



Identifying and Responding to Domestic Abuse and Parental Conflict - Practice Guidance

Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, sexuality or background. Domestic abuse is not always physical violence. It can also include:

- coercive control and 'gaslighting'
- economic abuse
- online abuse
- threats and intimidation
- emotional abuse
- sexual abuse

All forms of domestic abuse are not acceptable in any situation.

Parental Conflict is a pattern of destructive conflict behaviours which put children's mental health and long-term life chances at risk. Some level of arguing and conflict between parents is often a normal part of everyday life. However, there is strong evidence to show how inter-parental conflict that is frequent, intense and poorly resolved can have a significant negative impact on children's mental health and long-term life chances.

Damaging conflict between parents can be expressed in many ways such as:

- aggression
- silence
- lack of respect
- lack of resolution

When addressing parental conflict in a relationship, practitioners should continue to be vigilant and confident there are no indicators of domestic abuse, including fear, imbalance of power and controlling behaviour. If there are signs of controlling behaviour that adversely affects one person in a relationship, this can be an indicator of an abusive relationship.

As a professional, the following procedures should be used when working with families experiencing domestic abuse or parental conflict:

Assess the Needs of the Family – "Working Together to Safeguard Children" July 2018 outlines that effective early help relies upon local agencies working together to identify children and families who would benefit from early help, undertaking an early help assessment and providing targeted early help services to address those needs to significantly improve outcomes.

You can download the **Early Help Assessment Form** [here](#) and **Our Family Plan** [here](#).

Full **Early Help Guidance** including the Early Help Assessment and Our Family Plan is [here](#)

Support for completing an Early Help Assessment is available from the Early Help Support Team - EHST duty desk number: 0121 303 8117.

To register your Early Help Assessment and Our Family Plan, please send to the Early Help Support Team: ehst@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk. For more information on email security [click here](#).

Use tools to support assessment – There are a variety of tools to assess domestic abuse. These tools will help you to ask the right questions which will enable you to understand the level of risk to a victim of domestic abuse. The most frequently used tool is called a DASH (Domestic Abuse, stalking and honour-based abuse) risk assessment. This tool and guidance will help you determine the level of risk and where to refer if the risk is high. The risk assessment and guidance can be accessed here:



DASH%20assessment
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Refer to MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) – MARAC meetings in Birmingham are held daily to discuss victims who have been risk assessed at high risk. A referral to MARAC requires you to complete the DASH risk assessment and score under the following criteria: 1 – Professional Judgement; 2: Visible High Risk (scoring 14+); or 3: Potential Escalation. These factors are explained in the DASH risk assessment above. If the person you are working with meets one of the 3 criteria, then a referral to MARAC should be completed and sent with your DASH risk assessment form. The



form can be accessed here: West%20Midlands%
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*Please also ensure that you refer to Right Help Right Time Guidance alongside the MARAC referral.

Refer to Right Help, Right Time – Birmingham’s threshold guidance ‘Right Help, Right Time’ provides guidance for practitioners to deliver effective support for children and families in Birmingham. The guidance was updated in December 2021 and includes:

- The importance of Early Help and how to access early intervention is embedded throughout the document.
- We have strengthened the guidance on Contextual Safeguarding, the impact of domestic abuse and school exclusions.
- We have provided greater clarity on the importance of consent and information sharing.
- We have embedded direct links within the Right Help, Right Time guidance to the ‘Family Connect’ and the new revised ‘Request for Support’ forms’ that you will need to complete. You can also type the web addresses directly into your browser to access the forms locations

Key forms you need to complete to access support:

Included within the guidance are links to the ‘Family Connect’ and the ‘Request for Support’ forms’. For those families with Universal Plus Needs and requiring Early Help or Family Support, you need to complete the ‘Family Connect’ form. For those families with Additional Needs and/or Complex and Significant Needs you need to complete the ‘Request for Support’ form. To access the forms, click on the links below.

- Family Connect form – [click here](#)
- Request for Support form – [click here](#)

Provide Support and Intervention – Early Help means taking action to support a child, young person or their family early in the life of a problem, as soon as it emerges. It can be required at any stage in a child’s life from pre-birth to adulthood and applies to any problem or need that the family cannot deal with or meet on their own. It also applies to all children and young people, with any form of need.

Early Help requires that agencies should work together as soon as a problem emerges or a need is identified to ensure the child gets the right response, and the right services, from the right people at the right time. Our aim is to meet need early and avoid a problem escalating or the need increasing.

Early Help is provided to prevent or reduce the need for specialist interventions unless they are absolutely the correct response to meet the need and resolve the problem.

Early Help can be provided in the most complex of circumstances as well as the simplest. Early help means responding promptly if a child is at immediate risk of harm (or has other significant or complex needs) as much as it means responding to a need which only requires advice or guidance.

The Early Help Handbook aims to explain how early help works in Birmingham. It is a guide for any practitioner working with children, young people and families across every sector, including, health, voluntary community, education (from early years to post 16), SEND, social care and youth justice. The handbook is organised into a series of questions and answers, with links that signpost the reader to further information throughout. To access the handbook [click here](#).

The Birmingham Children's Partnership have been working to improve outcomes for young people in Birmingham. The partnership - including representatives from statutory and voluntary agencies, are working together on a range of initiatives and improvements to the way we work with children and families within the city, strengthening the Birmingham Early Help and safeguarding system. These include:

The **Children’s Advice and Support Service (CASS)**, offering earlier partnership support, improving Early Help advice and access to MASH. For more information [click here](#).