



Department
for Education

Relationship Support Trials for New Parents

Evaluation Technical Report

Research Report

December 2013

TNS BMRB

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Much evidence exists around the breakdown of relationships and the unequivocal negative associations this has on adult physical and mental health (Coleman and Glenn, 2009). Breakdown in this context refers not only to couple separation but also a substantial decline in the quality of the relationship. Indeed, it is well evidenced that the health outcomes for some single people may be more positive than those reporting unhappy relationships (Murphy, 2007).

Although the quality of a couple relationship is generally considered to decline through time (Schulz et al, 2006), there are a number of transition points where this erosion of relationship quality is accelerated. One of the most significant times, traditionally early in the couple relationship, is the transition to new parenthood. There is robust evidence¹ demonstrating the accelerated decline in relationship quality during this transition. The strains on a relationship during this transition are thought to include increased relationship conflict; more negative communication; managing the balance between work and family; less time available for conversation and sex; and increased sleeplessness, fatigue, irritability and depression (Shapiro and Gottman, 2005).

It is appropriate, therefore, that there has been much attention on looking at ways to smooth the transition to parenthood and stem the accelerated erosion of relationship quality during this time. Interventions such as the Family Foundations report statistically significant impacts on couple relationship quality (Feinberg et al 2010). 'Couple Care for Parents', a specific form of Couple Relationship Education, also prevented a decline in relationship satisfaction during this transition, especially for women (Halford et al 2010). Petch and Halford (2008) present a useful review of interventions and focus on the almost universal effectiveness of psycho-education programmes and conclude, of relevance to this trial, that interventions that involve both partners should be recommended.

With particular relevance to the Relationship Support for New Parents trial is evidence from Schulz and colleagues (2006) who followed up couples from the last trimester in pregnancy and at regular intervals through to when the child was 66 months old. The authors note that sessions discussing topics such as attachment, accepting within-couple differences, preventing negative emotional exchanges from escalating, and normalising experiences could be particularly effective as an 'early intervention' approach given that couples at this time of new parenthood are particularly motivated towards becoming 'good parents' and may seek out information to support this intention.

Nonetheless, with much of this research emanating from overseas, interventions supporting couples through the transition to parenthood in the British context were relatively new.

From secondary analysis of 112 couples in Britain, Ramm and colleagues (2010) explored attitudes to relationship support and found that the first sources of support tended to be friends and family rather than more formal sources. Barriers to seeking more formal support were an admittance of 'defeat' in that a couple alone could not resolve difficulties, concerns over being

¹ Studies are supported by the use of matched comparison groups of non-parents and periods of substantial follow-up of outcomes (Galde et al 2005; Lawrence et al 2008; Doss et al. 2009; Herschberger et al 2009; Mitnick et al 2009)

judged, anonymity issues, and a sense that if relationship support was necessary then the relationship was doomed and irresolvable. Ramm et al (2010) found that more formal counselling support was only used as a last resort (often too late).

Ramm et al (2010) also reported that a lack of awareness about relationships (e.g. that they change over time; that conflict and confrontation is common for most couples; triggers for relationship strain such as ill-health, unemployment and transition to parenthood, etc.) underpin these attitudes and stigma associated with relationship support services. In addition, Coleman (2011) outlined how people with a 'non-developmental' rather than a 'developmental' perspective towards relationships were less inclined to use relationship support services at an earlier, more effective time. 'Developmental' perspectives were characteristic of those who recognised that relationships changed through time, that relationship work could make a difference and, most significantly, that people were active agents with control over the course of their relationship.

In light of the evidence above and the positive impacts seen overseas, it was deemed appropriate to trial early intervention relationship support to new parents in the British setting. More specifically, encouraging people to seek relationship support as a preventative measure, when motivation is high, and to encourage further use of relationship support in the future was in tune with the Government's commitment to promote family stability.

1.2 The trials

Trials were set up in five areas to provide relationship support for new parents. Parents were eligible for the support if their oldest child was less than two years old, or if they were expecting their first child in the next three months. The support was not aimed at parents with significant problems in their relationship but was intended to give advice about keeping relationships healthy at a stressful time, and to ensure parents knew where to go for support if they did have any problems. The trials aimed to 'normalise' relationship support so that, in the future, couples who did have problems would be more likely to seek help at an earlier stage when it would have a greater chance of success.

The five trial areas were:

- Westminster and Islington
- City of London and Hackney
- Leeds and York
- Essex (Colchester, Braintree and Harlow)
- Plymouth

In each area there were two support options: an hour long face to face session; and an online workshop that individuals could work through at their own pace.

The trials were launched in October 2012. However, after the first six months of the trials less than ten couples had participated in any of the programmes. Although take-up was forecast to be quite slow this was much lower than expected and it was decided to end the trials in June 2013.

1.3 The evaluation

The evaluation was intended to have several strands including:

- Postal surveys amongst new parents and expectant parents, in trial areas and comparison areas, before the start of the trials (in Summer 2012) and again when the trials had been running for around a year and a half (in January/February 2014).
- Short surveys of participants immediately before receiving the support, and a few weeks after the support.
- Analysis of management information collected by providers, including demographic information about the couples taking up the support.
- A cost effectiveness analysis looking at the costs to providers and DfE of providing the support and what volumes and charges would be required in order for providers to be able to offer the support without it being subsidised by DfE.
- A willingness to pay exercise where respondents to the population survey would be recontacted and asked to complete an online survey that tested how much they would be willing to pay for relationship support such as that offered by the trials.
- Qualitative research amongst new parents and key professionals. The exact design and aims of this qualitative work had not yet been decided as it was intended to be used responsively depending on early findings from the trials.

When the evaluation was brought to an end in June 2013 the baseline population survey had been completed, and questionnaires for the participants pre and post support survey had been created.

1.3.1 The baseline population survey

The sample for the population survey was taken from child benefit records, and from Bounty². Both of these sample sources generally list mothers rather than fathers.

Child benefit records were used to select parents of children aged four months or more, and Bounty records were used to select parents of children aged less than four months, and parents who were expecting their first child within three months.

Parents were considered eligible for the survey if their eldest child was aged less than three and a half years old or if they were expecting their first child in the next three months. This upper age limit is higher than the upper age limit for parents eligible for the trial. This is because at the later population survey we wanted to include parents who would have been eligible for the trial *at any*

² Bounty is a resource used by expectant parents and new parents – a high proportion of expectant mothers register with Bounty to be sent freebies and offers relevant to them. Their names and addresses are available to buy as a commercial sample source.

point during the trial period. If a parent's oldest child was aged two at the time the trials started, that child would be three and a half at the time of the later population survey. It was important to use the same age profile at the baseline survey for comparison with the later survey.

The baseline survey also used comparison areas to check that there were no obvious differences between parents in trial areas and those in comparison areas. The comparison areas selected were local authorities that had similarities with the trial areas. The table below shows the comparison areas for each trial area.

Table 1 Comparison areas for each trial area

Trial area	Comparison areas
Hackney and City of London	Southwark Lambeth Lewisham Greenwich
Islington and Westminster	Hammersmith and Fulham Wandsworth Hounslow Ealing
Leeds and York	Sheffield Liverpool Coventry Trafford Stockport Calderdale Cheshire West and Chester Warrington
Essex (Braintree, Colchester and Harlow)	Maidstone Charnwood Huntingdonshire Warwick South Kesteven

Trial area	Comparison areas
	Ashford Newark and Sherwood Stroud Stevenage Redditch Basildon Chesterfield
Plymouth	North Tyneside Redcar Southampton Sunderland

In total 5,000 records were selected for the survey. Each household was sent two questionnaires and a covering letter. The letter was addressed to the person listed on the Child Benefit or Bounty records (usually the mother). It asked them to complete one questionnaire and, if they lived with a partner, for their partner to complete the other questionnaire. A letter reminder was sent three weeks later, and a full pack reminder three weeks after that. Fieldwork took place from August to October 2012.

In total, 1,842 completed questionnaires were received back from parents. However, some of these parents were not eligible either because they had not been in a relationship in the last 18 months (based on screening questions A1 and A2), or because they did not have children (or were not expecting their first child in the following three months) or their children were too old (based on questions E6 and E7). Once these cases were excluded, data was available for 1,556 parents.

Of the 5,000 households selected for the survey 1,162 took part, equating to a household response rate of 23%. A higher number of questionnaires were received than the number of participating households because 680 of the participating households returned two questionnaires (one completed by each member of the couple).

This was a lower level of response than had been hoped for, and there were plans to reduce the length of the questionnaire for the later population survey in order to try to increase response.

Findings from the baseline population survey are presented in the next chapter, and the questionnaire is included in appendix 1. This is the questionnaire for comparison areas. The questionnaire for trial areas was the same apart from excluding questions D1 and D2 which were only included in comparison areas to collect data for comparison with the participants pre support survey.

1.3.2 Participants pre and post support surveys

The pre support survey was being completed on paper by participants immediately before starting their face to face session, and the post support survey was a web survey that was emailed to participants around four weeks after they had been to a face to face session.

The online workshop had not been set up in time for participants to complete this before the trials were cancelled. However, participants would have completed the pre support survey online when they first logged onto the online workshop, and they would have been sent a link to the post support web survey by email around four weeks after completing the online workshop.

Less than 10 couples had been to a face to face session when the trials were cancelled and none had done the online workshop. So very few pre and post support surveys were completed and this report therefore does not include any results from these surveys. The questionnaires for the pre and post support surveys are included in appendix 2 and 3.

1.4 The research consortium

The evaluation was being undertaken by TNS BMRB, BPSR, London Economics and OnePlusOne. TNS BMRB led the consortium and were responsible for the surveys, with input on sample design and questionnaire design from BPSR. London Economics were responsible for the cost effectiveness analysis and willingness to pay exercise, and OnePlusOne would have undertaken the qualitative research amongst new parents and key professionals.

2. Findings from baseline survey

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents headline findings from the baseline population survey. This data is based on 1,556 parents of children aged up to three and a half (and expectant parents) who completed a postal questionnaire in summer or autumn 2012.

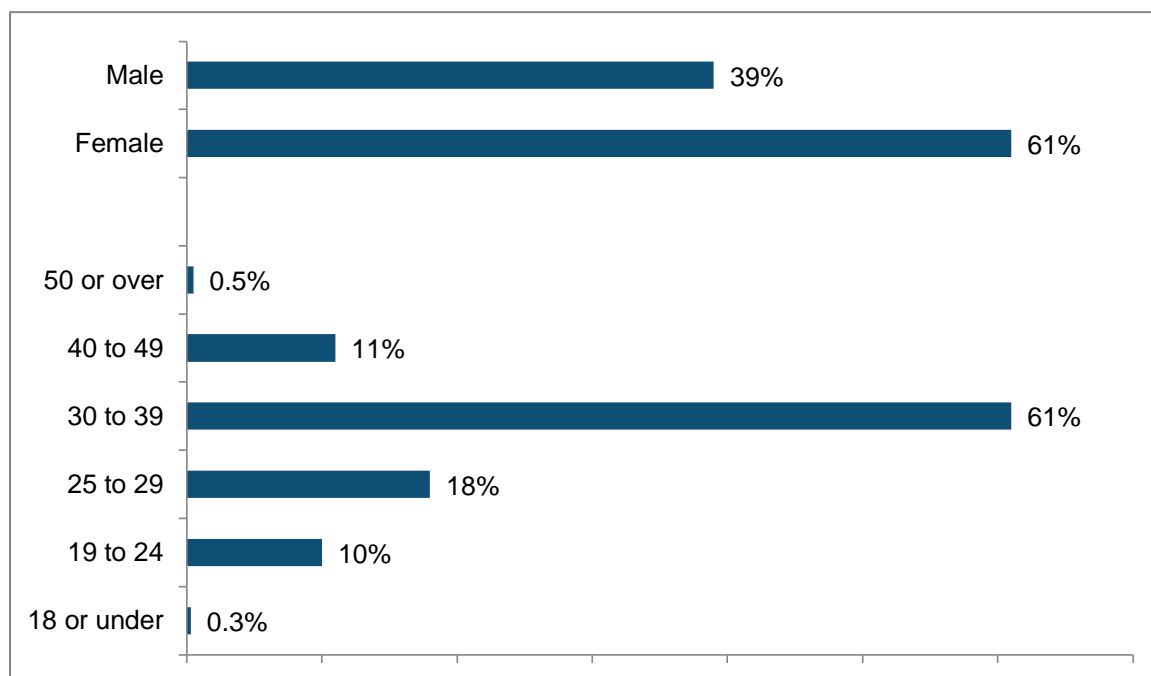
Data has been weighted for section 2.3 onwards, but the data in section 2.2 showing the profile of survey respondents is not weighted.

2.2 Profile of parents in the survey

More women than men took part in the survey: 61% of respondents were female and 39% were male.

Most respondents (61%) were in their 30s and another 18% were in their 20s.

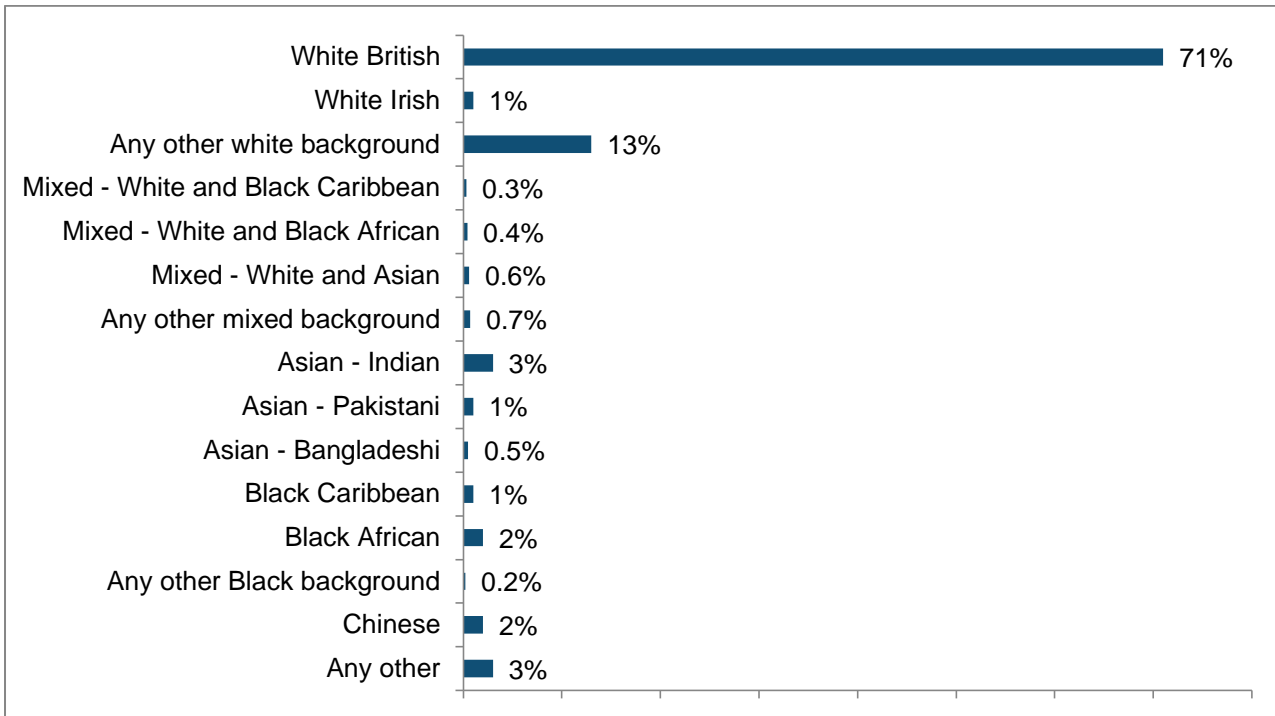
Figure 1 Gender and age profile of respondents



At the time of the survey, a little over two thirds (70%) of respondents were married and living with their spouse, around a quarter (24%) were living with a partner but not married, 3% were in a relationship but not living with their partner and 5% were not currently in a relationship but had been in the previous 18 months.

The majority of respondents (71%) were White British, and a further 14% were of another White background but 15% were of minority ethnic backgrounds.

Figure 2 Ethnicity profile of respondents



Over half of respondents (59%) were working full time, a further 22% were working part time and the remaining 19% were not working. This varied significantly by gender, women were more likely than men to be working part time or not working, as show in the table below.

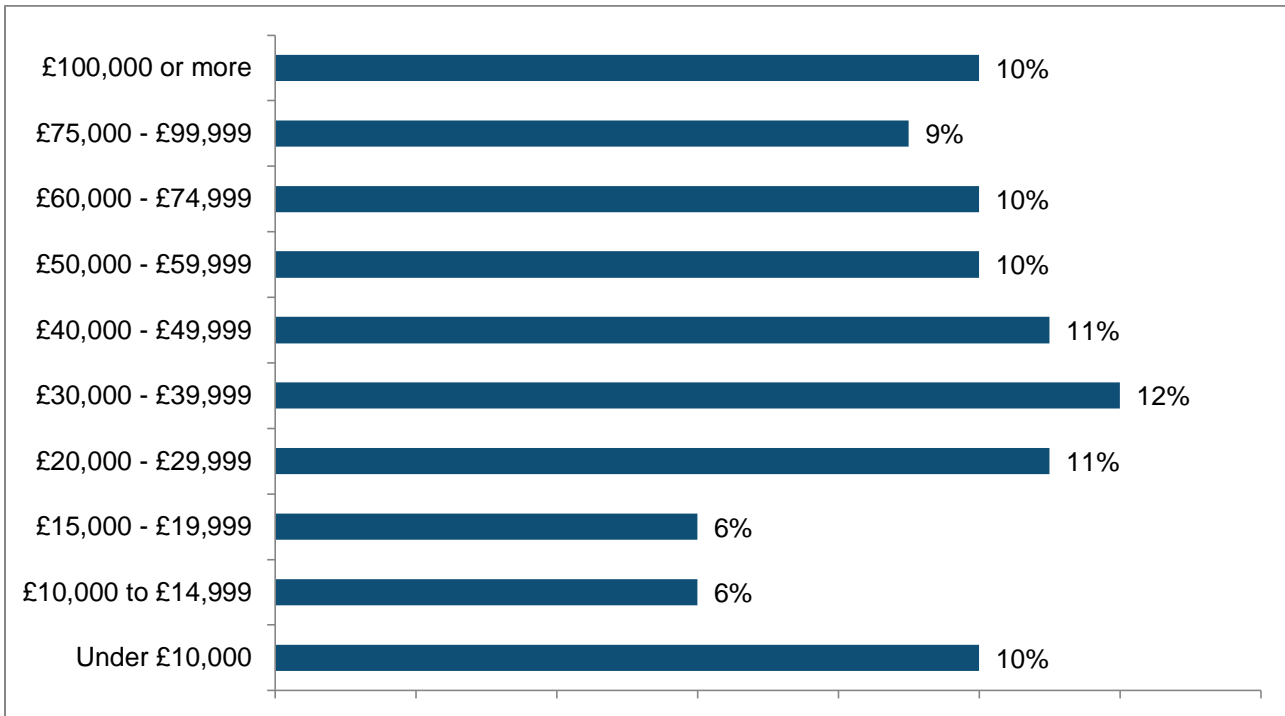
Table 2 Working status of respondents

	Men	Women	Total
	%	%	%
Working full time	86	42	59
Working part time	7	32	22
Not working	8	27	19
<i>Base: all respondents</i>	605	947	1,552

A little over half of respondents (54%) were qualified to degree level or higher, with a further 13% having higher education qualifications but below degree level. A minority of 4% had no qualifications.

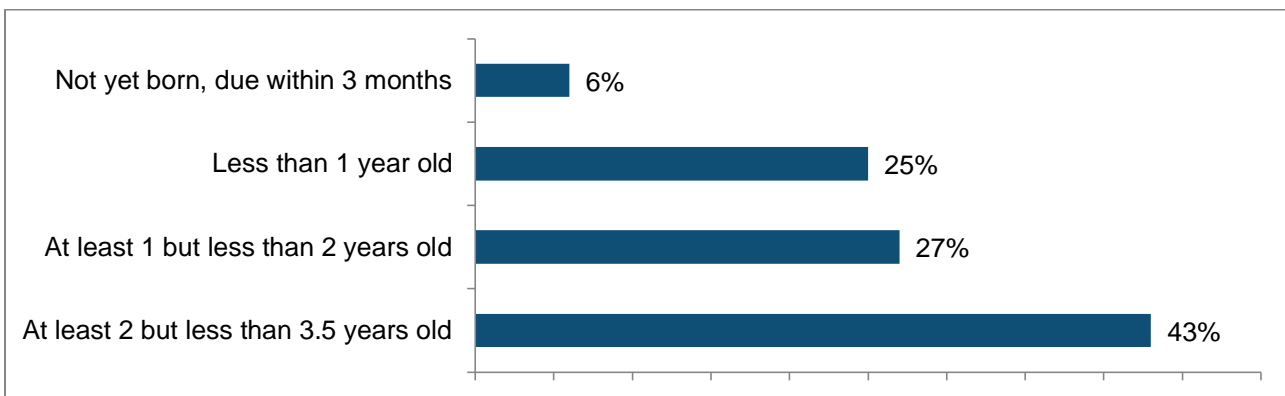
The chart below shows gross household incomes. As this shows, respondents to the survey were widely spread in terms of income from those with very low household incomes (10% had less than £10,000 a year) to those with very high incomes (10% had £100,000 or more a year).

Figure 3 Income profile of respondents



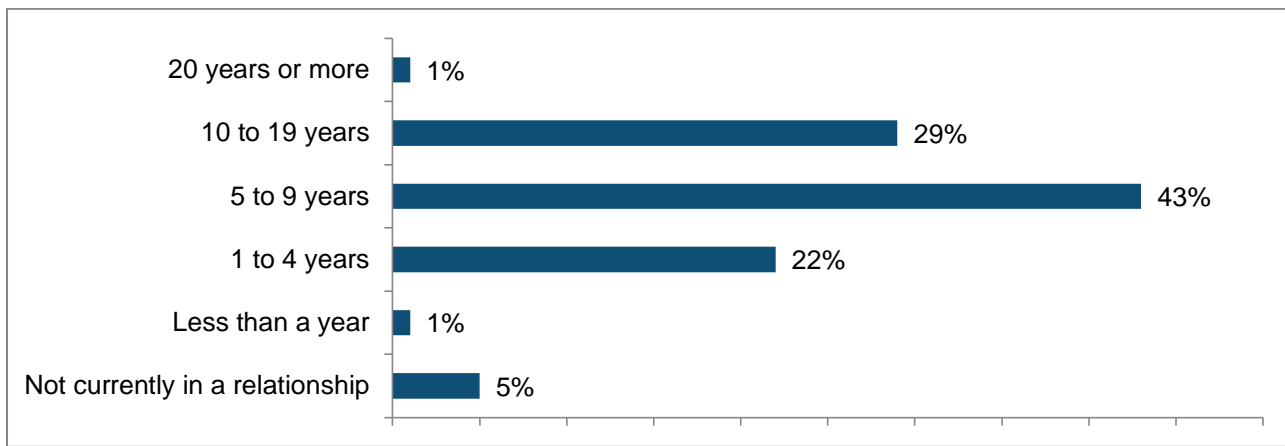
Only 6% of the survey respondents were expectant parents, the majority already had a child. The chart below shows the age of oldest child for the parents that took part in the survey.

Figure 4 Age of oldest child



The majority of respondents (72%) had been in their current relationship for five years or more. Five per cent were not currently in a relationship but had been in the last 18 months.

Figure 5 Length of current relationship



2.3 Attitudes to relationships and parenting

The questionnaire tested four areas of attitudes to relationships, with two agree/disagree statements about each.

2.3.1 Evolving over time

As the table below shows almost all respondents agreed that it is normal for relationships to have their ups and downs (47% agreed strongly and 50% just agreed) but the statement “Having a new baby usually brings couples closer together, rather than causes problems” resulted in much more mixed responses: around a third agreed and a quarter disagreed but most of the rest said they neither agreed or disagreed. One might expect the quarter of respondents that disagreed with this to potentially be interested in relationship support for new parents.

Table 3 Agreement with statements about relationships evolving over time

	It's perfectly normal for couple relationships to have their ups and downs %	Having a new baby usually brings couples closer together, rather than causes problems %
Agree strongly	47	7
Agree	50	26
Neither agree nor disagree	2	40
Disagree	1	19
Disagree strongly	<1	5
No answer/ Don't know	1	4
<i>Base: all respondents</i>	1,556	1,556

2.3.2 Knowledge about relationships

Most respondents seemed to be reasonably confident that they could both spot signs of trouble in their relationship, and that they would know what to do to get it back on track, although a significant minority (around 1 in 10) did not think they'd know what to do to get it back on track if things went wrong in their relationship.

Table 4 Agreement with statements on knowledge about relationships

	If things started to go wrong in my relationship, I don't think I'd know what to do to get it back on track	I think I could spot the signs if things between me and my husband/wife/partner weren't going well
	%	%
Agree strongly	1	14
Agree	10	68
Neither agree nor disagree	19	11
Disagree	48	3
Disagree strongly	18	<1
No answer/ Don't know	4	3
<i>Base: all respondents</i>	<i>1,556</i>	<i>1,556</i>

2.3.3 Agency

Most respondents thought that whether or not a relationship works is down to how the couple deal with things but a significant minority did not agree with this. There were also a third of respondents who agreed that a relationship will work if it's 'meant to be'.

Table 5 Agreement with statements on agency in relationships

	Whether or not a couple's relationship works is down to how they deal with things	I believe that if it's 'meant to be' then a relationship will work out
	%	%
Agree strongly	12	6
Agree	59	26
Neither agree nor disagree	19	26
Disagree	5	30
Disagree strongly	1	9
No answer/ Don't know	4	4
<i>Base: all respondents</i>	1,556	1,556

2.3.4 Co-parenting

Around eight in ten respondents agreed that parents need to be consistent in their parenting approach, and the same proportion agreed that a relationship will work better if both parents are involved in parenting.

Table 6 Agreement with statements on co-parenting

	It's important that couples agree to be consistent in their parenting approaches, even if they don't always agree with each other	A couple's relationship will work better if they are both involved in daily activities looking after their children and their home
	%	%
Agree strongly	37	38
Agree	51	50
Neither agree nor disagree	8	8
Disagree	2	2
Disagree strongly	<1	<1
No answer/ Don't know	2	1
<i>Base: all respondents</i>	1,556	1,556

2.4 Attitudes to relationship support

Attitudes to getting advice on relationships were mostly positive, 83% of respondents agreed that all couples can benefit from advice on how to cope during times when their relationship is under pressure, and over half (55%) agreed that advice on relationships is just as important for couples who are getting on well as it is for couples with relationship difficulties. However, attitudes to actively seeking advice were less positive, a third (32%) agreed that if you decide to seek advice about your relationship, you are basically admitting that your relationship is in trouble, and only half (49%) disagreed with this.

Table 7 Agreement with statements on getting advice on relationships

	All couples can benefit from advice on how to cope during times when their relationship is under pressure	Advice on relationships is just as important for couples who are getting on well as it is for couples with relationship difficulties	If you decide to seek advice about your relationship, you are basically admitting that your relationship is in trouble
	%	%	%
Agree strongly	25	10	5
Agree	58	45	27
Neither agree nor disagree	11	19	17
Disagree	4	19	35
Disagree strongly	1	4	13
No answer/ Don't know	2	3	2
<i>Base: all respondents</i>	<i>1,556</i>	<i>1,556</i>	<i>1,556</i>

When it came to seeking professional help about relationships attitudes were quite mixed. Equal proportions (a third each) agreed and disagreed that if a couple is having difficulties in their relationship, it's better that they talk to professionals rather than simply rely on talking to family and friends, and more agreed than disagreed that there's not much point in going on a course about relationships if your own relationship is fine (42% agreed, 31% disagreed). Only a minority of respondents (13%) agreed that only couples who can't talk to each other would decide to take up relationship support, two thirds (66%) disagreed with this.

Table 8 Agreement with statements on seeking support on relationships

	If a couple is having difficulties in their relationship, it's better that they talk to professionals rather than simply rely on talking to family and friends	There's not much point in going on a course about relationships if your own relationship is fine	Only couples who can't talk to each other would decide to take up relationship support
	%	%	%
Agree strongly	7	7	2
Agree	24	34	11
Neither agree nor disagree	33	25	18
Disagree	27	28	50
Disagree strongly	6	3	17
No answer/ Don't know	2	2	3
<i>Base: all respondents</i>	1,556	1,556	1,556

2.5 Attitudes to relationship support for new parents

The questionnaire also asked more specifically about relationship support and advice for new parents. The majority of respondents were positive about the idea of advice on relationships for new parents and felt this was something that ought to be available. Around three quarters agreed with each of the following three statements:

- When a new baby comes along, most couple could benefit from advice on how to deal with the effect on their relationship with their partner;
- Learning how to keep couple relationships strong when a baby is born should be something that all new parents are offered;
- Taking advice on how to have a good relationship with your partner is all part of trying to be the best possible parent to your children.

Table 9 Agreement with statements relationship advice for new parents

	When a new baby comes along, most couple could benefit from advice on how to deal with the effect on their relationship with their partner	Learning how to keep couple relationships strong when a baby is born should be something that all new parents are offered	Taking advice on how to have a good relationship with your partner is all part of trying to be the best possible parent to your children
	%	%	%
Agree strongly	20	18	21
Agree	57	56	54
Neither agree nor disagree	14	18	17
Disagree	6	5	6
Disagree strongly	1	0	1
No answer/ Don't know	2	2	2
<i>Base: all respondents</i>	1,556	1,556	1,556

However, despite these fairly positive attitudes, over half of respondents thought that they would not have time to spend on their relationship as new parents and that parents are more likely to focus on their own relationships when their children are a bit older. A quarter of respondents also thought that relationship strains arising from having a new baby would get back to normal without outside help, although half of respondents had no strong opinions on this.

Table 10 Agreement with statements relationship advice for new parents

	When couples become new parents, they don't have time to spend on their own relationship	Parents are more likely to focus on their own relationships when their children are a bit older and they can spend more time on each other	If a couple finds it difficult to adjust when a new baby comes along, it's likely things will get back to normal without outside help
	%	%	%
Agree strongly	10	7	2
Agree	43	53	26
Neither agree nor disagree	15	21	44
Disagree	26	13	19
Disagree strongly	5	2	3
No answer/ Don't know	1	5	7
<i>Base: all respondents</i>	1,556	1,556	1,556

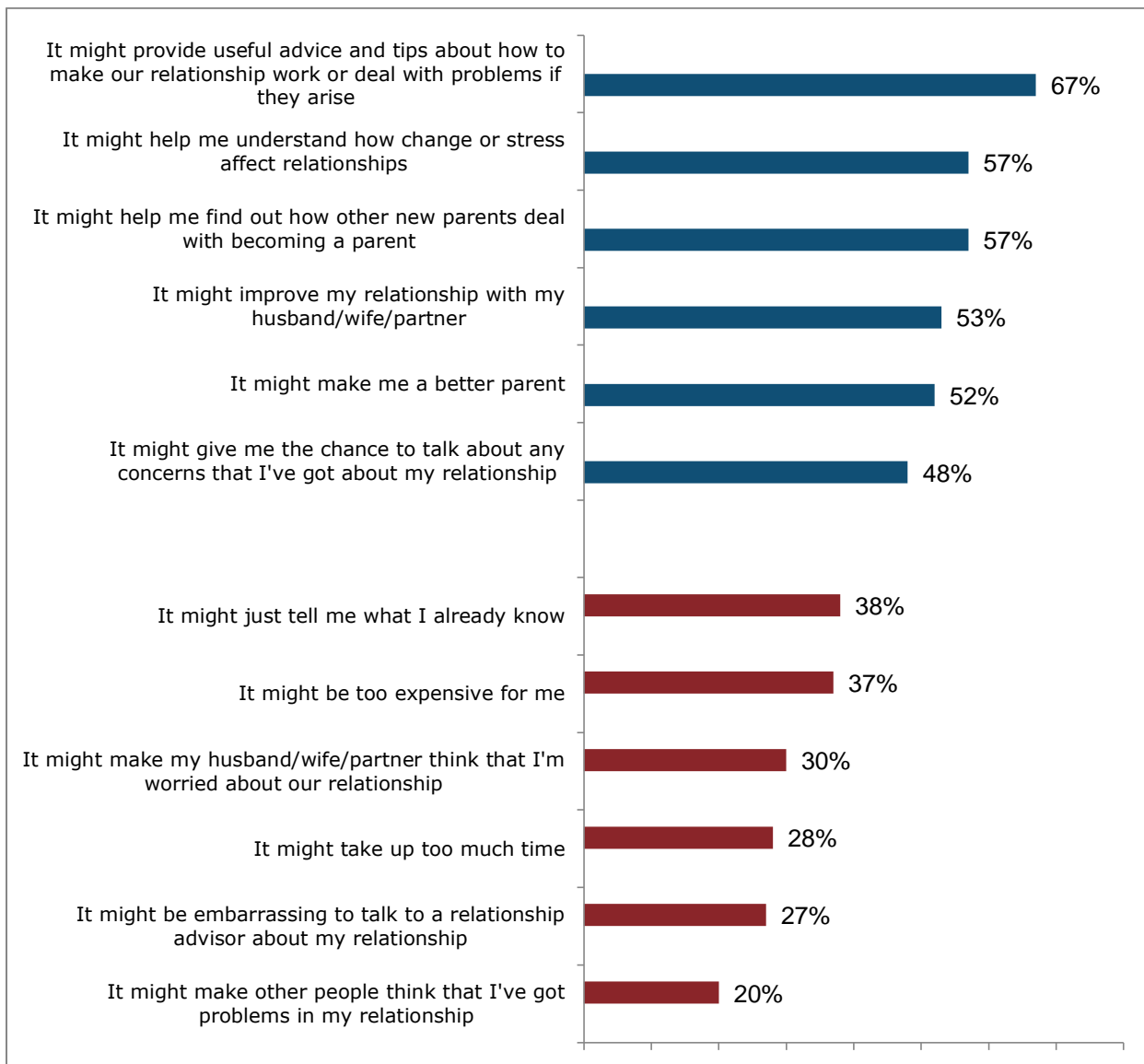
2.6 Feelings about taking up relationship support specifically for expectant parents or parents of young children

Respondents were presented with a list of potential positive and negative things they might feel about taking up advice or support about relationships for expectant parents or new parents. Higher proportions of respondents said the positive ones applied to them than the negative ones. The chart below shows the proportion of respondents that said each applied to them.

The majority of respondents (83%) said at least one of the positives applied to them with the most common positive being that it might provide useful advice and tips about making relationships work or dealing with problems. Around half thought it might actually improve their relationship or make them a better parent.

Around three quarters (73%) of respondents thought at least one of the negatives applied to them. Cost and time were quite commonly considered barriers, as was the concern that it might be a waste of time (just telling them what they already knew). Other people's perceptions were also a barrier for a minority of respondents (one in five).

Figure 6 Positives and negatives about relationship support for new parents that might apply to respondents



2.7 Awareness of relationship support for new parents

The baseline survey took place before the trials had started and so it was not expected that respondents would be aware of relationship support specifically for new parents. However, in both the trial and comparison areas a minority of respondents had seen relationship support for new or expectant parents advertised in the previous 18 months (5%), or been told about relationship support for new or expectant parents in the previous 18 months (7%).

2.8 Taking up relationship support or advice

A minority of respondents had taken up some kind of relationship support or advice in the past:

- 2% had taken up relationship support or advice for expectant parents or parents of young children in the last 18 months;
- 5% took up general support or advice about relationships before having children;

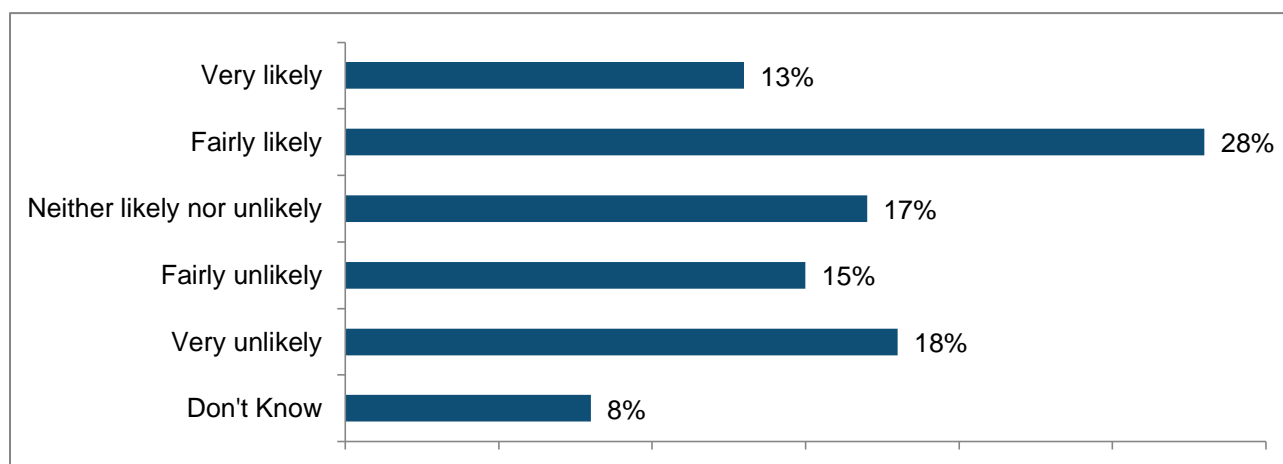
- 7% had had professional relationship support because of relationship difficulties (2% in the last 18 months and 5% longer ago).

A higher proportion (17%) had discussed couple relationships as part of antenatal or postnatal classes. Around two in five respondents (39%) had asked someone for relationship advice in the previous 18 months, but in the vast majority of cases it was friends or family they had asked (36% of respondents had asked friends or family for relationship advice).

2.9 Likelihood of taking up relationship support

Two in five respondents (41%) said they would be very or fairly likely to take up a short course or support session for parents on maintaining good relationships. However there was a notable proportion of respondents who were not at all keen on the idea of such support: around a third (34%) were unlikely to take a short course or session.

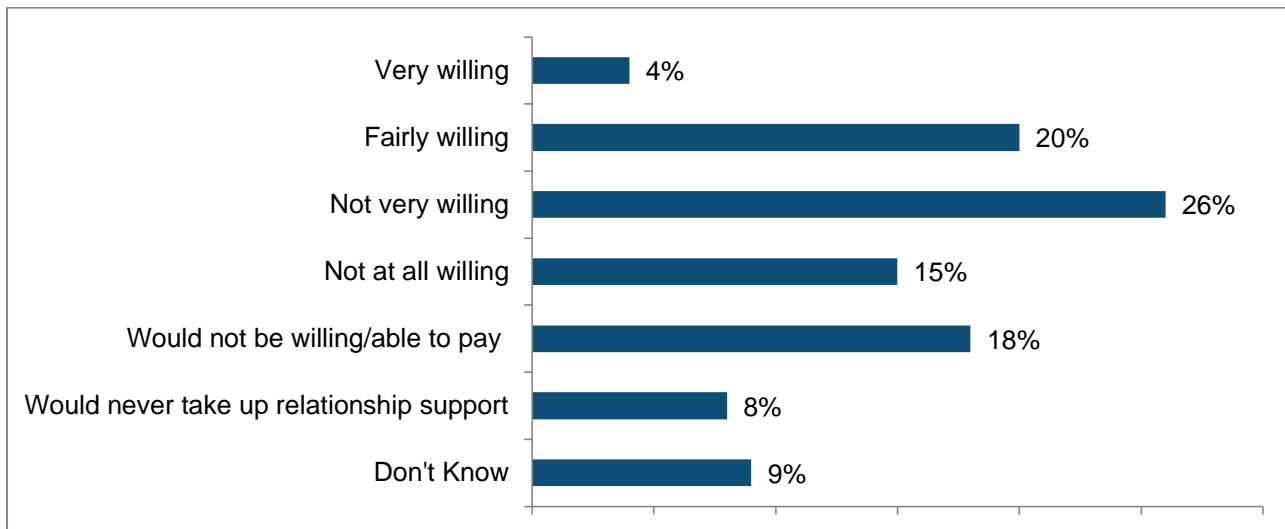
Figure 7 Likelihood of taking up a short course or support session for parents on maintaining good relationships



If respondents were to do a short course or support session for parents on maintaining good relationships most (64%) would prefer to do this as a face to face session (or sessions) and 22% would prefer to do it online. Other options were less popular.

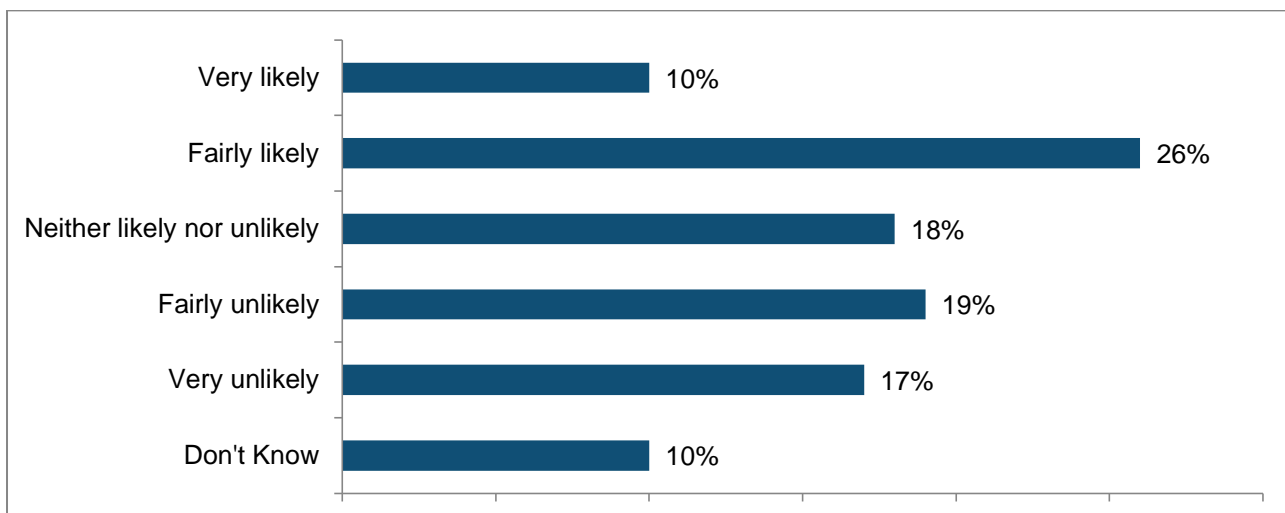
Around a quarter (24%) of respondents would be at least fairly willing to pay £60 for a short course or support session on maintaining good relationships – the remainder were unwilling to pay this much, said they would not want to/be able to pay at all or that they just wouldn't do it.

Figure 8 Willingness to pay for a short course or support session for parents on maintaining good relationships



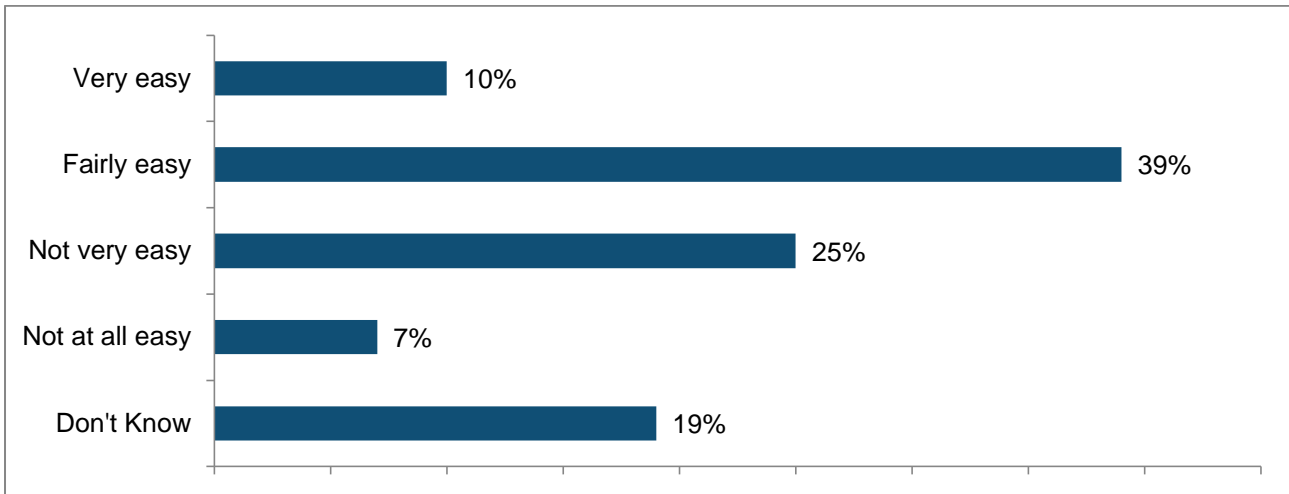
A slightly lower proportion of respondents said they were likely to ask for advice or support from someone other than friends and family if had they relationship difficulties than had said they would be willing to take up a short course or support session for parents on maintaining good relationships (36% compared with 41%). There was a large minority (36%) who were unlikely to ask for advice or support from someone other than friends and family even if they did have relationship difficulties.

Figure 9 Likelihood of asking for advice or support from someone other than friends and family if had relationship difficulties



Around half of respondents (49%) thought it would be very or fairly easy to find relationship support or advice from someone other than friends and family if they wanted it, but a third (32%) thought this might not be easy, and 19% did not know how easy it would be.

Figure 10 Ease of finding advice or support from someone other than friends and family if needed it



Appendix 1 – Baseline population survey questionnaire

Evaluation of Relationship Support for New Parents

HOW TO FILL IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer *all* questions, unless the instructions before the question tell you not to. Please complete the questionnaire in **black or blue ink**, keeping your answers within the boxes. This questionnaire will be read by a scanner so please mark your answers in the spaces provided by putting a **cross** in the appropriate box to indicate your answer [**X**]. If you have made a mistake in your answer or changed your mind please completely fill the box to show the mistake [**■**] and then cross the correct answer.

Your answers will be treated in the **strictest confidence** and all findings will be made anonymous in the reporting of results so that responses cannot be traced back to individuals.

Section A: Checking this questionnaire is relevant to you...

This questionnaire is relevant to you if you are in a relationship, or have been in a relationship in the last 18 months.

A1 To check, are you ...

CROSS ONE BOX ONLY

Living with a husband/wife/civil partner

Living with a partner, but not married

In a relationship, but not living together

} GO TO SECTION B, AND PLEASE ASK YOUR PARTNER TO COMPLETE THE OTHER QUESTIONNAIRE WE HAVE SENT YOU

Or not currently in a relationship?

ANSWER A2

IF NOT CURRENTLY IN A RELATIONSHIP AT A1

A2 Have you been in a relationship during the past 18 months? If you have been in more than one relationship in the last 18 months please answer about your most recent partner.

CROSS ONE BOX ONLY

Yes, was living with a husband/wife/civil partner

Yes, was living with a partner, but not married

Yes, was in a relationship, but not living together

No, have not been in a relationship in the past 18 months

} GO TO SECTION B

SEE TEXT BELOW

IF NOT CURRENTLY IN A RELATIONSHIP AT A1 AND NOT BEEN IN A RELATIONSHIP IN THE PAST 18 MONTHS AT A2

Thank you for your time, but the rest of the questions are only relevant to parents or expectant parents who are in a relationship or have been in a relationship in the past 18 months. Please return this questionnaire in the envelope provided so we know not to send you anything more about this survey.

B2

And how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about expectant parents and parents with young children and their relationships?

CROSS ONE BOX ON EACH ROW

	<i>Agree strongly</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree strongly</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
When a new baby comes along, most couples could benefit from advice on how to deal with the effect on their relationship with their partner.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If a couple finds it difficult to adjust when a new baby comes along, it's likely things will get back to normal without outside help	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When couples become new parents, they don't have time to spend on their own relationship	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning how to keep couple relationships strong when a baby is born should be something that all new parents are offered, just like going on classes to prepare for parenthood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents are more likely to focus on their own relationships when their children are a bit older and they can spend more time on each other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taking advice on how to have a good relationship with your partner is all part of trying to be the best possible parent to your children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

B3

Some relationship support is specifically for expectant parents and parents with young children. Parents have lots of different views about taking up this offer of advice or support, and whether or not they themselves would do so. Which of these things might you feel about taking up such support?

PLEASE READ THROUGH THE LIST CAREFULLY AND CROSS ALL THAT APPLY TO YOU

It might be too expensive for me	<input type="checkbox"/>
It might improve my relationship with my husband/wife/partner	<input type="checkbox"/>
It might be embarrassing to talk to a relationship advisor about my relationship	<input type="checkbox"/>
It might help me understand how change or stress affect relationships	<input type="checkbox"/>
It might provide useful advice and tips about how to make our relationship work or deal with problems if they arise	<input type="checkbox"/>
It might make other people think that I've got problems in my relationship	<input type="checkbox"/>
None of these	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section C: Taking up relationship support....

C1

Thinking back over the past 18 months, have you seen any relationship support (e.g. advice sessions or online courses) advertised locally for expectant parents or parents with young children?

CROSS ONE BOX ONLY

Yes No Don't know

C2

Over the same period, have you been told about any relationship support (e.g. advice sessions or online courses) for expectant parents or parents with young children?

CROSS ONE BOX ONLY

Yes ANSWER C3
No } GO TO C4
Don't know

ANSWER IF YOU SAID 'YES' AT C2

C3

Who by?

CROSS ALL THAT APPLY

Family/friends/word of mouth Antenatal class
Midwife Childcare provider/children's centre
Health visitor Other (please write in)
GP/practice nurse
Hospital
Don't know

C4

Did you have any discussions or sessions about couple relationships as part of any antenatal or postnatal classes (classes about preparing for childbirth and having a baby)?

CROSS ONE BOX ONLY

Yes No Don't know

C5

Apart from any discussions at antenatal or postnatal classes, during the past 18 months, have you taken up any other relationship support or advice offered to expectant parents or parents with young children?

CROSS ONE BOX ONLY

Yes ANSWER C6, C7 AND C8
No } GO TO C9
Don't know

ANSWER IF YOU SAID 'YES' AT C5

C6

Did this involve...?

CROSS ALL THAT APPLY

Face to face sessions Phone sessions
Email correspondence None of these
Online sessions Don't know

ANSWER IF YOU SAID 'YES' AT C5

C7

And to check, was this support...

CROSS ONE BOX ONLY

General advice about how to maintain good relationships
Specifically because of difficulties you were having in your relationship
Or both?
Don't know

ANSWER IF YOU SAID 'YES' AT C5

C8

Approximately how much did you pay for this?

CROSS ONE BOX ONLY

It was free £25 to £49
It was part of my ante/post natal classes that I'd already paid for £50 to £74
£75 to £99
£100 or more
Less than £25 Don't know

C9

In the past 18 months, have you asked for any advice about your relationship from...

CROSS ALL THAT APPLY

Family and friends A relationship advisor or counsellor
A midwife Someone else
A health visitor No - I've not asked for any advice
A GP, hospital doctor or nurse
A childcare provider or children's centre staff Don't know

C10

Have you ever had professional relationship support (e.g. relationship counselling or couple therapy) because of difficulties you were having with a couple relationship?

CROSS ONE BOX ONLY

Yes, in the past 18 months No
Yes, but not in the past 18 months Don't know

C11

And before having children or expecting a baby, did you ever take up any general relationship support or advice sessions about couple relationships?

CROSS ONE BOX ONLY

Yes No Don't know

ANSWER IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY IN A RELATIONSHIP (OTHERWISE GO TO SECTION E)

D2

And on a scale from one to ten, one being unhappy, five being happy, and ten being perfectly happy, all things considered, what degree of happiness best describes your relationship with your partner?

CROSS ONE BOX ONLY

(Unhappy)					(Happy)					(Perfectly happy)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section E: Finally, a few questions about you...

E1

Are you...

CROSS ONE BOX ONLY

Male Female

E2

How old are you?

CROSS ONE BOX ONLY

18 or under	<input type="checkbox"/>	30 to 39	<input type="checkbox"/>
19 to 24	<input type="checkbox"/>	40 to 49	<input type="checkbox"/>
25 to 29	<input type="checkbox"/>	50 or over	<input type="checkbox"/>

E3

What is your ethnic group?

CROSS ONE BOX ONLY

<u>White</u>	<u>Mixed</u>	<u>Asian or Asian British</u>	<u>Black or Black British</u>	<u>Chinese or other ethnic group</u>
British <input type="checkbox"/>	White and Black Caribbean <input type="checkbox"/>	Indian <input type="checkbox"/>	Caribbean <input type="checkbox"/>	Chinese <input type="checkbox"/>
Irish <input type="checkbox"/>	White and Black African <input type="checkbox"/>	Pakistani <input type="checkbox"/>	African <input type="checkbox"/>	Any other <input type="checkbox"/>
Any other white background <input type="checkbox"/>	White and Asian <input type="checkbox"/>	Bangladeshi <input type="checkbox"/>	Any other Black background <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Any other mixed background <input type="checkbox"/>			

E4

From the list below, what best describes what you are doing at the moment? If you are on maternity/ paternity leave, please tell us your situation before your maternity/ paternity started.

CROSS ONE BOX ONLY

Working full-time (30 or more hours per week)

Working part-time (fewer than 30 hours per week)

Not working

E5

Please cross the first qualification that you have on this list.

CROSS ONE BOX ONLY

Degree (e.g. BA, BSc, MA)

Higher Education but below degree level (e.g. HND, HNC, etc.)

A/AS level or equivalent

5 or more GCSEs at A*-C or equivalent

Some GCSE passes or equivalent

No qualifications

E6

How many children do you have in each of the following age ranges? Please include birth, adopted, foster and step-children.

PLEASE WRITE AN ANSWER ON EACH LINE. IF YOU HAVE NO CHILDREN IN THAT AGE GROUP WRITE "0".

Less than one year old	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>
At least one year old but less than 2	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>
At least 2 years old but less than 3 ½	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>
3 ½ years old or older	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>

E7 Are you/Is your wife/partner (or your previous wife/partner who you were with in the last 18 months) currently pregnant?

CROSS ONE BOX ONLY

Yes and due to have the baby in the next 3 months

Yes but not due to have the baby in the next 3 months

No

ANSWER IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY IN A RELATIONSHIP (OTHERWISE GO TO E10)

E8 How long have you and your husband/wife/partner been together?

CROSS ONE BOX ONLY

Less than a year 10 to 19 years

1 to 4 years 20 years or more

5 to 9 years

ANSWER IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY IN A RELATIONSHIP (OTHERWISE GO TO E10)

E9 From the list below, what best describes what your husband/wife/partner is doing at the moment? If he/she is on maternity/paternity leave, please tell us his/her situation before he/she went on maternity/paternity leave.

CROSS ONE BOX ONLY

Working full-time (30 or more hours per week)

Working part-time (fewer than 30 hours per week)

Not working

ANSWER IF YOU ARE NOT CURRENTLY IN A RELATIONSHIP, BUT HAVE BEEN IN A RELATIONSHIP IN THE PAST 18 MONTHS (OTHERWISE GO TO E11)

E10 How long were you and your ex-husband/wife/partner together?

CROSS ONE BOX ONLY

Less than a year

1 to 4 years

5 to 9 years

10 to 19 years

20 years or more

E11 Approximately, what was your total household income in the past year before tax? Please include income from all sources including earnings, benefits, pensions, and interest on savings.

CROSS ONE BOX ONLY

Under £10,000

£10,000 to £14,999

£15,000 - £19,999

£20,000 - £29,999

£30,000 - £39,999

£40,000 - £49,999

£50,000 - £59,999

£60,000 - £74,999

£75,000 - £99,999

£100,000 or more

E12 It is possible that we may wish to contact you again in the next year or so for a follow up to this survey. Would you be willing for the Department for Education, or someone working on behalf of the Department, to contact you again in the future to collect additional information?

CROSS ONE BOX ONLY

Yes No

E12 It is possible that we may wish to contact you again in the next year or so for a follow up to this survey. Would you be willing for the Department for Education, or someone working on behalf of the Department, to contact you again in the future to collect additional information?

CROSS ONE BOX ONLY

Yes No

E13 Any follow-up survey may be done online, and it would be very helpful to have your email address. If you are happy to provide it, please write it here. Your email address will *only* be used to contact you for a follow up to this survey.

WRITE IN EMAIL ADDRESS

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. PLEASE RETURN THE QUESTIONNAIRE IN THE FREEPOST ENVELOPE PROVIDED. IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY IN A RELATIONSHIP, PLEASE ASK YOUR PARTNER TO COMPLETE THE OTHER QUESTIONNAIRE WE SENT YOU AND RETURN THIS IN THE SAME FREEPOST ENVELOPE. SO THAT YOU CAN KEEP YOUR ANSWERS PRIVATE WE HAVE ALSO PROVIDED TWO BLANK ENVELOPES FOR YOU (AND YOUR PARTNER) TO SEAL THE QUESTIONNAIRES IN BEFORE SENDING THEM BACK.

Appendix 2 – Participants pre survey questionnaire

We would like to know what you think about couple relationships and parenting. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? *Please tick one box on each row.*

	<i>Agree strongly</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree strongly</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
It's perfectly normal for couple relationships to have their ups and downs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If things started to go wrong in my relationship, I don't think I'd know what to do to get it back on track	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Whether or not a couple's relationship works is down to how they deal with things	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Having a new baby usually brings couples closer together, rather than causes problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I think I could spot the signs if things between me and my husband/wife/partner weren't going well	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I believe that if it's 'meant to be' then a relationship will work out	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It's important that couples agree to be consistent in their parenting approaches, even if they don't always agree with each other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A couple's relationship will work better if they are both involved in daily activities looking after their children and their home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

In the future, if you had relationship difficulties, how likely would you be to ask for advice or support from someone other than family or friends?

Very likely	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fairly likely	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neither likely nor unlikely	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fairly unlikely	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix 3 – Participants post survey questionnaire

Feedback on support provided

Q1

Which of the following are true for you about [the online workshop/the face to face session³] on relationships and learning to parent together that you have recently [done/been to]?

PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.

It has helped me understand how change or stress can affect relationships

It just told me what I already knew

It has provided useful advice and tips about how to make our relationship work or deal with problems if they arise

I'm concerned it has made my husband/wife/partner think that I'm worried about our relationship

It helped me find out how other new parents deal with becoming a parent

It took up too much time

It gave me the chance to talk about any concerns that I had about my relationship

RELATE AND TCCR ONLY: It was embarrassing to talk to someone about my relationship

It has improved my relationship with my husband/wife/partner

It has made me a better parent

None of these

Don't know

³ Here and throughout questionnaire, textfills will refer to online workshop if the respondent has done the Fatherhood Institute trial, and face to face session if they have done the TCCR or Relate trial.

Q2

Thinking about the [online workshop you did/face to face session you attended], how useful would you say it was overall?

Very useful

Quite useful

Not very useful

Not at all useful

Don't know

Q3

And given how much you paid for the [online workshop/face to face session] do you think it was...?

Very good value for money

Fairly good value for money

Neither good nor poor value for money

Fairly poor value for money

Very poor value for money

Don't know

Q4 *ask if had Fatherhood Institute support only*

How easy did you find the online workshop to use?

Very easy

Fairly easy

Not very easy

Not at all easy

Don't know

Q5

After the [online workshop/face to face session] did you seek further support or advice from the [workshop/session] provider via email, telephone, or any of the other methods set out below?

PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

By email

By post

By telephone

In person (face to face)

Through access to further online material

No, I did not seek further support or advice

Don't know

Q6 *ask if Q5=email, post, telephone, face to face or online material*

How easy was it to get further support or advice?

Very easy

Fairly easy

Not very easy

Not at all easy

Don't know

Q7 *ask if Q5= email, post, telephone, face to face or online material*

How useful was this further support or advice?

Very useful

Fairly useful

Not very useful

Not at all useful

Did not manage to get further support or advice

Don't know

Q7a ask if went on *Fatherhood Institute* workshop

In your area there was a choice between two different types of support for new parents – an online workshop or a face to face session. What was the main reason you chose to do the online workshop?

Preferred to do something online rather than talk to someone in person

Would have been difficult to go to a face to face session (e.g. due to lack of time, childcare considerations etc)

Preferred the sound of the content of the online workshop

Chose based on cost/value for money

None of these /did not know there was a choice

Don't know

Q7b ask if went to a *Relate* or *TCCR* session

In your area there was a choice between two different types of support for new parents – a face to face session or an online workshop. What was the main reason you chose to do the face to face session?

Preferred to talk to someone in person rather than do something online

Preferred the sound of the content of the face to face session

Chose based on cost/value for money

None of these / did not know there was a choice

Don't know

Propensity to take up relationship support in the future

Q8

In a few years time, if you were offered a similar session for parents of older children, how likely would you be to take it up?

Very likely

Fairly likely

Neither likely nor unlikely

Fairly unlikely

Very unlikely

Don't know

Q9

Has doing this [online workshop/face to face session] made it

More likely that you'd do a similar session in the future

Less likely that you'd do a similar session in the future

Or has it not made any difference to what you might do in the future?

Don't know

Q10

[The [online workshop/face to face session] you recently did was subsidised by the government as it was part of a trial testing new support for parents – this meant you paid less than it would normally cost.]⁴

If you did want to do a similar session in the future how much would you be willing to pay for it?

Would only do it if it was free

Would only do it if it was less than £20

Would pay between £20 and £39

⁴ Text to appear for all except trial participants in Plymouth

Would pay between £40 and £59

Would pay between £60 and £79

Would pay between £80 and £99

Would pay £100 or more

Would not do another [online course/face to face session]

Don't know

Q11

How likely would you be to recommend the [online workshop/face to face session] you have recently [done/been to] to other first time parents?

Very likely

Fairly likely

Neither likely nor unlikely

Fairly unlikely

Very unlikely

Don't know

Q12

[The online workshop you recently did was about working together effectively as parents – this is intended to help you to be a good parent but also to help prevent difficulties arising in your relationship with your partner.]⁵

In the future, if you had relationship difficulties, how likely would you be to ask for advice or support from someone other than family or friends?

Very likely

Fairly likely

⁵ To appear for participants of Fatherhood Institute support

Neither likely nor unlikely

Fairly unlikely

Very unlikely

Don't know

Q13

If you had relationship difficulties in the future, do you think doing the [online workshop/face to face session] has made it....

more likely that you would ask for advice or support

less likely that you would ask for advice or support

or has doing the [workshop/session] made no difference to your views about asking for advice or support?

Don't know

Q14

If you wanted advice or support in the future about your relationship from someone other than family and friends, how easy do you think it would be to find that advice or support?

Very easy

Fairly easy

Not very easy

Not at all easy

Don't know

Relationship competency and couple parenting

Q15

We would like to know what you think about couple relationships and parenting. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Please select one answer on each row.

	<i>Agree strongly</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree strongly</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
It's perfectly normal for couple relationships to have their ups and downs						
If things started to go wrong in my relationship, I don't think I'd know what to do to get it back on track						
Whether or not a couple's relationship works is down to how they deal with things						
Having a new baby usually brings couples closer together, rather than causes problems						
I think I could spot the signs if things between me and my husband/wife/partner weren't going well						
I believe that if it's 'meant to be' then a relationship will work out						
It's important that couples agree to be consistent in their parenting approaches, even if they don't always agree with each other						
A couple's relationship will work better if they are both involved in daily activities looking after their children and their home						



Department
for Education

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Reference: DFE- RR311

ISBN: 978-1-78105-272-3

The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Education.

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