

Amity Pan Lancashire Relationship Toolkit Independent evaluation August 2022

Multi-agency Practitioner Feedback

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Introduction:

This evaluation was undertaken in August 2022 using feedback from multi-agency practitioners who had been trained directly by Amity to use the Toolkit in 2021/22 and who stated they had/have been actively using the Relationship Toolkit in their practice, with families since they were trained.

This evaluation was undertaken independently of Amity and of the local authority from which the feedback was sought. Quotations from feedback have not been edited during the evaluation process and are taken directly from the practitioners who participated in this survey.

A group of practitioners working directly with children and families were asked for feedback relating to the Amity Relationship Toolkit, more specifically the one tailor-made for use in the Lancashire region, known locally as the 'Pan-Lancs Relationship Toolkit'. This is a resource designed by Amity to support parental (and wider) types of family relationship communication difficulties and relationship conflict.

Practitioners included in this evaluation worked in a variety of roles in health, education, early help and social care.

All practitioners who participated in this evaluation stated they had completed the Amity toolkit training and have used and are continuing to use the toolkit in their everyday practice to date.

This report summarises their experiences to date.

Summary of Evaluation

1. Usefulness of Toolkit and ease of use for practitioners

There are various tools and strategies within the toolkit that can be utilised depending on the circumstances and needs of the family. Practitioners reported they found *“benefits in having variety in one easy to access resource pack, that can be utilised when required”*.

One practitioner commented *“I find the toolkit very useful as it provides planned sessions. This has saved time as I have not had to search for resources to use with families.”*

Another noted *“I like how the toolkit is presented and laid out in the book and easy to photocopy or print.”* Practitioners also commented that the resources were accessible for families with a variety of needs with one noting *“I enjoyed the resources – the font, style and colour makes working with families where there are potential learning difficulties more accessible”*.

Practitioners commented on the flexibility of the toolkit within different family relationships other than the couple.

One practitioner who used the toolkit with a mother and son commented that *“learning about their argument styles has resulted in them giving each other breathing space as needed and has reduced the amount of escalations in the home.”*

Another practitioner reported that some of the tools were *“easily adapted to use between a parent and teenager.”*

The toolkit acknowledges that individuals have different learning styles and practitioners commented that the toolkit *“reflects this through visual resources and videos.”* A number of practitioners found benefit in the use of the support videos.

One practitioner commented that the support videos were *“useful for parents to view and compare other families arguments to their own. Allows the parents to comment how the conflict affects the child in the video”* with another commenting *“the videos are really good to as it makes the parents think how their behaviours are impacting on their children”*.

Practitioners were asked specifically which strategies and tools they were finding the most useful for families. The answers covered the whole range of strategies and tools with some commenting that they found *“all sections useful”* and others commenting on particular tools that aligned with their practice style such as the use of the ‘perspective’ resource. One practitioner commented that they particularly liked this as it *“gave parents a different outlook on issues.”*

The ‘I Statement’ tool was then also utilised to support behaviour change and that changing the way that parents worded things *“reduced conflict and helped resolve issues.”*

2. Feedback from families

In addition to practitioners finding the toolkit useful in their practice, families have commented that they have also found the resources *“accessible and useful”*. One practitioner reported *“one family expressed that they felt they could open up and have a discussion around the topics as the wording was easy in the activities for them to understand.”*

Another reported *“I love using it – its colourful and easy to understand not only for myself but for the parents as well.”*

Feedback from families continued...

Importantly practitioners, after using the toolkit, could see acknowledgement from families of the cause of their conflict and they were supported to address and reduce this.

One practitioner reported *“A family I supported were able to identify what there triggers were when they were in conflict, when this was explored they were both able to support each other to reduce their conflict.”* In addition another practitioner noted that the toolkit has *“helped breakdown cognitive barriers – such as parents overthinking silent treatment as meaning someone is hiding something.”*

Notably, practitioners have reported behaviour changes with the families they were working with, as a consequence of the strategies and tools they used. One practitioner reported *“one family report that they are spending more time together as a family now as a result of the toolkit. When children are at school, parents are making time for each other – going out for walks, coffees and meals out.”*

Another practitioner noted *“my family enjoyed it and have stated that they have put some of it in to practice. They are discussing how they feel and coming to a resolution calmly away from the children. A parent said they are no longer removing themselves from the situation for extended periods of time as they are aware it is making them emotionally unavailable to the children.”*

In addition, a practitioner reported *“some of the families I have supported are now able to focus on the positives in their relationship and reflect on what each other brings to the relationship and parenting rather than focusing on the negatives”*

3. Conclusion

In summary, the Amity Relationship Toolkit commissioned by the Lancashire region is clearly helpful to a number of different multi-agency practitioners who work in a variety of roles both inside and outside of the local authority.

Headlines:

1. Feedback has been consistently encouraging and the evaluation has highlighted that the toolkit can be easily adapted within different roles and within different types of family relationships – despite this not being the main intention of the resource when commissioned by the region.
2. The resource is mainly intended to be used with intact/together parents, although they are activities clearly designed for use with parents who are no longer in a relationship with their co-parent and who are in conflict.
3. Practitioners have been easily able to use the toolkit in creative ways and this evaluation has shown that the toolkit has had a positive impact on families and reduced destructive conflict whilst improving constrictive family communication.
4. The toolkit is easy to use with each ‘activity/strategy’ being described in a way that is easy to understand and interpret by both practitioners and families being supported by them.
5. The toolkit appears to be most useful when used with adults and children/young people*

*the ages of the children/young people referenced were not been verified during this evaluation process.