

Connecting Families Summer Newsletter

The Connecting Families Early Help Conference 2023

The Connecting Families Team hosted the second Early Help Conference on 10th July 2023, following a break due to Covid. This year's theme was Children and Young Peoples' Voice and Participation / Feedback. The event was funded by the Reducing Parental Conflict fund, so this topic formed an essential part of the day, reminding us all to listen to children and young people who are struggling with unhealthy relationships, and how their parents / carers relationships effect them and what signs to look out for. Last year we developed a toolkit to support everyone when working with those experiencing conflict in the home, and the link to access this is [here](#)



The day was very well received by all those who attended, some 50 plus practitioners from a wide range of agencies, from the voluntary sector to teachers, health visitors, early years and children services staff. Some feedback from participants included:

"I enjoyed the conference and found it very useful."

"Thank you very much indeed for setting the day up and ensuring essential early help services have a profile."

We would particularly like to thank the team from Southside and a youth work volunteer, who spoke about their personal experiences. I think they made us all think about how we should be **more caring and provide a consistent joined up approach** when working with families. The voice of child and young person lies at the heart of everything we do. It is important for those who use our services that this is the case; that they should have the space to express themselves, feel actively involved, listened to and able to influence the decisions that affect them and must lie firmly alongside that aspiration. We also need to hear from parents, carers and the wider family, as well. We are developing a **participation toolkit**, I hope that this will help you, the link can be found [here](#)

In B&NES Council we promote participation and therefore we hope that you find this a helpful guide to ensure you are working with children and young people from the outset in a way that not only improves their lives, but importantly that you support them to make decisions and that you have children and young people at the heart of the consultation, planning, delivery and feedback.

Connecting Families Summer Events

Connecting Families are kicking off the Summer with a number of special events to support our families.

- * 24th—26th July: Working in partnership with The Wheels Project at Brislington, we are running a Pre CBT course for new moped riders for four young people age 16 years and older. All the young people have previously attended a karting course with Connecting Families, and this course aims to engage and prepare new moped riders for safe responsible riding and to equip them with the basic skills required to maintain their moped safely,
- * 9th August: A Katakana (kayaks that seat up to 6 people), Games and Picnic event is being held at The Boathouse and a local park in Bath. This is open to existing CFT families or those recently closed.
- * 23rd August: A Riverside Family Fun Day is planned using Riverside Youth Hub in the morning, using the open space of Kensington Meadows in Bath in the afternoon. This is funded by Bathscape and the activity is open to existing CFT families or those recently closed.



These events have been very popular in the past ... last year all the families scored the Riverside Family Fun Day as “10 out of 10” for being a brilliant day, and some of the families have attended multiple times, which shows how much they enjoy these activities.

Connecting Families Talking Teens course

Talking Teens

The Connecting Families team have just finished a bespoke young persons' group (Talking Teens), which runs alongside a course

which supports their parents, and a group for children under 11 where they make crafts and play sports. These sessions, based at Southside Youth and Community Centre run every Thursday evening for 2 hours from 6.00—8.00 pm (22nd June — 20th July) . We are also holding another Talking Teens course based at Radstock Children's Centre which will run every Thursday evening from 21st September—19th October 2023.



The sessions provide a safe space for the young people participating, to share and explore some of the issues they have been experiencing in their relationships with their parents/carers. During group discussions, the Keyworkers help the young people think of positive strategies that they can use to improve their relationships in the future. The parenting course, which runs alongside the Talking Teens group sessions, discusses being the parent of a teenager and provides help with communicating, problem solving and handling difficult issues.

The most significant barrier to the success of the Talking Teens group sessions was the apprehension that some young people had around where they would be going, what they would be doing and who would be there. Through talking with the Young People on the final session, it was apparent that having those initial conversations, made them fully aware of how the sessions would be delivered, and they were reassured that they would have a familiar person to talk to when they first arrived.

"Course providers were brilliant - never felt judged. They were obviously eager to help, all in all the course was brilliant. Every parent should do this - I only wish it went on longer!"

"I'm so glad Jamie referred us to this course. The facilitators were friendly, non-judgemental and engaged us with a lot of content. My biggest thanks to Joan, Matty, Jamie and all the team that did activities with the kids too. What would we do without Connecting Families?!"

The Connecting Families Team

We are pleased to welcome Jacky Bloomfield who has recently joined Connecting Families as a new Keyworker on 3rd July 2023. She has a background in working with the welfare, pastoral and attendance of children in a Bristol secondary school.

Anna Brownell is also due to join the team soon as a new Keyworker. She has previously worked with Mentoring Plus.

We have also sadly seen the departure of three Keyworkers - Dean Noon, Paul Spreadbury and Paul Hamnett, we wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

At the beginning of July the team took part in a team development day at Prior Park School, and we were very grateful to the school for allowing us to use their beautiful venue overlooking Bath. This was an essential day to help with team building, communication and enable us all to reconnect as a new team.

We have one more vacancy to fill so if you are reading this newsletter and thinking to yourself "I would like to join them", please keep an eye on the B&NES vacancies bulletin or email the team at Connecting_Families@bathnes.gov.uk and we can send you the link as soon as it is available.



Ranked against other Local Authorities, Connecting Families is first in the South West for 4 years in a row

The Connecting Families Team is funded by the Government currently, through the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities. However, from April 2024 this will move to the Department of Education. We are not sure about the implications of this but as we find out more, we will keep you posted. More details about the payment methods and criteria, can be found [here](#)

Family & Professional Feedback

“Chris made me feel that he was always ‘on my side’ and no doubt, he made my ex-partner feel the same. He was always supportive and able to empathise. He opened up about his own family, which helped me see that he understood the issues arising within the family.

Extra time was given to us as a family as improvements were not complete . . .

Thank you Chris, you have made a big difference to our lives.”



Chris Martin
Mediation Worker



Amy Rusbridge
Keyworker

“I was struggling with my son’s behaviour and my depression was getting worse. These issues are still here — but having someone to talk to / support me makes a huge difference.”

It is hard having someone come to your home, into your family, and giving them a lot of reassurance that you’re not there to judge / criticise makes a massive difference.

“Rod has taken a lot of stress off my shoulders with the morning routines and helped me to be more organised”. My son “responds well to Rod and the work he has done around choices and consequences.”

If I had never signed up to work with Connecting Families “I would probably be in court due to my children’s school attendance as Rod has been liaising with the CMES and has stalled any court action. Just to say thank you to Rod, he has been a massive help.”



Rod Dixon
Keyworker



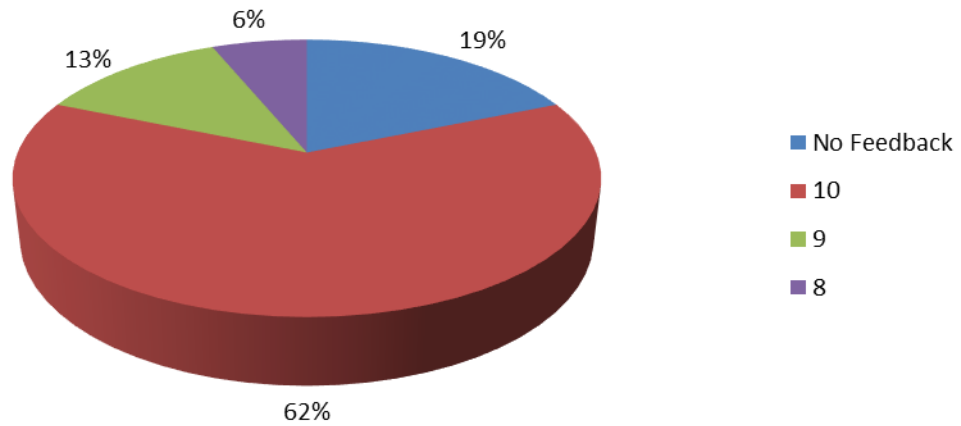
Jamie Flukes
Keyworker

“Jamie has been amazing, he came in at a time that myself and my family were struggling and was able to offer support and advice that reflected my families’ situation.

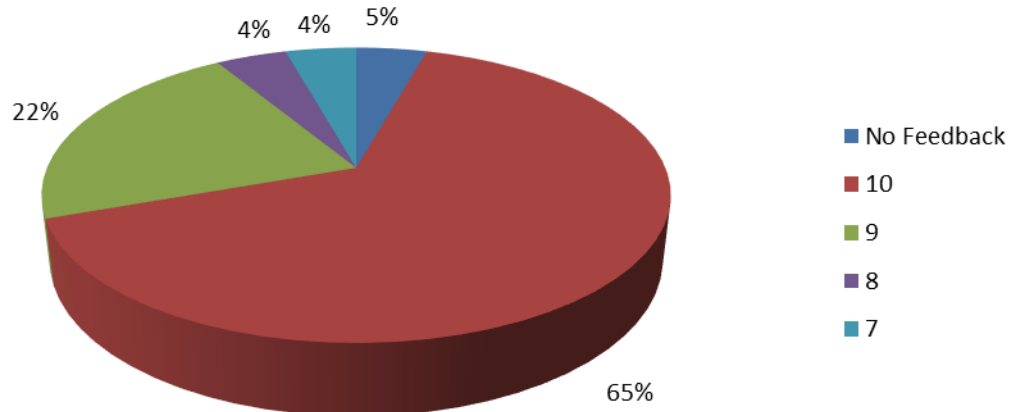
It has been particularly helpful for me to have someone to talk through the difficulties I am facing and help me to look forwards.” He and Jan (the Connecting Families Employment Advisor) “have been supporting me to look at going back into work, something I have not felt able to do up until now. They have both been getting me to think about what I would like to do and setting realistic aims in order for work to fit around my family.”

How success is measured / impact and results to date

Family feedback - Open cases Jan - June 2023
Keyworker satisfaction scores (out of 10)



Family feedback - Closed cases Jan - June 2023
Keyworker satisfaction scores (out of 10)



The Connecting Families Team



Paula Bromley
Head of Families
& Prevention
Service



Tracey Bidgood
Team Leader



Matty Byrne
Lead Key
Worker



Joan Copper
Lead Key Worker



Marie Porter
Senior
Practitioner
for Early Help
(on sabbatical)



Lynett White
Business
Manager



Rebecca Wilkinson
Admin



Tina Sheeley
Admin



Jacki Ashworth
Admin



Caroline Tape
Admin



Jan Capel
Employment
Adviser



Amy Rusbridge
Key Worker



Hannah Fullbrook
Key Worker



Hannah Herod
Key Worker
(ARAP)



Grace Harding
Early Help
Allocation
Support Worker



Jamie Flukes
Key Worker



Rod Dixon
Key worker



Chris Martin
Family
Mediation
Worker



Jacky Bloomfield
Key Worker

"I met with Project 28 yesterday and they were singing the praises of the Connecting Families Team and the positive impact they have on some of our most vulnerable families..." The staff member said "the only down side is she wished the intervention could continue for longer"

Heather Brumby, Public Health Development and Commissioning Manager

Connecting Families Team Contact Details

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To make a referral to the Connecting Families Team please complete our referral form which can be found on the website

Website: <https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/request-help-complex-family-issues>