**Briefing Paper April 2020 – A New Website**

**Relationship Matters** is a new partnership between 15 Local Authorities including North Yorkshire County Council across Yorkshire and the Humber Region helping families who may be having relationship difficulties. In response to the DWP Reducing Parental Conflict Programme a new website is being launched to offer families information, tips and help and what better time as the coronavirus is leading to big changes in the way we live our everyday lives.

As you may be contacted by a parent or carer or you may be working closely with families the purpose of this briefing paper is to provide helpful information to you as professionals supporting children and families to reduce the impact of parental conflict on them. Whether couples are together or separated, disagreements are completely normal. But evidence shows that **regular, unresolved conflict** has a big impact on children’s outcomes including their mental health, education, confidence and self-esteem. What matters is how the conflict is dealt with and children need to learn how negotiation and compromise can work in a relationship dispute.

All relationships have tricky moments it is how they’re experienced and resolved that matters especially at the moment for getting us through enforced self- isolation, lock down and social distancing. We are all spending longer periods of time with our loved ones and this is bound to bring about some added challenges. Whether couples together or separated the way they communicate can impact on their relationship and their children.

* Relationship Matters can help everyone recognise the sign such as: Arguing, rows, shouting all the time with each other about things like, money, parenting, housework
* Are they worried about splitting up?
* Is there sulking, silent treatment, slamming doors or walking away from each other?
* Are they anxious or worried which gets in the way of managing everyday life?
* Are they not able to say sorry or to compromise after an argument and move on?
* Are they using hurtful texts, emails or Social Media against each other?
* Is there arguing regular, intense and unresolved?

The website [www.relationshipmatters.org.uk](http://www.relationshipmatters.org.uk) can give everyone tips, information and help to:

* Stay calm
* Try to work it out
* Think about the impact on the children
* How to get some help with links to national websites and contact details of your Local Authority. To access the website, go to: [www.relationshipmatters.org.uk](http://www.relationshipmatters.org.uk)

**“I feel unloved / ignored as mum & dad are preoccupied with their own conflicts, I just put my hands over my ears! Child 12 yrs.**

**“I hate it when they yell, they do not even know how it makes me feel I’m just invisible” Child 7 yrs.**

You will have within your service questions & prompts you will be required to ask, the following are generic ones you may find useful.

**Tips and Questions, you may want to ask when a parent / carer telephones your service or when you are working with a family.**

* Tell me a little about what made you contact us today and how may I help you?
* How long has this issue been going on?
* How are you managing as a couple throughout all of this uncertainty and pressure?
* Are you worried about a relationship breakdown?
* Are you experiencing additional pressures in your life that may be having an impact on your relationship with your partner?
* What other parts of your life is this issue impacting on and do you think it is affecting your children?
* Have you tried anything to solve this problem?
* What are your best hopes what will be different about your relationship when the problem has been solved?
* Have you seen our Relationship Matters website?

**In addition to the new website below are a few national websites such as:**

**Early Intervention Foundation – Reducing Parental Conflict Hub**

The hub is for local leaders, commissioners, practitioners and researchers who are looking to reduce the impact of parental conflict on children. It provides a central repository of key ‘what works’ evidence and tools, including why parental conflict matters for children’s outcomes, and guidance on how to take action. The hub will continue to grow as new evidence and tools are created. [www.reducingparentalconflict.eif.org.uk](http://www.reducingparentalconflict.eif.org.uk)

**Relate** highly trained counsellors to support everyone’s relationships. Their service offers the following: [Live Chat, telephone and webcam counselling services](https://www.relate.org.uk/relationship-help/talk-someone) can be accessed from their website [www.relate.org.uk](http://www.relate.org.uk)

**Cafcass** stands for Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service. There website offers advice to parents, carers and professionals on the following:

* divorce and separation, sometimes called ‘private law’, where parents or carers can’t agree on arrangements for their children
* care proceedings, sometimes called ‘public law’, where social services have serious concerns about the safety or welfare of a child
* adoption, which can be either public or private law
* Tools for professionals to use with families

To access their website go to: [www.cafcass.gov.uk](http://www.cafcass.gov.uk)

## Action for Children their vision is that every child and young person in the UK has a safe and happy childhood, and the foundations they need to thrive. They work closely with children and their families, from before they’re born until their twenties. Their work is split into three main areas: Best start in life, Good mental health and a safe and loving home. They have lots of advice, information and resources available to support you and you can also [Talk to their parenting coaches](https://talk.actionforchildren.org.uk/) online. [www.actionforchildren.org.uk](http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk)