

Reducing Parental Conflict

Guidance for Professionals Working with Parental Conflict Cases that could be Domestic Violence

- If a woman is continuously making excuses for her partner or saying things such as ‘the arguments we have are my fault too’ or ‘I do cause a lot of the arguments’ – although this could be seen as recognising that parental conflict is there, professionals also need to be mindful that this could be due to the perpetrator telling the survivor repeatedly that it is their fault and they caused the conflict as a form of coercive control
- If in doubt and professionals do suspect dv instead of parental conflict – Professionals need to make sure a DASH is completed with the women, on her own and away from the partner to assess risk. If high risk this needs referring to the MARAC and social care need to be informed.
- If professionals find that the couple are always together when talking to them and it is hard to speak to the women on her own, this could be seen as normal parental conflict and the couple are working together to solve their issues OR, it could be that the perpetrator does not want to leave the women on her own for fear she may disclose domestic abuse – ensure you can create a safe space where the women can disclose domestic abuse if you suspect it without the partner being present. Even if you do not suspect domestic abuse, it is good practice to create opportunities for the women to disclose domestic abuse if she wants too. It is important to risk assess this before doing so.
- Professionals need to be really mindful re the topic of parental counselling/couples counselling – if professionals have any inkling or thought that domestic abuse may be present then this would not be appropriate in any circumstance for the couple to take part in and could cause serious harm to the survivor and further incidents of domestic abuse.
- A lot of survivors will not describe their relationships as domestic abuse / coercive when asked. We know that a lot of female survivors assume responsibilities for abuse towards themselves. For example, 'I make mistake I wind him up, I did this wrong' so professionals need to be really mindful of this when discussing parental conflict and the circumstances surrounding it.
- Professionals need to be mindful that relationships can go up and down the scale, and people who are at risk are simply not in the black circle (with regards to the continuum) they may technically be in the lightest purple circle, as the perpetrator is trying to instil hope in the survivor in regards to their relationship but in actual fact they could be most at risk. It is important for professionals to be able to recognise this when looking at parental conflict as although on the outside it may seem that conflict is managed in a ‘healthy way’ there could be more less obvious perpetrator tactics being used.
- Professionals need to trust their gut instinct – if it does not feel right between a couple, it probably isn’t!!
- If professionals find that when talking to a couple there is one person who dominates the majority of the conversation and the other does not have opportunity to speak much this could be due to lack of confidence etc but it is really important that professionals create arenas for both people in the relationship to speak openly and honestly about their experiences.
- If overall, parental conflict situations/arguments are ‘down played’ or minimized when spoken about, particularly from the women – it is really important to try and explore this with her at a safe and confidential time.