

Families supported by £33 million to drive down parental conflict

The Reducing Parental Conflict programme – which funds councils across England to deliver evidence-based relationship support to parents in their communities – has helped thousands of families since 2018.

The support was launched in response to [research which shows](#) that frequent, intense and poorly resolved conflict between parents can significantly impact children's mental health and long-term life chances, affecting their school grades, early emotional and social development, future relationships and employment.

This funding boost agreed by ministers comes as the programme's [third evaluation report](#) is published. It details the positive effect of the support on family relationships and improvements in their children's behaviour.

As part of the programme, parents can be taught techniques to de-escalate conflict, put aside their differences and communicate better for the benefit of their children.

The new funding will enable councils to train many more frontline staff who regularly come into contact with families facing conflict. This means that staff working in early years education, policing, schooling, and health and social care will be equipped to support parents, addressing conflict in families and improving children's wellbeing.

DWP Lords Minister Baroness Stedman-Scott said:

We know frequent, intense and poorly resolved conflict between parents is harmful to children. And we know how to help.

This £33 million investment builds on what we've started, supporting parents to deal with the root cause of their issues so they can move forward and offer their children a better chance at life.

For example, in Norfolk the council trains their workforce to understand the detrimental effects of parental conflict on children, helping them provide initial support and signpost parents to further interventions to help them resolve their differences constructively.

Meanwhile, Rochdale's award-winning '[Relationship Revolution](#)' brought the whole community together, including health, education and voluntary sectors, to tackle parental conflict. Their approach improved the lives of local families as well as those further afield as their work has been mirrored by

other areas in England.

Other successful projects have included online relationship support and learning videos, counselling for parents, and toolkits for frontline services ensuring a standard of support is available across the country.

Professor Gordon Harold from Cambridge University who launched a landmark report in 2015 on the importance of reducing parental conflict, said:

The RPC programme aims to reduce the adverse impacts that parental conflict causes to children through the provision of new support for parents, training for family practitioners and better awareness, understanding and coordination of parental conflict related services delivered by local authorities and their partners; all with one core aim – to promote improved mental health outcomes for at-risk children and adolescents.

Cristina Odone, Head of Family Policy at The Centre for Social Justice said:

Unresolved parental conflict can spiral into violence and domestic abuse, affecting children's mental health. The impact is felt long term.

More information

- Frequent, intense and poorly resolved conflict, below the threshold of domestic abuse, between parents, whether together or separated, can significantly impact children's mental health and long-term life chances, affecting their school grades, early emotional and social development, future relationships and employment.
- Children in families where both parents are workless are twice as likely to experience relationship distress than those where both parents are working. More information can be found here in the [Parental conflict indicator 2011/12 to 2017/18 – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- The Reducing Parental Conflict programme mostly focuses on disadvantaged families, where factors like both parents being out of work, can exacerbate conflict.
- DWP is committing £33 million over 2022-25, with £11 million in 2022/3, to build on the progress of the Reducing Parental Conflict programme so far and enable local areas to train greater numbers of their workforces to address conflict in families locally.

Media enquiries for this press release – 0115 965 8781

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