

Report to:	Health and Wellbeing Board	Date of Meeting:	Wednesday 8 June 2022
Subject:	Reducing Parental Conflict- Promoting Positive Relationships		
Report of:	Head of Communities	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:			
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

This report provides a summary of the work carried out across parts of Sefton's Early Help partnership. It details the importance of and the ongoing work to reduce parental conflict, helping families to reach their potential, prevent issues from escalating and enabling them to lead happier and healthier lives.

Recommendation(s):

(1) To note this report

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

The report highlights a key area of preventative work, which harnesses the use of external funding.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

The revenue costs are entirely funded via the Reducing Parental Conflict Grant, provided by the Department for Works and Pensions'.

(B) Capital Costs

There are no additional capital costs associated with this paper'

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):	
N/A	
Legal Implications:	
N/A	
Equality Implications:	
There are no equality implications	
Climate Emergency Implications:	
The recommendations within this report will	
Have a positive impact	N
Have a neutral impact	Y
Have a negative impact	N
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	N

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: Provides a summary of activity and developments for children, young people and families requiring support to address parental conflict and improve outcomes for children and young people. April 21-March 22
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: Details the work delivered across the partnership to support communities, enabling them to become more resilient
Commission, broker and provide core services: Details the activities and development within Early Help from across the Partnership
Place – leadership and influencer: Details how reducing parental conflict reflects local needs at the earliest opportunity
Drivers of change and reform:
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity:
Greater income for social investment:
Cleaner Greener

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.6794/22.) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.4994/22..) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

N/A

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Appendices:

There are no appendices to this report

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Improving Positive Relationships between parents/carers and families, whether living together or not, is a priority within the Early Help Strategy and Supporting Families' Outcome Framework. It is recognised that this can often have the most impact on children's health and wellbeing.
- 1.2 Initial work on Reducing Parental Conflict commenced in 2019, with the roll out of initial awareness training for the wider partnership, production of supportive materials for families and the establishment of a multi-agency steering group. Unfortunately, the onset of the pandemic slowed progress.
- 1.3 Over the last year, Councils across the Liverpool City region and Sefton received a pooled fund of £159,000 to support parents facing continued conflict in their relationships and prevent lasting impact on their children. This report will detail the purpose of the funding and indicate how it is been spent, the impact and next steps

2. The importance of Reducing Parental Conflict

- 2.1 Conflict between parents is a normal part of relationships. However, there is a large body of evidence that shows that parental conflict puts children's mental health and long-term outcomes at risk when it is frequent, intense and poorly resolved. These destructive conflict behaviours include aggression, non-verbal conflict or the 'silent

treatment', lack of respect and emotional control, lack of resolution and, in their most extreme form, domestic abuse.

2.2 Parental conflict can harm children's outcomes regardless of whether parents are together or separated, or are biologically related to the child, such as in blended or foster families.

2.3 Parental conflict can affect children's physical and mental health. This can include psychological difficulties shown as aggression and conduct disorder, anxiety and depression, poor attachment, withdrawal, fearfulness, and even suicidality; and physical health problems such as higher rates of illness and fatigue, reduced physical growth and impact on nervous and hormonal systems.

2.4 Parental conflict may also affect child risk-taking behaviours, such as smoking, drug use and early sexual activity.

2.5 In 2019 to 2020, 12% of children in couple-parent families were living with at least one parent reporting relationship distress

2.6 It is essential to note that the Reducing Parental Conflict programme is designed to resolve parental conflict, not domestic abuse. Those in abusive relationships will instead be referred to specialist support.

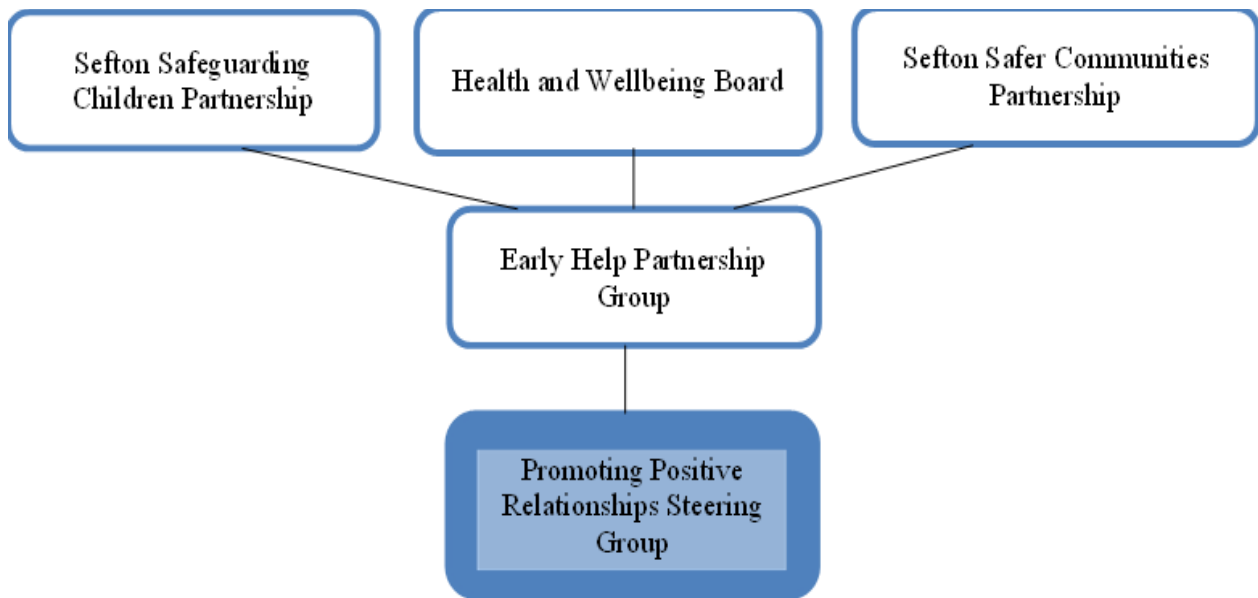
3. Reducing parental conflict is everyone's business

3.1 Any frontline member of staff working with children, young people and families can have an impact on reducing parental conflict. The risk of conflict between parents is higher at crucial transition points in family life, such as becoming pregnant, having a baby, a child starting or changing school, or separation and divorce. However, relationship difficulties are often seen as a private matter, and couples tend to only seek help when they are in crisis. Front-line practitioners often lack the confidence, tools and knowledge to raise relationship issues with parents and so miss opportunities to identify and support families experiencing parental conflict.

4. Governance

4.1 A multi-agency Steering Group has been re-established with members from across the partnership. The purpose of the group is to lead the development and implantation of an action plan to improve positive relationships. The structure chart below highlights the governance structure (Chart 1). The recent engagement with an online resource for practitioners, has provided a shared narrative and language among key stakeholders within the early help partnership and created greater buy-in to this agenda.

Chart 1



5. Pooled Funding 2021 - 2022

5.1 As mentioned above, Sefton pooled budgets awarded from the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) with Wirral, Liverpool, Knowsley, Halton, St. Helen's and Cheshire East working together as a cluster, which enabled economy of scales. For sefton it was essential that we utilised our learning from trauma informed work, taking the same approach to further improve the assessment of adults in the household by embedding routine enquiry/key questioning about relationships and integrating this into the assessment process.

5.2 The Cluster group agreed to invest in several different strands:

- The development of a regional digital tool, which would support LCR families to accessing self-help developed specifically for LCR partner region.
- Family relationship training from One Plus One Parenting to train professionals to support families experiencing relationship difficulties, to include 2500 registrations and 90 professionals trained in the programme across the 7 LA's.
- A trained Ambassador and Champions from across the partnership

6. Progress to date

6.1 Within Sefton, and across the partnership an ambassador and 6 Champions have all completed a 12 week training programme. In addition, the Ambassador has gained a Level 4 qualification in delivering professional training. Dates have now been released across the partnership for frontline staff to attend training sessions. In addition, briefings are ongoing with key partners such as head teachers and safeguarding leads in education, 0-19 health services team managers, Youth Justice team meeting, Every Child Matter's Forum, Children's Social Care managers, Police and VCF sector, so that they understand their role and can help to identify the right practitioners to attend the reducing parental conflict training

6.2 The training will support professionals working with young people to communicate key messages of how to nurture a healthy relationship and what to do if you are in a relationship where conflict is a consistent feature, and how to support peers. Thus, promoting future healthy adult relationships and breaking the cycle across Sefton

6.3 The long-term programme is sustainable due to a train the trainer model. The training will enable practitioners to:

- Recognise the difference between Domestic Abuse and Parental Conflict
- Explain how to use the tools which families can use to reduce parental conflict.
- Promote the referral pathway for working with families with parental conflict in Sefton.
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6.4 300 licenses are available now, to support any families struggling with parental conflict

6.5 A bespoke regional digital tool is due to be launched June 2022. This will provide long term and sustainable training for both professionals and families, enabling key learning and understanding what makes a healthy relationship and recognise when a relationship is not healthy, the effects of toxic stress upon a child living with parental conflict and what simple steps can be taken to reduce parental conflict.

7. Next steps

7.1 Sefton is in a strong position to build on existing successes to support to implementation of a new programme of work that will impact on meeting a current unmet need across the borough which we believe will positively impact on our children, their parents, the wider family, and communities.

7.2 The ambition is to extend this to the wider workforce to build a training pool to ensure there is a continuous cycle of training available.

7.3 If successful, future funding from the DWP (£60,000 over next two years) will help to build capacity and offer tailored support (from the provision of information, training, and self-help tools to provide intensive, specialist support). Whilst the LA's within the cluster group are submitting their own bid it is expected that the group will continue to offer peer support and share best practice.