



# Reducing Parental Conflict

**We're getting in touch with you today because we are being made increasingly aware of how parental conflict is having a negative impact on the lives of children and wider families. This is a new and emerging piece of work for us here at Durham County Council, but it has the scope to have a far-reaching positive impact, if we get our practitioners on board.**

We hope that you find the brief resume below interesting and that you will consider sharing it with colleagues.

We would also ask you to consider registering/encouraging your staff to register for one of our training courses. Our courses dig deeper into this important family issue, which impacts too many families across our county, empowering staff to recognise the signs and giving them the knowledge and tools to have a positive impact on these families.



## What is parental conflict?

Parental conflict is defined as a situation when arguments and disagreements between parents are frequent and poorly resolved, however there is not an imbalance of power or fear.

Disagreements in relationships are normal – all parents disagree from time to time and this is not usually problematic when both people feel able to handle and resolve disagreements.

But when parents are entrenched in conflict that is frequent, intense and poorly resolved it is likely to have a negative impact on the whole family. The impact on children can be varied and long-lasting including negative effects on mental health and development.

Conflict can range from a lack of warmth and emotional distance, right through to swearing and shouting. The relationship might be classed as “difficult” but it is not abusive.



Families are most at risk of parental conflict during key transitions in life such as separation, bereavement,



new babies, children starting school etc. Families living in poverty or under economic pressure are more at risk of parental conflict.

Parental conflict may require help and/or interventions, but many parents work through their differences either by staying together or separating amicably, which can result in an atmosphere of mutual love, consideration, and forgiveness.

## How does parental conflict differ from domestic abuse?

Sometimes conflict in a relationship is domestic abuse. Domestic abuse typically presents an imbalance of power and one parent may feel fearful of the other.

Since September 2012, the definition of domestic abuse is:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse: psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional.

Where an imbalance of power is not present, this is likely to be parental conflict rather than domestic abuse.

## What will I learn on the Reducing Parental Conflict Programme?

The programme is designed to improve the confidence, knowledge and skills of managers and practitioners who are working with families using a 'whole family' approach, this would include practitioners who work with both children and adults who are parents.

Areas covered:

- how to identify parental conflict and differentiate it from domestic abuse
- how to pinpoint issues which may lead to parental conflict /cause a decline in relationship quality
- how to have conversations about parental relationships
- how to help parents understand the cause and impact of their conflict
- how to help parents reduce the cause of conflict in their relationship
- how to decide which interventions, if any, are most suitable for the family's needs

We recognise that many practitioners are highly skilled at identifying domestic abuse but may feel less confident where parental conflict is concerned.

Through this new training programme, we hope that

practitioners will become comfortable having conversations about family relationships and that these conversations will become part of their everyday work with families.

This in turn should improve referrals to specialist services, which can now be accessed as part of this programme and broaden the scope of agencies who are involved – no one agency should be solely responsible for this area – we all need to work together.

## How do I sign up?

You can view the full range of training and courses available at [http://www.countydurhamfamilies.info/kb5/durham/fsd/advice.page?id=Z8S\\_XRfIwCI](http://www.countydurhamfamilies.info/kb5/durham/fsd/advice.page?id=Z8S_XRfIwCI)

## What next?

The reducing parental conflict programme will soon be launched formally in a public facing way and will be known as **Relationships Matter**. When you see this term in the future, you will know that it refers to the work undertaken by the reducing parental conflict programme.

## RPC hub

<https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/13576/Relationships-Matter>

