



Factsheet – March 2025

Parental conflict

What is parental conflict?

Some level of conflict between parents is often a **normal part of everyday life** and isn't always bad. However, parental conflict can become a safeguarding concern if it's:

- Frequent
- Intense
- Poorly resolved

This type of conflict can have a significant negative impact on children's mental health and long-term life chances.

Damaging parental conflict can look like:

- Unresolved arguing
- Silence
- Lack of respect
- Lack of resolution

It can affect children in all types of parental relationships, including whether parents are married or not, separated or divorced, or where other family members might play a parenting role.

Certain periods can be more stressful for families

It's understandable that certain periods are more stressful for families, and they'll likely need more support, such as:

- Bereavement
- A new baby
- Children starting a new school
- Separation or divorce
- Periods of financial difficulty

Although it won't always be the case, these can increase the likelihood of damaging conflict.

Parents may also experience drug or substance abuse, and mental health problems which can contribute to conflict.

Signs to look out for

As with other safeguarding issues, you're well placed to spot signs of concern and are often the first professionals to see the signs that children are being affected by damaging conflict at home. Look out for children who:

- Seem less ready to learn when they come to school
 - Have poor attention or concentration due to lack of sleep
 - Have emotional or behavioural problems, including social difficulties with their peers
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How does this differ from domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse is abusive, violent, controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour between people aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members.

Children who see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse and are related to the victim or perpetrator are victims of abuse themselves. It can seriously affect children's physical and mental wellbeing, including into adulthood, so we have a responsibility to share concerns.

If you have concerns about either parental conflict or domestic abuse

- Speak to our designated safeguarding lead (DSL), or deputy, and keep a clear record
- Make a clear record of your concerns
- If a child tells you about abuse, make it clear that you'll need to tell someone else – but only those who really need to know
- If you think a child is in immediate danger, contact the local authority children's social care team, and the police, if appropriate. Then tell our DSL or deputy