



One minute guide

Relationship Matters—reducing parental conflict

No. 196, May 2020

What do we mean by parental conflict?

Leeds has developed a definition of parental conflict through consultation with a number of partner agencies, parents and children and young people:

'Parental conflict can include regular bickering, arguing and frustration with each other about issues such as money, parenting or housework. When a child experiences this conflict frequently and it is unresolved, it could result in children feeling upset, confused or angry and affect their ability to resolve relationship problems throughout their lives and achieve positive outcomes'.

In Leeds our behaviour is guided by relational practice and we are committed to helping families make choices and develop their own solutions to the challenges they face. This includes helping parents where there may be parental conflict.

Evidence shows that frequent, intense and poorly resolved parental conflict can have a negative impact on children's mental health and long term life-chances. In response to this, local authorities across Yorkshire and Humberside have jointly commissioned a website, awareness raising campaign and workforce development programme called 'Relationship Matters'.

Determining parental conflict or domestic abuse

Often it is clearer to identify where [domestic abuse/ violence](#) is a concern. However, sometimes it can be more challenging to differentiate between parental conflict and domestic abuse.

Leeds has adopted the [Stefanou Foundation Intimate Relationship Spectrum](#) to assist practitioners in determining whether families are experiencing parental conflict or domestic abuse. The spectrum includes the following relationship descriptions:

Respectful, equal, cooperative, happy

Mostly respectful, equal, cooperative but experiencing difficulties

Conflictual, non-communicative, non-violent

Situational couple conflict, abuse, violence both ways

Controlling, abusive / behaviour

Coercive control and physical harm, fear of violence / death

Good practice would always support practitioners having a conversation with families to help them determine if they are experiencing parental conflict. If practitioners are in any doubt they should refer to their agency's domestic abuse policy, or seek guidance from their line manager or from their local [Early Help Hub](#) Domestic Abuse Worker.

What are we doing in Leeds?

We understand that conflict is an everyday part of life; our aim is to ensure that conflict is constructively resolved thereby modelling appropriate relationships where any differences are agreed amicably between adults.

The ambition in Leeds is that families experiencing parental conflict are supported at the right time, by the right practitioner to prevent any impact of this conflict on children. We are aiming to increase awareness of parental conflict and the impact it can have on children and young people and their outcomes. In Leeds we are taking a practice approach through providing workforce development opportunities.

Leeds is working with thirteen other Local Authorities within Yorkshire and Humberside to jointly commission a regional website and digital campaign for practitioners and members of the public. The website can be accessed by visiting www.relationshipmatters.org.uk

Who should think about parental conflict? And what training is available?

All practitioners working with families should think about parental conflict. This involves all the organisations, agencies and services working with adults, those working with children and young people, and those who work with families. This includes but is not limited to health services, the police, the third sector and local authority services.

A multi-agency and multi-disciplinary training programme is available for practitioners and managers working with children and families and includes the following:

Module 1 (e-learning): Understanding Parental Conflict and its impact on Child Outcomes: How can I use the evidence base to support parent relationships?

Module 2: Recognising and Supporting Parents in Parental Conflict: Applying knowledge, skills and techniques

Module 3: Working with Parents in Conflict: How do I support, refer or intervene?

Module 4: Reducing Parental Conflict: The role of Supervisors and Managers: How can I support my frontline practitioners?

Where practitioners are working with parents who have said they want to talk to someone about their relationship, the worker can support them to contact one of the early help hubs.

Key contacts or for more information

For more information and for details of how to book onto training, contact Families First at: families.first@leeds.gov.uk