

# Wakefield Relationship Matters

## Reducing Parental Conflict

### **What do we mean by parental conflict?**

In Wakefield we take a whole family approach and are guided by restorative practise. 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.

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.

### **What are we doing in Wakefield?**

We are aiming to increase awareness of parental conflict and the impact it can have on children and young people and their outcomes.

Whilst we understand that conflict is an everyday part of life; our aim is to ensure that conflict is constructively resolved and any differences are agreed amicably between adults.

We want families experiencing parental conflict to be supported at the right time, by the right practitioner, to prevent any impact of this conflict on children.

As such, we are part of the 'Relationship Matters' programme, alongside a collective across Yorkshire and Humberside, working to reduce parental conflict.

### **Actions we are taking in Wakefield to do this are:**

- Working collaborative with other local authorities across Yorkshire and Humberside to launch a regional website and digital campaign targeted at practitioners and the public.  
This can be accessed at [www.relationshipsmatter.org.uk](http://www.relationshipsmatter.org.uk).
- Providing training and workforce development opportunities around parental conflict for staff.
- Developing a named parental conflict champion within individual organisations and services.
- Working with adult education providers to embed the understanding of parental conflict and the effects this has on children within their programmes.

### **Who should think about parental conflict?**

All practitioners working with families should think about parental conflict. This includes 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.

# Wakefield Relationship Matters

## Reducing Parental Conflict: Professionals Briefing

### **What is parental conflict?**

Whether couples are together or separated, disagreements are completely normal. But 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.

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.

### **What is Relationship Matters?**

Relationship Matters is a new partnership between 14 local authorities across Yorkshire and the Humber region aimed at helping families who may be having relationship difficulties.

Whilst we understand that conflict is an everyday part of life; our aim is to ensure that conflict is constructively resolved and any differences are agreed amicably between adults.

As such one of the actions we have undertaken is to jointly launch a new website, aimed at providing families information, tips, and help to stay calm and work it out.

It will also provide more general information on the signs of parental conflict as well as helpful links to support both nationally, and at a local level. The website can be accessed at [www.relationshipmatters.org.uk](http://www.relationshipmatters.org.uk).

### **How can you support?**

With the current pandemic resulting in families spending longer periods of time together, and potentially increased pressure, it's more important than ever that we can support families.

As you may be contacted by a parent or carer the purpose of this briefing paper is to provide helpful information to you as professionals, so you can support the work going on to reduce the impact of parental conflict on children and young people.

### **The signs:**

- Arguing, rows, shouting all the time with each other about things like, money, how they parent, housework
- Are they worried about splitting up?
- Is there a pattern of sulking, silent treatment, slamming doors or walking away from each other?
- Are they anxious or worried which gets in the way of managing everyday life?
- Are they not able to say sorry after an argument and move on?
- Are they using hurtful texts, emails or Social Media against each other?

## **Below we've outlined some questions and prompts which you may wish to use in your communication with families:**

- Have you seen our Early Help website?
- Tell me a little about what made you contact us today and how may I help you?
- How long has this issue been going on?
- What other parts of your life is the problem affecting and how does this impact on you and your children?
- Have you tried anything to solve this problem? What was the result?
- What would your life be like if the problem were to be solved?
- Do you know anyone else that has had an issue or problem like this?
- Are you afraid of your partner? If so, how and what has happened?
- How has it felt to talk about the problem today?

### **Local services**

As part of this you may need to find out or know about what services are available in your area. Some useful websites are listed below:

- Wakefield Early Help: [www.earlyhelp.wakefield.gov.uk](http://www.earlyhelp.wakefield.gov.uk)
- Wakefield District Domestic Abuse Service: [www.wakefield.gov.uk/keepitsweet](http://www.wakefield.gov.uk/keepitsweet)
- 0800 915 1561 / [domesticabuse@wakefield.gov.uk](mailto:domesticabuse@wakefield.gov.uk)

Wakefield Safeguarding Children Partnership: [www.wakefieldscp.org.uk](http://www.wakefieldscp.org.uk)

Remember, if you believe a person is in immediate danger please don't hesitate - contact the Police on 999.

You can also report domestic abuse using this simple form

[www.westyorkshire.police.uk/report-it/report-domestic-abuse](http://www.westyorkshire.police.uk/report-it/report-domestic-abuse).

### **Further information**

There are also national websites which may prove useful too, such as:

#### **Early Intervention Foundation**

**Reducing Parental Conflict Hub:** [www.reducingparentalconflict.eif.org.uk](http://www.reducingparentalconflict.eif.org.uk)

Aimed at local leaders, commissioners, practitioners, and researchers who are looking to reduce the impact of parental conflict on children. It provides a central repository of key 'what works' evidence and tools, including why parental conflict matters for children's outcomes, and guidance on how to take action.

**Relate:** [www.relate.org.uk](http://www.relate.org.uk)

Information and support around relationships; services include live chat, as well as telephone and webcam counselling services.

**Children and Family Court Advisory Service (CAFCASS):** [www.cafcass.gov.uk](http://www.cafcass.gov.uk)

Offers advice and support to parents, carers, and professionals on divorce and separation, care proceedings, and adoption. It also has tools for professionals to use with families.

**Action for Children:** [www.actionforchildren.org.uk](http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk)

Advice, information, and resources for professionals and families around getting the best start in life, good mental health, and a safe and loving home. You can also talk to parenting coaches online.