

Parental Conflict and its Impact on Children

North Lincolnshire One Family Approach



**North
Lincolnshire
Council**

www.northlincs.gov.uk





What does today look like?

- This session aims to understand parental conflict and the impact on children
- By the end of the session you will be able to identify the difference between helpful and harmful conflict and where it differs from domestic abuse.
- By the end of the session understanding the evidence base behind this work
- By the end of the session you will identify some key actions to take forward into practice.

Before we get started



1. Session times
2. Housekeeping
3. Confidentiality
4. Further support

Welcome and Introductions

- Name
- Job role
- Expectations



Video 1 - Parental conflict: the impact on children and how local authorities can help - <https://vimeo.com/216676343>

Domestic Abuse and Parental Conflict

- By having conversations about relationships, staff are better placed to identify parental conflict including domestic abuse.
- When exploring or addressing parental conflict within a relationship, practitioners should continue to be vigilant and confident there are no indicators of domestic abuse, including coercive control.
- Should any concern be identified that could indicate domestic abuse, local policies and procedures to address domestic abuse should always be followed and the priority should be managing any potential risk of harm.
- Practitioners should be curious and alert to an imbalance of power within a relationship that adversely affects one person and is used as a form of control; or where at least one person feels fear - this is one indicator of an abusive relationship.
- If you would like more information about domestic abuse, please discuss with your line manager, local domestic abuse services or designated safeguarding lead.

Ruling out Domestic Abuse:

We argue a lot. Sometimes I know it's my fault. We've both lost our temper and broken things or "pushed each other's buttons." We both want to argue less, he says I nag and I think he doesn't appreciate what I do for the family. He won't be happy that I've told you this.

Initial thoughts – can we rule out DA at this point?

What else do we need to know? How will we get this information safely?

What would satisfy us that this is **not** DA.

What are the facts?

11% of children in couple parent families had at least one parent who reported relationship distress

All forms of conflict have a lasting negative effect on children

40% – 70% of couples experience a decline in relationship quality in their first year of parenthood



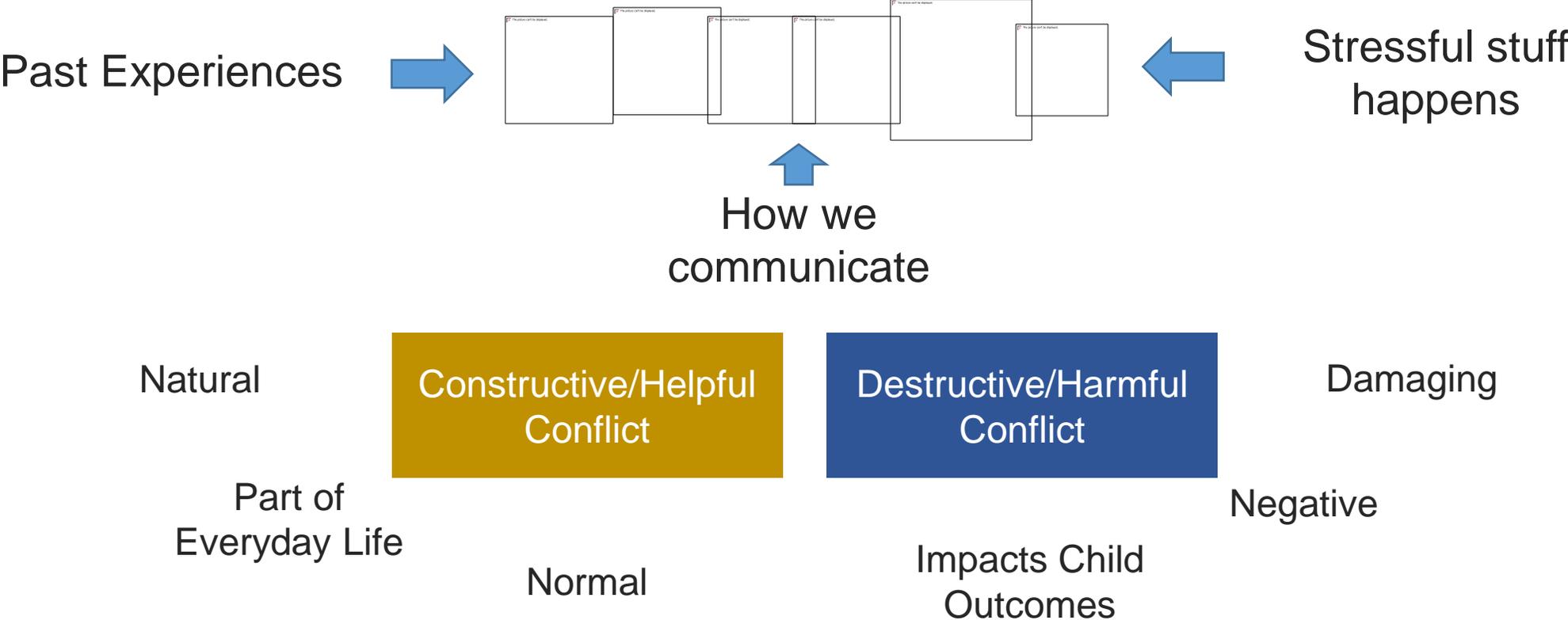
True or False

1. 42% of children, by the age of 16 do not live with both parents
2. Workless couple-parent families fair no worse than other groups who report having a distressed relationship
3. 23% of children will experience relationship distress when the youngest parent is under 25
4. Mothers who experience stress due to parental conflict during pregnancy and early months is linked to evidence of elevated heart rate in children

True or False

5. Children are unaware of relationship distress when they don't experience the conflict directly
6. All children exposed to destructive conflict are scared for life as a result of their experiences
7. 52% of children in separated families see their non-resident parent at least once a fortnight
8. Improvement can be achieved through early intervention and if parental conflict is corrected

Conflict in relationships is a reality....



Conflict between parents is normal

Constructive helpful Conflict

- ✓ Try to compromise
- ✓ Demonstrate Warmth
- ✓ Use humour and negotiation
- ✓ Resolve their differences
- ✓ Agree to differ
- ✓ Not trying to put the other person down

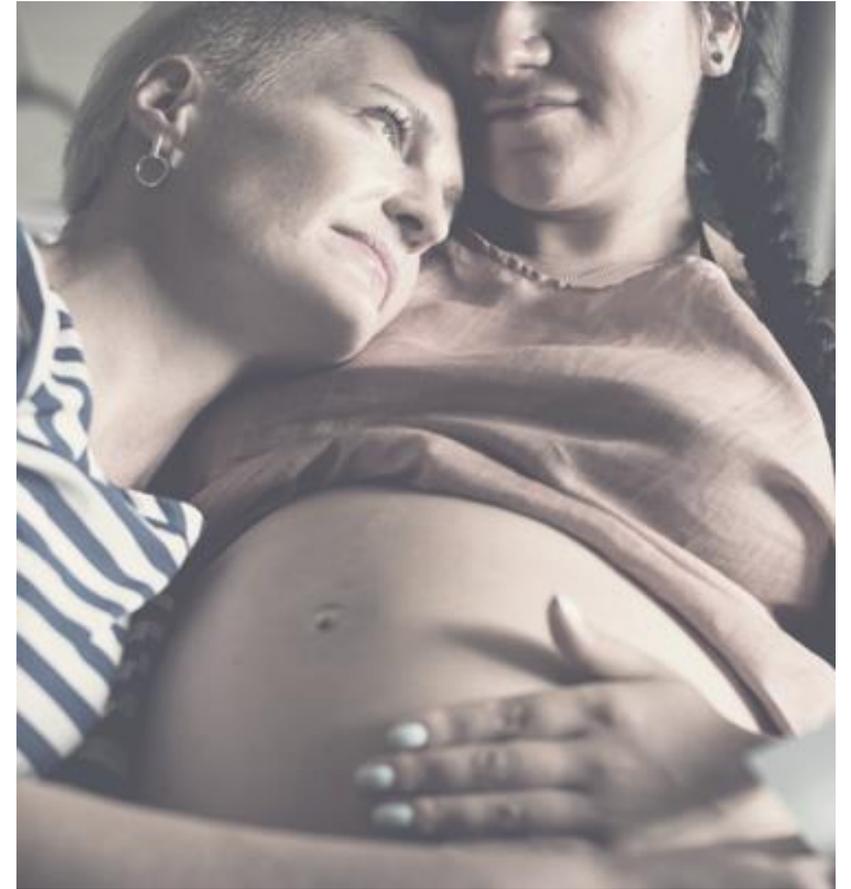
Destructive Harmful Conflict

- × Intense Arguments
- × Hostile verbal exchanges
- × The 'silent treatment'
- × The need to win
- × Personal Attacks
- × Arguments that are about or involve the children

Impact on Children

Constructive/helpful conflict

- Children can benefit from seeing their parents resolve their differences and disagreements
- This teaches valuable lessons about compromise, negotiation, resolution and reaching agreements

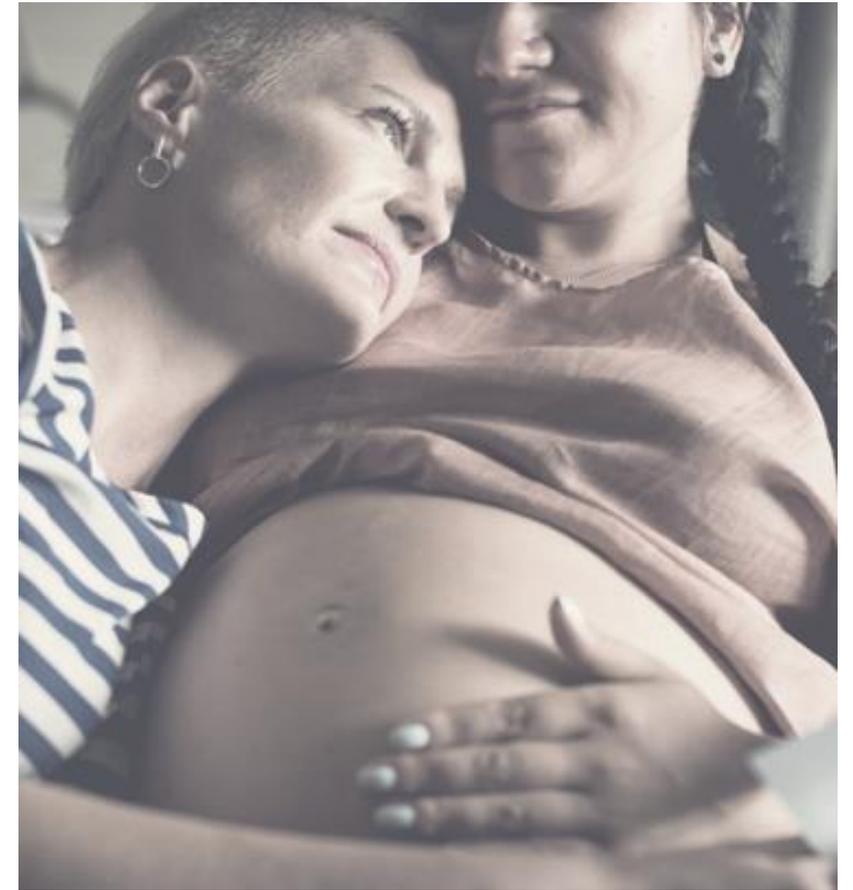


What does the evidence tell us ?

Harmful Conflict

Is frequent, intense and poorly resolved, whether parents are together or separated.

- Children exposed to this type of conflict are at risk of poor social, emotional and educational outcomes, physical and emotional/mental health.
- Harmful conflict can impact on a child or young person's ability to form and sustain positive relationships with peers and also impacts on their ability to develop healthy relationships in later life



Conflict and Separation

Research shows that the impact of parental separation on children may be determined more by the level of conflict before the breakdown rather than the breakdown itself.

Research tells us most children, in relationships that do not display harmful conflict returned to levels of pre-divorce functioning within two years.

What do most parents argue about?

Money/finances

Parenting Style

Division of household tasks

Extended Family Relationships (In Laws)

Work or unemployment

Sex and Intimacy

Infidelity

Sibling Rivalry

Housing

Shared Responsibilities

Social Media

Babies

It's not about family formation it's about relationship quality ?



Click the below link to view Maddie's Story.

<https://www.seeitdifferently.org>

Seeing it differently video Mum arrives from work, Dad is at home cooking / playing with his daughter– video resource to highlight the impact of harmful conflict on children and encourage parents to consider their behaviour

Impact on children and families

- How would you know?

We are just going to explore some factors that may become apparent when you are working with children and their parents / carers that indicate conflict is having an impact on the child or within the family.

How parental conflict
impacts on children
and young people

[Kids Talk video- YouTube](#)



Internalising
sad, withdrawn
anxious depressed

How does destructive conflict
manifest in children and young people?

Externalising
aggression, behaviour
problems, acting out

Parent-Child
provides emotional
support, excuses,
care for siblings

What signs may a parent in conflict show us?

- They may just tell us!
- Changes in presentation
- Changes in attitude
- Crying
- Aggression
- Frustration
- Lateness to collect children
- Short tempered with us or children
- Arguing
- Shouting
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Changes in who collects children
- Attention seeking behaviour
- Absence
- Withdrawing

Communication and conflict

Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse | The
Gottman Institute – YouTube

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1o3
0Ps-8is](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1o3
0Ps-8is)

Professional Curiosity and Difficult Conversations

Changes in behaviour of children or parents may not be due to conflict but they will be due to something – asking the difficult questions can help us understand what.

“How’s everything at home...”

I’m here if you want to talk about anything....

I’ve noticed.....

How do you think they are getting on...

Active Listening

- Pay Attention. Give the speaker your undivided attention, and acknowledge the message. ...
- Show That You're Listening. ...
- Provide Feedback. ...
- Defer Judgment. ...
- Respond Appropriately.

Support in North Lincolnshire

Health Services

Children Centres

Samaritans

MIND

- The Blue Door – Domestic Abuse Service



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How to access local support

Children's centres and FaSST are now all one service - where children's centres pick up the majority of preventative and lower level cases and FaSST will address more intensive targeted work with families/children.

1. Where a provider wishes to access support for a family (not just for parental conflict) they should ring the locality children's centre (with verbal parental consent) to discuss family/child's needs. Depending on the support required the children's centre will -

- offer guidance to the provider to allow them to offer support to the family themselves
- if appropriate and level of support requires a more specific approach that the children's centre can offer then the centre will forward a Prevention Referral Form which should be completed by the provider in partnership with the family and returned to the children's centre so support can be allocated as appropriate.

2. If a provider feels the family/child require a higher level of intervention with targeted or more intensive support then a referral to FaSST can be discussed. Providers must have consent from parent/carer to do this. Providers must ring SPOC (01724 296500) to discuss any possible referrals into FaSST.

Support Nationally..

- www.relationshipmatters.org.uk
- www.clickrelationships.org
- www.dad.info
- www.netmums.com
- www.relate.org.uk
- www.contact.org.uk
- www.fatherhoodinstitute.org
- www.tavinstitute.org

- [National Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0808 2000 247](http://www.nationaldomesticabusehelpline.org)
- www.womensaid.org.uk

