

# **The Centre for Systemic Social Work**

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# What is it?

- A tri-borough project initially funded by the DfE through Partners in Practice, with a focus upon supporting other LA's to embed systemic practice in their delivery of social work to children and families,
- The centre delivers systemic social work training courses (with the aim to be AFT accredited where appropriate) for each level of the LA: practitioner, firstline manager, leaders, together with the national Practice Leaders Development Programme,
- Our belief is that wholesale practice change needs to be both bottom up and top down,
- We are passionately systemic and believe that social work practice can be the best it can be through the use of systemic ideas and practices.

# Why systemic?

- Because it fundamentally repositions the relationship between the Local Authority in the form of the allocated social worker, and the client family: families are worked with rather than done to,
- Because it has a liberating effect for families and practitioners: families are no longer pathologised, and practitioners are free from the burden of trying to urge a family to change,
- Because it supports the idea that there are multiple ways of working with families to make change,
- Because models of systemic working involve a clear theory of change, which gives practitioners purpose,
- Because everything we do at all levels of the organisation is therapeutic: focused upon making change,
- Because families get a better service, and are better supported to stay together and practitioners are more satisfied with their jobs and more likely to stay in them!

# But what about risk?

- The most effective way to manage risk is through social work intervention using a clear theory of change!
- Risk is best understood using a relational frame: the value of generating systemic hypotheses...
- Working therapeutically with families can run in parallel with acting robustly to manage immediate risk where required: this does not have to be constructed as an either/or,
- Every action carries meaning: working with families in a systemic way tells them a story about what we do, how we think about families and most importantly what our values are!