

Parental Relationships Spectrum*



HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP

INTER-COUPLE/PARENTAL CONFLICT

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE/ABUSE

Respectful, equal, cooperative, happy

Mostly respectful, equal, cooperative (but experiencing difficulties)

Conflictual, non-communicative, non-violent

Situational couple abuse

Controlling/abusive behaviour

Coercive control and physical harm, fear of violence/death

SITUATION

All relationships have tricky moments, it's how they're experienced and resolved that matters

Children are experiencing constructive resolution of any arguments, characterised by mutual respect and emotional control

SITUATION

Lack of open and honest communication; difficulties are minimised, not recognised or addressed

Children beginning to be affected by conflict between their parents

ACTION

Early conversation initiated by a Prevention and Support Service Practitioner; direct to sources of self-help

SITUATION

Conflict is frequent, intense and poorly resolved; parents emotionally unavailable to their partner and children; lack of consistency in parenting; feeling isolated; toxic atmosphere

Children being adversely affected

ACTION

Prevention and Support Service Assessment; consider referral to local relationships support services

SITUATION

Day to day unresolved and unresolvable conflicts; may erupt into episodes of emotional or physical abuse by either or both parents; no clear imbalance of power or ongoing fear

Children being adversely affected; children may show signs of distress and their mental health/behaviour may be affected

ACTION

Prevention and Support Service Plus Assessment; contact Changing Pathways for advice/access to services

SITUATION

Clearer 'victim' and clearer 'abuser' and the person experiencing the abuse is likely to have underlying feelings of fear and lack of agency or freedom

Children being significantly adversely affected; children's mental health and/or behaviour being affected

ACTION

CFAT assessment follow domestic abuse pathways/processes

SITUATION

Clear 'abuser' and clear 'victim' who is at significant risk of harm

Children at risk of significant harm; children being traumatised

ACTION

CFAT Assessment Referral to specialist domestic abuse service(s)

CONTINUUM OF CHILDREN'S NEED

UNIVERSAL

TARGETED

SPECIALIST ASSESSMENT

EMERGING NEEDS

INTENSIVE FAMILY SUPPORT

*Adapted by The For Baby's Sake Trust from the model developed by Dr Mark Farrall, Ignition Creative Learning Limited
www.Forbabysake.org.uk

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Where you are in contact with parents whose relationship is not healthy, use motivational interviewing and active listening techniques to explore whether they may be experiencing relationship conflict or domestic violence and abuse

Website for further information - <https://www.thurrocklscp.org.uk/lscp/professionals/threshold-document>

Consider asking some or all of the following questions to explore where on the spectrum diagram the relationship may sit:

What aspects of your relationship trouble you?	
What would you change if you had the opportunity?	
How understanding is your partner?	
How safe do you feel at home and in your relationship?	Where the relationship is not healthy, this is a really important question to ask. If the parent clearly feels safe, this would tend to suggest they are experiencing parental conflict and may appreciate further discussion, information about sources of self-help and/or referral into local relationships support services. If the parent says they are scared or sometimes feel unsafe at home, this would tend to indicate that the parents are on the domestic abuse side of the spectrum (including on the domestic abuse side of 'situational couple conflict and abuse') so a referral into local domestic abuse pathways and processes might be appropriate
How confident do you feel about making decisions? How comfortable do you feel about expressing your own views and opinions? How much choice do you have about your own life and family life?	These questions might indicate the presence of coercive or controlling behaviour with the relationship.
Where is the joy in your life?	Those in an abusive relationship may feel the lack of joy in their life and start to see the reality of the situation.
What would your children say about life at home? What changes, if any, have you noticed in your children's behaviour?	These questions could lead to a discussion about the impact on the children who may be experiencing conflict or abuse between their parents.
What prevents you from asking for support?	This question may lead to a discussion about how the parent and/or family could be enabled to access the support they need.

More information and guidance on distinguishing between domestic abuse and harmful conflict can be found at <https://www.cafcass.gov.uk/grown-ups/professionals/ciaf/resources-for-assessing-harmful-conflict/>

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