as part of our response for adults during the pandemic, including NHS staff in London, the Midlands and the South West. These are **30-minute one-off solutions-focused interventions** delivered by our Relationships and Wellbeing Advisors.

This service could be tailored to meet the needs of families who need immediate, one-off advice or signposting to a suitable service, either within or outside of Family Hub services. It could also form part of our online self-help portal which is outlined below.

## Digital Relationships Portal

Created as part of our LearnRelate service, this is a self-directed, online learning programme supporting healthy family, couple, and social relationships, which could be accessed as a stand-alone resource or alongside other provision such as the RelateHub above. Topics for online courses range from Family Life, Parenting & Communication Skills, and Sexual Communication and Intimacy. 2,398,537 used our online self-help resources 2020-2021.

Relate also regularly produces talking head videos & podcasts, featuring a range of issues that might be relevant to specific communities. These can be further tailored or created to suit the priorities and outcomes of individual Family Hubs across the country.

# The Relate offer

## Reducing Parental Conflict Training

We have developed a series of one-hour webinars and one-day workshops for professionals in this specialist area, drawing on our direct experience of delivering services to parents experiencing all levels of inter-parental and family conflict. We can train your staff and volunteers, equipping them with the additional **skills and confidence** they need to “have the conversation” with parents. This training can be tailored to your area’s specific needs, demographics and priorities. **See Appendix One for suggested learning outcomes.**

As well as direct training delivery, we can create a **tailored digital resource**; a toolkit which will offer bespoke resources and ideas for working with separated and intact parents experiencing conflict in their relationship.

## Supervision and Coaching

Would you like a **go-to ‘relationships’ person**, someone you or your staff / volunteers can approach when they are at a loss on how to proceed with families who are experiencing relationships distress? Perhaps you have a safeguarding issue, or would like to support a young person in crisis? Our **experienced counsellors and Reducing Parental Conflict practitioners** can help by providing regular supervision, either in person, online or via phone/web chat, or provide regular coaching sessions with staff, in groups or individually, providing your Family Hub with confident and well-informed staff.

## Strategic Planning

Our senior management team can support you to develop a Family Hub service that truly puts family relationships at the heart of your proposal or service. Relate is an active participant in the Relationships Alliance and the Kids in the Middle coalition with other charities.

Our input into your proposal will strengthen your business case, ensuring you have the best possible chance of securing maximum funding for the delivery of your Family Hub provision.

# How these services support the Family Hubs approach and your support offer for families

Relate and all of our regional centres have employed **a relational approach to service delivery** for many years. We are able to support both the **development and delivery of Family Hubs** across the country in very clear ways:

- **Our couple and family counselling** helps strengthen relationships and prevent family breakdown.
- **Our reducing parental conflict provision** improves family resilience and puts the child at the heart of the conversation, improving long-term outcomes for children of all ages.
- **Our mediation services**, and support to improve communication between separated and separating parents, minimises the devastating impact such conflict can have on children and extended family relationships.
- **Our training provision** can strengthen your staff teams' knowledge, confidence and skills, as well as those of your volunteers and your partners in the voluntary or public sectors.
- **Our experience and understanding** of family and social relationships can add significant value to your funding proposals, your implementation plans and delivery structures.

# Our commitment to quality

Relate is a well-recognised brand right across the UK, and we are committed to maintaining our **excellent reputation** through continual review and improvement of our services. Our staff are highly qualified, trusted, skilled professionals, whose primary responsibility is to build relationships and achieve tangible outcomes. We are **so much more than a couples' counselling service**, and our digital offer is growing in its diversity and popularity.

By supporting families to build on their strengths, to listen to each other, to be child-focused, to separate well, argue well as well as less, to have the tools to help provide a loving, nurturing environment for their children, **we are not only reducing the burden on public services such as the family courts, early help or social services, but we are building a more resilient society, where children learn and grow to be contributors, and where adults learn to be kinder to each other.**

One of our key aims is to ensure our services become a serious part of the solution when tackling poor family relationships, and we strive to ensure our provision works seamlessly with other interventions at whatever stage of the journey a family is at when they come to us.



**82% of our service users report that they feel better or much better about their situation after undertaking a Relate service**

# How to reach us

As the leading provider of relationship support in England and Wales, Relate would welcome the opportunity to discuss how we can collaborate to **put healthy relationships at the heart of the Family Hubs movement**. The support services above are examples of what we can offer local partnerships, and we are always open to discussing how they can be adapted to fill identified gaps in local services, and add value to existing provision.

To talk to us, please contact:  
Jude.gordon@relate.org.uk

# Appendix 1

"I had never considered the difference between parental conflict and domestic abuse. It was also great that you covered parents who are still in a relationship as well as those who are separated."

*Participant on Relate's Reducing Parental Conflict Training*

## Advanced Development for Professionals Workshop – Reducing Parental Conflict (Relate)

This interactive (virtual or face-to-face) workshop, and accompanying Relate toolkit, will be relevant for colleagues in organisations that have ongoing involvement with families, such as schools, community health, substance misuse, adult mental health, domestic abuse, family support, early help and social workers.

Participants will be able to identify and understand the detrimental impact of parental conflict on families, and they will learn how to respond in order to protect children and support parents, using real-life experiences, professional practice and case studies.

This full-day workshop (10am to 4pm) will be participatory and experiential in order to **increase skills, knowledge and confidence** in developing professional practice. The workshop will develop the confidence in the implementation of frameworks and models that support professionals to provide a proportionate response to parental conflict.

## Learning Outcomes:

- Confidently be able to explain to parents how conflictive behaviours used by them can have a negative impact on relationships, in particular their children.
- Explore and reflect on your own internal biases and/or personal experiences, and how these may impact or stop you from recognising or responding to signs of family conflict early on in your interactions with the families you support.
- Use real-life experience to enhance learning and address scenarios such as disguised compliance, non-engagement, and boundary setting, to reduce the impact of conflict on meaningful intervention, and overshadowing the needs of the child.
- Further develop skills and confidence in initiating restorative, strength-based, and challenging conversations. The workshop will use scenario-based case studies to address topics including: parents in distressed relationships, separated parents, same-sex parents, and parents with additional needs.
- Increase comprehension, knowledge, and guidance on the legalities of shared parental responsibility, and managing the rights of both parents.
- Gain awareness and signposting to other services, as well as reflection tools to assist parents to review their own parenting style, identify conflict triggers, and regulate emotion.