



One minute guide

Relationships Matter—reducing parental conflict

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What do we mean by parental conflict?

Leeds has developed a definition of parental conflict through consultation with 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 and restorative practices, 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, or relationship distress, 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 work together and refer to the programme regionally as 'Relationships Matter'. This regional approach is underpinned by the [Relationships Matter website](#), which is recommended for both parents and practitioners.

Determining parental conflict or domestic abuse

We are clear that parental conflict and domestic abuse are not the same thing and sometimes it can be challenging to differentiate between the two.

To assist practitioners, Leeds has adopted the [Stefanou Foundation Intimate Relationship Spectrum](#) to determine whether families are experiencing parental conflict or domestic abuse. If practitioners are in any doubt, they should refer to their agency's domestic abuse policy, or seek guidance from their line manager, Relationships Matter Coordinator or from their local Family Hub Domestic Abuse Worker.

What are we doing in Leeds?

We understand that conflict, arguing or disagreements can be part of everyday life. Our aim is to ensure that conflict is constructively resolved therefore modelling appropriate relationships where differences are agreed amicably is promoted.

The ambition in Leeds is that families experiencing parental conflict, are supported at the right time, by the right practitioner to prevent any unnecessary impact on children. We are aiming to increase awareness of parental conflict and the impact it can have for children and young people such as increased anxiety, poorer educational outcomes and difficulties with their own adult relationships in the longer term. In Leeds we are taking a practice development approach and offer workforce development opportunities via training, lunch and learn, Early Help Open Mic and team briefings.

Who should think about parental conflict? What training is available?

All practitioners working with families should be aware of the effects of parental conflict and the benefits of parents working together to address the challenges they face. Good practice will be to include healthy relationship conversations with parents, supported by the early help documentation and formulation process. This is recommended prior to working with parents on intensive support or referral to parenting programme.

A free multi-agency and multi-disciplinary training programme is available for practitioners and managers working with children and families. The training is currently available to anyone who is working with children and/or adults across the Leeds workforce. Please reserve your place by accessing PALS (for Leeds City Council employees) or by contacting: relationshipsmatter@leeds.gov.uk.

What support is available to parents?

The [Relationships Matter website](#) is available to all parents and practitioners in the first instance. If parents need a little more help, they can speak to a trained practitioner who may be based in schools, children's centres, clusters or Family Hubs. Parents may also like to access the resource 'Amity - little book of relationship care', which is available by contacting the Relationships Matter service. If a more therapeutic option is needed, parents are encouraged to speak to their GP or contact organisations such as [RELATE](#) or [Marriage Care](#), but there may be a charge to do so.

Parents who are separated, divorced or co-parenting can access the OnePlusOne coparenting app '[Separating Better](#)' which is free and offers lots of advice and support on working towards a family plan and building self-care. In more complex situations, parents can request a place on a [Family Transitions - Triple P](#) course with the help of a practitioner. They could also apply for a [voucher towards mediation sessions](#).

We are working towards restorative solutions for separating parents and would only advise taking legal action where relationship support or mediation has not been effective or where safeguarding is a concern.

Key contacts and further information

For more information and for details of how to book onto training, contact the team via email: relationshipsmatter@leeds.gov.uk or familiesfirst@leeds.gov.uk.