**DWP 12 Month Reducing Parental Conflict Fund**

The objective of the DWP Reducing Parental Conflict Fund is to encourage local authorities to integrate services and approaches which address parental conflict into their local services for families.

Salford has successfully secured some funding from the Reducing Parental Conflict grant funding for the period Mar 2019 – Mar 2020.

Project aims:

* To work with partners through existing Community Safety and Safeguarding Children’s Partnerships to undertake the Reducing Parental Conflict Planning Tool to capture the current strategic and operational response in Salford around parental conflict (online planning tool to be completed by 11th June 19)
* To work with key partners in education, health, voluntary and community sector and criminal justice to undertake current state analysis of the needs and response to parental conflict across the city. This will include appropriate engagement with parents to understand the lived experience
* Locality lead to organise a series of city-wide and neighbourhood partner engagement events to support strategic and operational awareness and understanding of parental conflict
* Spot-purchase a train-the-trainer and front-line practitioner training programme through the DWP approved training provider, Knowledge pool
* A pool of expert practitioners are identified and trained to deliver reducing parental conflict training
* Practitioners from key agencies including: health; housing; criminal justice and education trained in identifying and addressing parental conflict

**Contacts:**

Rachel Shearn: 0161 686 5257 - rachel.shearn@salford.gov.uk

Michelle Warburton: 0161 787 7795 - Michelle.Warburton@salfordcvs.co.uk

**Reducing Parental Conflict/Early Intervention Foundation**

There is strong evidence that conflict between parents – whether together or separated – can have a significant negative impact on children's mental health and long-term life-chances. Not all conflict is damaging, but where this is frequent, intense and poorly resolved it can harm children's outcomes.

The government's Improving Lives strategy introduced a new focus on tackling the impact of parental conflict on children, with the aim that this will become mainstream, alongside support for parenting. As part of this work, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is leading a national Reducing Parental Conflict Programme to embed evidence-based support to tackle parental conflict in local areas.

**What is the problem?**

Strong scientific evidence shows that conflict between parents can affect multiple outcomes for children, including emotional, behavioural, social and academic development. Parents in poverty or under economic pressure are more likely to experience relationship conflict. DWP estimates that 11% of all children, and 28% of children in workless families, have parents in a distressed relationship. We have collaborated with Professor Gordon Harold and his team at the University of Sussex on a number of pioneering evidence reviews.

<https://reducingparentalconflict.eif.org.uk/>

## Why does it matter?

Addressing couple conflict and the quality of parental relationships is a critical component of improving outcomes for children. Parenting interventions for families in the context of ongoing parental conflict are unlikely to be effective or improve outcomes for children.

## Where do I start?

There is a need to increase the availability of relationship support provision in the UK and to embed a focus on reducing parental conflict in local systems and services. But as a new policy area, local areas need support on where to start. There is a range of tools and resources that can help.

## Identifying interventions

While there is strong evidence that parental conflicts impacts child outcomes, the evidence about interventions and what works is still at an early stage. The majority of interventions with robust evidence come from outside the UK and many have not yet collected evidence on how they improve child (rather than parent or couple) outcomes. However, a growing number of interventions have either been shown to work or are building their evidence-base.

## Preparing the workforce

Supporting practitioners to identify relationship problems early and refer families to the right interventions is essential in tackling parental conflict. Embedding relationship support in mainstream services, such as children's centres or health visiting, or targeting transition points for families, such as new parenthood or separation, can be a way to identify families before relationship difficulties escalate. Learn more about how you can prepare and equip your local workforce.

## What services are there?

Relationship support is underdeveloped and not easily available across the UK, with a patchwork of largely uncoordinated provision. The voluntary sector is the main provider of relationship support services but operates in an unstable funding environment. Current provision ranges from formal specialist support such as counselling and mediation, to more generic services such as health visiting, which are not explicitly defined as relationship support but may touch on relationship issues.

## How will I know if I made a difference?

The UK evidence-base on what works to reduce the impact of parental conflict on children is a relatively early stage. As a new policy field it is critical that evaluation is part of any plans to develop or commission relationship support services. Without a suitable evaluation you won't really know if or why new services have worked or had an impact. Read about how you can start evaluating your services and learn from