

£4m for councils to support more families to resolve parental conflict

The Department for Work and Pension's Reducing Parental Conflict programme is working with local family services including health and social care, the courts and emergency services such as the police, to help them spot parental conflict, provide initial support and refer parents to further interventions such as therapy for a constructive resolution.

This includes:

- Almost £4 million for councils in England to help resolve conflict between parents
- Councils can now bid for the new cash so more children can thrive in happier homes – a new cash pot of £3.87 million for councils to help support parents and their families experiencing severe relationship difficulties goes live today (Tuesday 6 April 2021).

Research published by DWP today shows nearly 9 in 10 councils believe the programme's practitioner training is important to embedding support into their services and are positive about the programme's potential to improve outcomes for children in the areas.

Today's announcement means more funding to help them train more of their services to intervene in difficult situations. DWP Lords Minister Baroness Stedman-Scott said:

Every child deserves the best start in life and this programme aims to do just that by protecting child mental wellbeing through healthier relationships between parents – whether together or separated.

The pandemic has been a difficult for everyone, with families cooped up or apart from each other for longer periods of time.

That makes our work in this area all the more important and this new funding will help councils do even more to support parents.

The programme is designed to resolve parental conflict, not domestic abuse. Those in abusive relationships will instead be referred to specialist support.

Since 2017, the department has worked with nearly 150 councils to help them develop strategies for approaching conflict below the domestic abuse

threshold. This includes investigating the issue of frequent, intense and poorly resolved conflict between parents and how it impacts children's wellbeing.

DWP is funding councils to increase understanding of these issues at a local level, undertaking innovative projects working with charities and sharing evidence on what works. For example, the successful #SeeItDifferently videos which have attracted almost a million views by parents in court.

The clips emotively showcase through the eyes of children, the emotional damage of arguments between parents, and how differently it could have played out if disagreements were communicated calmly and constructively, resulting in a happier family.

Reports published by DWP today (Tuesday 6 April 2021) show just how significantly the department is raising the profile of parental conflict, which councils overwhelmingly recognise as an important, but often blurry issue that can lead to difficult consequences for children.

Research shows the programme's effectiveness in:

- helping parents to take responsibility for their actions and understand the impact on their families;
- improving communication between a couple and within the family as a whole;
- and skills training focused on emotional coping strategies, both to manage triggers to substance use and to improve parenting practices and conflict management.

With this new round of funding, the DWP will be able to take the programme to the next level, giving more children the opportunity to thrive in happier homes.

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