



One – minute guide Reducing Parental Conflict

What is parental conflict?

Parental Conflict is a pattern of destructive conflict behaviours which put children’s mental health and long-term life chances at risk. These behaviours include aggression, non-verbal conflict or ‘the silent treatment’. There are also signs of lack of respect and emotional control. Not all conflict is damaging, but where this is **frequent, intense and poorly resolved** it can harm children’s outcomes.

The quality of the inter-parental relationships, specifically how parents communicate and relate to each other, is increasingly recognised as a primary influence on effective parenting practices and children’s future life chances, including attainment and employment.

Causes of parental conflict

There are many triggers for parental conflict including having a new baby, health difficulties, losing a job and getting into debt. Economic stress, family and household factors, as well as parental risk factors such as mental health, the quality of the parent-child relationships and parenting affect the quality of interparental relationships.

It is important to be aware that parenting interventions in families where there are high levels of parental conflict are unlikely to be effective, so it is critical that the interparental relationship is also addressed, as often it is conflict that drives parental behaviours. Which in turn impacts on child outcomes.

How to support parents in conflict

Talk about relationships with all parents you’re in contact with, use motivational interviewing and active listening techniques to explore whether they may be experiencing relationship conflict or domestic violence and abuse.

[The Parental Relationship Spectrum](#) can support to identify where a relationship may sit and the level of support required.

Use the four R’s:

- **Recognise** - The most effective way to recognise whether parents are going through conflict is simply to ask them.
- **Respond** - Once someone has opened up to you about their relationship it is important to listen, use motivational interviewing and active listening techniques to help parents think about how they can improve their relationship.



- **Review** - After your client has had a chance to discuss their concerns, consider how you can support them further. This could include setting couple goals, being available for further discussions and guiding parents to local resources.
- **Refer** - Some couples may benefit from more intensive support to resolve conflict in their relationship. This may also be the case if you feel you don't have time to give them the support they need. In these cases, you can refer parents for additional support.

What support is available for parents?

Parents in conflict will have varying needs for support depending on the extent and nature of their conflict. The different levels of support can be differentiated as follows:

- **universal services** such as written and digital information, advice, and resources including conversations with trained practitioners. This support could be delivered by midwifery, health visiting and school nursing, family support service, school and early education services and housing and benefits advisors.
- **targeted services** include structured support from trained practitioners and referral to targeted interventions. This support could be delivered by early help family support teams, local authority 'front door' services, SEND services supporting schools and families.
- **specialist services** include high intensity expert provision that could be delivered by adult mental health services, child and young people's mental health services, adult drug and alcohol services, social care, safeguarding and disabled children's teams, parental relationship breakdown services including contact centres, mediation, Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS), private family law and family group conferencing services.

Information on resources and interventions available at a universal and targeted level can be found on the [Relationship support for parents | Hertfordshire County Council](#)

What support is available for professionals?

[Course: Recognising and Supporting Parents in Parental Conflict eLearning Module \(learningpool.com\)](#)

[Parent relationship support - Information for professionals \(hertfordshire.gov.uk\)](#)

OnePlusOne digital intervention training



Training Summary
2022.pdf

