

# WHAT IS PARENTAL CONFLICT AND WHY SHOULD WE BE CONCERNED?

This is not Domestic Abuse or Domestic Violence



Conflict within a relationship is quite normal and when resolved well can provide valuable lessons to the children of the couple. It shows them that you can disagree at times and still enjoy a loving and caring relationship.

The problems begin when the conflict is frequent, intense and poorly resolved. This can have a lasting effect on the child's mental and physical health as well as the possibility of affecting attachment, future relationships and their own sense of self worth.



## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF PARENTAL CONFLICT?

There are many signs to look out for, the Gottman Institute has dubbed four of the most commonly seen ones as "the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse"



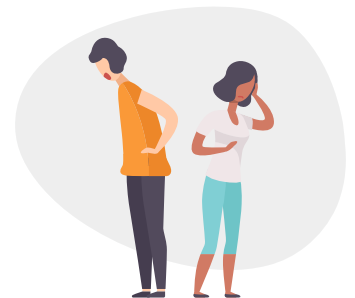
**Criticism**



**Contempt**



**Defensiveness**



**Stonewalling**

## HOW CAN WE HELP?

If you recognise the above issues with families that you are working with and you would like some additional support and knowledge on how to approach the subject and support them effectively.

We are able to support you with our Reducing Parental Conflict training package alongside a toolkit we have developed with nine other councils across Greater Manchester.

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## WHY SHOULD WE BE CONCERNED?

Mothers who experience stress due to parental conflict during pregnancy and early months is linked to evidence of elevated heart rate in children

52% of children in separated families see their non-resident parent at least once a fortnight

Medical research shows that child brain development is affected by Parental Conflict

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

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

Destructive conflict involves behaviours that evoke negative reactions in children and is characterised for example by nonverbal conflict

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# IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP STUCK IN A RUT?



## DO YOU FIND IT DIFFICULT TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR PARTNER?



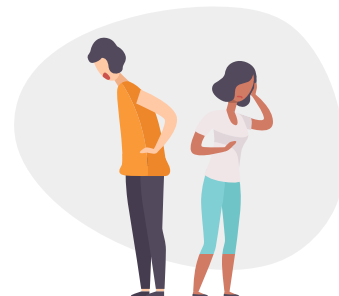
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We can all feel this way at some point in our relationships and it can be difficult to see a way to improve things, and you are not alone in feeling like this.

40%-70% of couples experience a decline in relationship quality during their first year of parenthood.

7% of couples report quarrelling “more often than not”, “most of the time” or “all of the time”

## IT'S OK TO ASK FOR HELP

You can change things for you and your family and we can support you to do this.



# SOMETIMES BEING IN A RELATIONSHIP CAN SEEM LIKE A REAL STRUGGLE.



Did you know that all relationships go through several stages?



We sometimes find ourselves “stuck” with the middle stages of a relationship and this is when we tend to argue more, belittle each other, ignore the other person and sometimes it seems that we just can't agree on anything.

The way we deal with this part of the relationship not only affects us as adults but can have a massive impact on our children who may be witnessing our behaviours.

Evidence reviewed by the Early Intervention Foundation shows that young people who are exposed to conflict between their parents that is frequent, intense and poorly resolved are likely to suffer increased levels of aggression, depression and anxiety. In addition they may struggle to achieve at school.



# “WE ALWAYS SHOUT AND ARGUE BUT IT NEVER GETS VIOLENT SO IT DOESN'T AFFECT THE KIDS, RIGHT?”



## WHAT THE EVIDENCE TELLS US:

“Parental Conflict\* (whether parents together or separated) places children at risk of poor social, emotional and educational outcomes”

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## THE EVIDENCE ALSO TELLS US:

Children can benefit from seeing their parents resolve their differences and disagreements.

This teaches valuable lessons about compromise, negotiation, resolution and reaching agreements.

