

# Getting Things Changed

## Supporting Parents Well



EASY  
READ





## About the research (finding out)

This work is part of the Getting Things Changed Project at the University of Bristol.



This project found out about how parents with learning difficulties can be supported to be good parents.



We asked professionals in 3 areas to suggest families who they thought had been helped to be better parents.



We talked to 8 parents about the support they got.



Parents said we could talk to professionals who worked with them.



We asked the professionals what they thought about parents with learning difficulties generally and what support they needed. We also asked them how they worked together to support the parents.

## What we found out



Parents said that they had all come across at least one professional who they didn't trust. They were made to feel 'guilty until proven innocent'. Parents felt they were not heard or respected by these professionals.



But, they also said that some professionals had worked hard to develop a relationship with them and often their families. They had helped them with difficult issues in their lives and with their parenting. Good support helps parents have confidence in their own ability to succeed.



Parents and professionals said the following things helped them work well together:



**Time** – professionals spending extra time with parents to

- Get to know them.
- Explain things.
- Show them how to do things.



**Trust** – where the parent trusts the professional and the professional trusts the parent.



**Tenacity** – professionals sticking with the parents and working on difficult issues together. This might even take a few years.



**Truthfulness** – being honest with the parents about why they are worried about the children. Also being honest about what might happen to the children. And parents being honest when they didn't know what to do, or were worried about their children.



**Transparency** – making sure everybody knows and understands what is happening. Everyone sharing information.



**Tailored response** – the support given to parents has been thought about very carefully so that it is right for them and their family.



**Parents also liked:**

- Having an adult social worker.



- Making friends with other parents through parenting groups or college courses.



### **Professionals believed:**

Parents with learning difficulties need support.



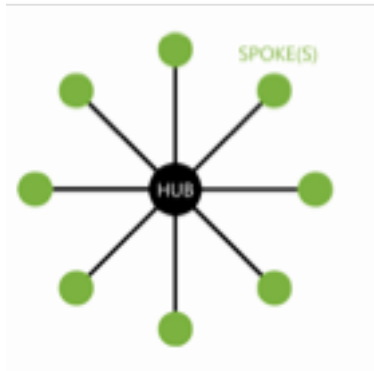
### **Professionals understood:**

Parents might not understand all the different things they need to do to keep their children well and safe.



### **What was special about these 3 areas?**

All 3 areas had a specialist team that worked with parents with learning difficulties.



These teams worked with the other professionals like a wheel with spokes. The specialist team was the 'hub' – the middle bit of the wheel. The other professionals were the spokes. The specialist team organised all the professionals involved with the families.



They often showed professionals how to work with parents. They were making sure the family's needs were met.



The other professionals were happy to work with this team and learn from them. They all moved forward together.



The specialist team helped other professionals think like they did – that parents needed support and help so that their children were safe.





When other professionals respected parents and wanted to support them, the professionals in the specialist team confirmed this. This means they said: yes, that's the right way to do it.



Some professionals didn't see parents positively or thought parents were not working with them as they should.



The specialist team would help these professionals to understand the parent and all the barriers they were facing in their lives. They would explain that parents weren't lying or being awkward.



Often these professionals then changed their minds about parents. They were **converted** (changed how they thought). They were then more positive about supporting the parents.



These 3 areas had policies or protocols about how to work with parents. A policy or protocol is a document which describes how professionals should work.



These protocols were owned by adults and children's services together.

They were based on how some professionals were already working well with parents.

They showed other professionals how to work that way too.



Norah Fry Centre for Disability Studies  
8 Priory Road  
Bristol  
BS8 1TZ

**Contact details:**  
GTC-SPS@bristol.ac.uk

[bristol.ac.uk/sps/gettingthingschanged](http://bristol.ac.uk/sps/gettingthingschanged)

In memory of Dr. Sue Porter, 1953-2017.