

Using the Reducing Parental Conflict Planning Tool: Key findings from local areas

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Tackling parental conflict requires effective local arrangements for strategy and planning, leading change, delivering effective single- and multi-agency working, and evaluating progress.

The Reducing Parental Conflict (RPC) Planning Tool* is designed to guide local areas in developing local arrangements to reduce the impact of parental conflict on children. The tool has **four dimensions: plan, lead, deliver, evaluate**. Each dimension has two **key elements**, which can be rated at **five different progress levels**, from **entry level** to **mature**.

Completing the self-assessment planning tool helps a local area:

- assess their current position and recognise the progress made on each dimension
- identify and plan the steps they need to take to improve.

This briefing summarises the key findings of the analysis of the planning tool data collected from 130 local areas in 2021.

FIGURE 1
Structure of the RPC Planning Tool

DIMENSIONS	KEY ELEMENTS	PROGRESS LEVELS				
PLAN	1. Strategy	0 ENTRY LEVEL Services yet to prioritise parental conflict but provide strong foundations	1 FIRST STEPS Principle of tackling parental conflict is accepted and there is commitment to action	2 EARLY PROGRESS Initial development to tackle parental conflict	3 SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS Initial results achieved and positive outcomes evident	4 MATURE Embedded good practice and others learning from achievements
	2. Workforce					
LEAD	3. Partnership					
	4. Community					
DELIVER	5. Services & interventions					
	6. Coordinated working					
EVALUATE	7. Outcomes & experience					
	8. Evaluation					

* Available at <https://www.eif.org.uk/resource/reducing-parental-conflict-planning-tool>

Local areas are making progress with their RPC programmes

- All local areas have shown progress, especially in **planning** and **delivering** some local RPC activities.
- The vast majority of areas reported that they had some form of RPC local offer, and that they applied knowledge from training activities when engaging with families.
- 70 per cent of local areas said that they offered activities for parents, such as practice sharing events or newsletters.
- Half the local areas reported some data collection activities, such as gathering outcomes data and feedback from families.
- While progress is slower for evaluation, 20 per cent of local areas now mentioned they have arranged for help in evaluation from independent researchers and organisations.

Change takes time

- Despite overall progress, the majority of local areas are still at **first steps** and **early progress** levels across the **eight key elements**.
- The **coordinated working** and **partnership** elements under the **delivery** dimension show good progress, but still only 22 per cent of local areas have started to develop and use a multi-agency pathway and 20 per cent have started some form of data sharing.
- While a majority of local areas were offering RPC activities only 22 per cent explicitly reported the use of evidence-based interventions.

Three active ingredients for change

Local areas consistently reported three enablers for making progress:

1. Securing a commitment to action and establishing a shared understanding of parental conflict and its impact enables progress on local strategy.
2. Including RPC in the Early Help strategy can unlock wider strategic planning, for example the inclusion of RPC in children and young people plans.
3. Having an active team of RPC trainers can increase the chances of training the majority of the workforce in at least one service.

“ RPC is evident within our Early Help strategy. This remains an agenda item on all meetings with cross-district representation from our partners in education, health, social care and the police.

Challenges in developing RPC programmes

- Although local areas reported investment in the development of multi-agency engagement and community involvement, this work has been slow.
- Some areas found it difficult to clearly define outcomes measures and data collection processes.
- Introducing evaluation of RPC activities has also been challenging, given the need to make progress in other areas first, delayed training or lack of consistency across the partnership.

“ We need to define outcomes and agree the measurement tools that will be applicable as a Multi-Agency Strategic group.

The local context

Local areas identified several factors which contributed to the challenges to progress:

- contextual challenges, like the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic
- structural challenges, such as staff turnover and lack of capacity
- staff development needs, for example statistical skills.

“ We had plans in place to deliver training to a community organisation last year but unfortunately communication was a challenge and this training did not take place and one team member who was due to deliver this training left the authority.

Common next steps

The majority of local areas reported that they were at either the **first steps** or **early progress** level for each of the four dimensions. The most common next steps that these local areas planned were:

1 PLAN	STRATEGY: embedding RPC in their Early Help strategy, ensuring RPC is a key driver and offer in the development of the local Family Hub.	2 LEAD	PARTNERSHIP: creating further multi-agency engagement strategies.
	WORKFORCE: continuing to roll out the RPC training and planning the delivery of training to the multi-agency workforce.		COMMUNITY: developing new strategies to consult with the local community, and creating opportunities to work with families and communities on service co-design and co-production.
3 DELIVER	SERVICES & INTERVENTIONS: reviewing evidence-based interventions, and implementing future training and delivery work.	4 EVALUATE	OUTCOMES & EXPERIENCES: identifying RPC measures or considering how RPC can be included in existing measures.
	COORDINATED WORKING: further working to ensure RPC is embedded in the support system and developing stronger links with their services.		EVALUATION: further working to plan evaluation of RPC services and interventions.

Tips for completing the planning tool

- Use the planning tool **throughout the year** in decision making and reviewing progress.
- **Involve local partners** and stakeholders in completing the planning tool.
- **Be clear** about which RPC activities are already happening in the local area, which are planned in the future, and which are desired but without concrete plans.
- Provide as much **clear evidence** as possible for the **level of progress** for each **dimension**.

Find out more about the RPC planning tool:

- » Visit the Reducing Parental Conflict Hub: <https://reducingparentalconflict.eif.org.uk> and find out more about using the Planning Tool: <https://www.eif.org.uk/resource/reducing-parental-conflict-planning-tool>

Find out more about evidence-based programmes:

- » EIF has assessed several programmes that have evidence of improving child outcomes by targeting the relationship between parents. Explore the spotlight set on the EIF Guidebook: <https://bit.ly/spotlight-set-improving-interparental-relationships>

About EIF

The Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) is an independent charity whose mission is to ensure that effective early intervention is available and is used to improve the lives of children and young people at risk of poor outcomes. EIF is working with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to support local areas in the Reducing Parental Conflict Programme.