

Strengthening Parental Relationships

Hampshire's Reducing Parental Conflict Offer

High Intensity Expert Provision: Mediation / Couple Support & Family Counselling

Appendix A: Safety Net Discussion

Please use this discussion tool with each parent / carer, individually. This is to ensure we find the most appropriate service for the family.

Experts on domestic abuse recognise that it is evidently distinct from parental conflict. One is about two parents feeling able to express their feelings and wishes (albeit not always in a constructive or positive way), but the other is about one partner exerting power and control over another – even where a victim may attempt to resist that control.

How to use this discussion tool

- Start by praising the individual for taking this step towards improving their relationship with their co parent. It's great that parents can identify when things aren't going well and work on addressing the conflict affecting their family.
- Explain the reason for having this discussion is to make sure we provide parents / carers with the best and most appropriate service. If individuals share something that suggests there is abuse or controlling behaviours within the relationship, help is available for victims, perpetrators and children / young people. The questionnaire and any discussion will not be shared with their partner / co-parent.
- Explain to the parent/carer that we have a duty of care, to report any abuse/controlling behaviours, if we feel they are at immediate risk.
- If any disclosures are made of historic or current DA within the current relationship, ensure you record accurately and reassure the parent/carer, that support is out there, and we will support them in accessing it. Explain that the disclosure will be shared with Stop Domestic Abuse, and they will advise of the next steps.
- If you have any concerns and are unsure, trust your professional judgement and you could always call the Stop Domestic Abuse professional line [03300533630](tel:03300533630) for advice.
- If the questionnaire and discussion identify domestic abuse / controlling behaviours, follow the Hampshire domestic abuse pathway or contact Stope Domestic Abuse with the parent to access a DASH: [DomesticAbuseReferralPathwayforHampshire.pdf](https://www.hants.gov.uk/domestic-abuse-referral-pathway-for-hampshire) ([hants.gov.uk](https://www.hants.gov.uk))
- Please record the findings from the questionnaire on the individual adult's ICS record.

- If a referral goes forward for Mediation / Couple support / Family Counselling, the service provider will carry out an initial assessment that will include questions about safety / domestic abuse.

Safety Net Discussion: Distinguishing domestic abuse and harmful conflict

Domestic abuse and harmful conflict are distinct from one another and require different assessment/ intervention techniques. This tool is adapted from Cafcass, designed to be used early in the life of a case to identify the most appropriate support. **Please ensure this discussion tool is completed with each parent / carer individually to establish the most accurate picture of the family situation.** It is not designed to be a diagnostic tool in and of itself and does not replace professional judgement. We have added some prompts to help with your discussion with the parent / carer. **Please record the findings of this questionnaire on the adults/family ICS / Mosaic record.**

Where cases contain characteristics of both, it is advised to contact the DA Advice Line, who can provide a DASH. For up to date information about DA services in Hampshire visit: [Hampshire Domestic abuse support and information](#)

Indicators of domestic abuse

If domestic abuse, including coercive control, is a potential factor, refer to the [Hampshire Domestic Abuse Pathway](#). This includes where the following indicators are alleged, present or suspected – either now or in the past, including, but not limited to:

Information relating to a primary perpetrator

- Ex military?
- Living with Victim?
- In employment?

Physical violence

- Please record any alleged, present, historic or suspect physical violence.
- Most victims don't believe it is abuse until things are physical, make sure they understand DA can be emotional, financial, sexual etc..

Sexual violence

- Do they feel they can't say no?
- Are they worried about the consequences?
- Are they threatened by being filmed and then this will be shared with family and friends?

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| <p>Coercive, controlling behaviours (towards a child or an adult)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are there threats about taking custody of the child/children, if they refuse to do as they are told? - Are they not allowed to wear certain clothes? - Do they need to ask 'permission' to purchase anything? |
| <p>Stalking behaviours and 'jealous surveillance'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do they 'turn up' in places they go regularly e.g shopping centre, gym, child's school? - Do they feel they need to have their phone on them and record themselves when walking alone? - Do they check the venues they visit have CCTV? |
| <p>Power imbalance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do they feel they can challenge their significant other, in a safe space? - Are they made to feel 'inadequate/stupid', during this conflict? - Are they made to feel they are not good enough? |
| <p>Threats to kill: any known or alleged threats must be taken seriously until sufficiently assessed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Threats to kill include any wording, where their life or child/childrens lives are at risk. This can be within the home or out in public. <p>To reduce potential risk and safeguard the child and others at risk report to the Police immediately via 999 emergency.</p> |
| <p>One or both parents report or present as being afraid</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feel unable to challenge partner without worrying about the consequences - Observations of individuals body language and your professional judgement |
| <p>One or both parents were in a previous relationship that was abusive Statistics show that if a victim has had no DA intervention, there is a high likelihood of them continuing in a cycle of abuse. Please explore historical abuse and record any disclosures of historical abuse.</p> |
| <p>Children imitate violent behaviour / changes in behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consider behaviour outside of typical child development |
| <p>Presence of degrading or humiliating behaviours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Degrading around image/weight - When they have parties/gatherings with friends and family, inappropriate comments made. |
| <p>Features of 'honour' based violence and / or features of forced marriage.</p> |

[Honour-based violence - Victim Support](#)
[Child marriage | ActionAid UK](#)

Please use these links for support on identifying these features.

Indicators of harmful conflict

If harmful conflict is a potential factor, refer to Hampshire's Strengthening Parental Relationships resources and course for parents / carers. This includes where the **following indicators including, but not limited to:**

A high degree of anger and mistrust

- High degree of anger- is potentially not DA- does the client feel they can challenge their significant other, without feeling scared of any 'consequences'.

Incidents of verbal conflict

- The way people communicate with one another: arguing, shouting etc.

Ongoing difficulties in communication and cooperation

- Do they feel listened to? Or do they agree to something and then it changes?
- Does the significant other agree to support with the children and then doesn't?

Loss of focus on the child

- Is the conflict taking over time that could be spent with the child/children
- Are they more focused on using ammunition against each other?
- Do they avoid some responsibilities when looking after the child? E.g items for school etc. Signed letters?

'Digging in of position' and no ability to compromise, such as micro managing contact and communication

The child, dependent on age, may be drawn into managing the parent's communication and behaviours

- Using the child as a messenger
- Can result in the child 'taking sides' or opting out.

Lengthy proceedings or repeat litigation (Family court – liaise with Cafcass if applicable)

Can escalate into incidents of violence or physical aggression. In these circumstances, please refer to the [Hampshire Domestic Abuse Pathway](#)