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Background

Conflict between parents, or co-parents, is a normal part of relationships. However, there is a large body of evidence that shows that parental conflict which is frequent, intense and poorly resolved puts children's mental health and long-term outcomes at risk. Parental relationship distress is different from domestic abuse. This is because there is not an imbalance of power, neither parent seeks to control the other, and neither parent is fearful of the other.

The government developed the [Reducing Parental Conflict](#) programme to reduce parental conflict and improve children's outcomes.

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Why it matters

The impact on children can include problems relating to their mental health and wellbeing, physical health and risky health behaviour, academic performance, and antisocial behaviour.

The risks can also have an effect on long-term life outcomes such as:

- poor future relationship chances
- reduced academic attainment
- lower employability
- heightened interpersonal violence
- depression and anxiety

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Information

1 in 5 married / cohabiting couples are in relationships which are classified as "distressed" this can mean that they argue a lot or regularly consider separating or regret being in the relationship. Differences in parenting styles and the influence from wider family members, can cause parental conflict. Our childhood experiences mean we all have personal ideas about how to parent our children and these won't always be the same.

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Research suggests long-term parental conflict affects how we parent our children. Triggers can also include:

- Money issues
- Work related issues
- Health issues
- Arrival of new babies
- Childcare arrangements
- Holiday periods

Parents who have separated can struggle to communicate effectively about their children causing conflict.

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Children as young as 6 months show distress in response to hostile parental exchanges with increased heart rate.

Children up to 5 may show distress by crying, acting out, and attempting to intervene

Younger children are more likely to blame themselves for the conflict.

Older children are more prone to displaying behavioural problems. Since they are more exposed for a longer period of time to the conflict, they may be more affected.

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Questions to consider

- Have I attended the Getting on Better Toolkit Training?
- Do I know the difference between parental conflict and domestic abuse?
- How can I routinely embed relationship enquiry in my role?
- Do I know what support is available for parents and how they would access this?
- How can my service/organisation support to promote Getting on Better across Blackpool?

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What to do

Workforce training - Getting on Better Relationship Toolkit Training (see attached flyer) [Training Booking Request Form](#)

Share Relationships Matter animated online workshop for parents - [Relationships Matter: video workshop \(youtube.com\)](#)

Signpost families to their local Family Hub for relationship support and check out the website [Blackpool Family Hubs | Relationship support](#)

