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# Reducing Parental Conflict Planning Tool

## **A self-assessment planning tool to support local authorities and their partners to deliver a system-wide approach to reducing the negative impact of conflict between parents on their children.**

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Healthy relationships between parents are an important focus for early intervention and local family services. The quality of the relationship between parents, specifically how they communicate and relate to each other, has a significant influence on effective parenting and child outcomes.

Reducing parental conflict is a complex issue which requires a system-wide response. This self-assessment tool is designed to support local leaders and commissioners to identify local system strengths and areas for development, and to monitor progress over time.

In this document you will find:

- A brief overview of the evidence on parental conflict, and link to further information.
- An introduction to using a systemic approach to reduce the impact of parental conflict on children.
- Descriptors for eight key elements which make up a reducing parental conflict system.
- A list of questions to use to monitor practical changes in your local area.

## **An overview of the evidence**

1. Conflict between parents is a normal part of relationships. However, there is a large body of evidence that shows that parental conflict which is frequent, intense and poorly resolved puts children's mental health and long-term outcomes at risk.
2. Parental conflict can be reflected in a wide range of behaviours, from constructive (helpful) to destructive (harmful) behaviours. Harmful behaviours in a relationship which are frequent, intense and poorly resolved can lead to a lack of respect and a lack of resolution. Behaviours such as shouting, becoming withdrawn or slamming doors can be viewed as destructive.
3. Parental relationship distress is different from domestic abuse. This is because there is not an imbalance of power, neither parent seeks to control the other, and neither parent is fearful of the other.
4. Parental conflict can harm children's outcomes regardless of whether parents are together or separated, are in a same-sex or heterosexual relationship, or are biologically related to the child or not, such as in blended or foster families.

5. Children in workless families are twice as likely to experience damaging parental conflict as those where both parents are working. Financial difficulties impact on parental mental health, which can increase parental conflict. This in turn can impact on parenting and children's outcomes.
6. Interventions which focus solely on supporting the parent–child relationship (such as parenting programmes) in the context of parental conflict are unlikely to improve outcomes for children.
7. Evidence suggests that parental conflict may have more of a negative impact on the father–child relationship than the mother–child relationship. Fathers are more likely to respond to parental conflict by withdrawing from their children or adopting poor parenting practices. In addition, parental separation can lead to reduced and inconsistent contacts between children and non-resident parents, who are typically fathers, further disrupting the father–child relationship. For these reasons, including fathers in family-focused interventions is an important future direction for both practice and research.

To find out more about the evidence relating to parental conflict and to access a range of practical planning resources go to the **Reducing Parental Conflict Hub** at <https://reducingparentalconflict.eif.org.uk/>

## A systemic approach

Tackling parental conflict is complex. It requires effective local arrangements for strategy and planning, leading change, delivering effective single- and multi-agency working, and evaluating progress. These four dimensions (**PLAN, LEAD, DELIVER, EVALUATE**) form the Reducing Parental Conflict Planning Tool, which is designed to guide local arrangements to reduce the impact of parental conflict on their children.

Each dimension has two key elements, each described at five different progress levels, to allow a local area to rate their current position, and identify the steps they need to take to improve.

## Using the planning tool

The Reducing Parental Conflict Planning Tool is designed to support practical change through positive challenge within local partnerships. It can also be used to set a baseline and track progress over time.

The tool and the corresponding worksheet are particularly effective as the basis for a structured stakeholder workshop, sharing different views and building consensus about progress and priorities. You may want to take account of the following if using the tool in this way:

- Reducing parental conflict is a complex issue which involves a range of different organisations. Make sure to involve strategic and operational stakeholders from across the spectrum of services and organisations that provide child and family services.
- No one sees the whole picture, so planning workshops are most effective when there is opportunity to hear different perspectives, to hear from families themselves, and to find common ground.
- Stakeholders often need to take time to understand what the evidence says about parental conflict and child impact before being able to actively engage in a local assessment and plan.
- The purpose of the workshop is to move from talk to action, so sufficient time should be allowed for agreeing specific next steps.

DIMENSIONS	KEY ELEMENTS	PROGRESS LEVELS				
PLAN	1. Strategy	<p data-bbox="792 464 882 549"><b>0</b></p> <p data-bbox="786 632 891 702"><b>ENTRY LEVEL</b></p> <p data-bbox="725 818 954 959">Services yet to prioritise parental conflict but provide strong foundations</p>	<p data-bbox="1084 464 1173 549"><b>1</b></p> <p data-bbox="1077 632 1182 702"><b>FIRST STEPS</b></p> <p data-bbox="1001 818 1261 959">Principle of tackling parental conflict is accepted and there is commitment to action</p>	<p data-bbox="1375 464 1464 549"><b>2</b></p> <p data-bbox="1337 632 1509 702"><b>EARLY PROGRESS</b></p> <p data-bbox="1312 818 1532 919">Initial development to tackle parental conflict</p>	<p data-bbox="1666 464 1756 549"><b>3</b></p> <p data-bbox="1599 632 1823 702"><b>SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS</b></p> <p data-bbox="1585 818 1839 919">Initial results achieved and positive outcomes evident</p>	<p data-bbox="1957 464 2047 549"><b>4</b></p> <p data-bbox="1935 632 2069 660"><b>MATURE</b></p> <p data-bbox="1890 818 2114 959">Embedded good practice and others learning from achievements</p>
	2. Workforce					
LEAD	3. Partnership					
	4. Community					
DELIVER	5. Services & interventions					
	6. Coordinated working					
EVALUATE	7. Outcomes & experience					
	8. Evaluation					

# Common typologies

Most local areas in England started on a journey to reduce the negative impact of parent conflict a few years ago and different local areas have encountered different obstacles along the way. Therefore, local areas are likely to be at different points in their journeys now. However, there are some common typologies for areas using the tool.

## 0 Type 0: Starting off

- No infrastructure specific to parental conflict yet.
- Early discussions among stakeholders.
- All or most of the Planning Tool key elements are scored as 0 Entry Level.

### FOCUS ON:

- **Making the case for change to key stakeholders.**
- **Identifying a Senior Responsible Owner who can make things happen.**
- **Improving understanding of the evidence.**
- **Agreeing first steps to build local workforce understanding of parental conflict.**

## 1 Type 1: Becoming established

- Some key champions and infrastructure specific to parental conflict and this work has a growing local profile.
- Planning Tool key elements usually scored as between 1 First Steps and 2 Early Progress.
- Building investment in workforce training and evidence based interventions.

### FOCUS ON:

- **Test and learn: making sure that the local infrastructure for using data and measuring impact is secure.**
- **Enhancing quality and reach within core services.**
- **Embedding approaches within wider network of relevant services.**

## 2 Type 2: Making good progress

- Well-established and high-profile approach to reducing parental conflict, embedded within wider child and family services.
- Planning Tool key elements usually scored as between 2 Early Progress and 3 Substantial Progress.
- Starting to share learning with wider audiences.

### FOCUS ON:

- **Peer / independent challenge on impact.**
- **Pooling and sharing learning.**
- **Sustaining and expanding effective approaches.**

# Measuring your progress

There are practical local changes that can be monitored to track your progress level. When completing an assessment using the tool, you will be asked to answer the following questions. Your answers will allow DWP to target support most helpfully and better understand the local environment.

1. Please estimate the percentage the following workforces that have received reducing parental conflict (RPC) training?

	0–25%	25–50%	50–75%	75–100%
Local authority Early Help/family support				
Commissioned Early Help/family support				
Children's social care				
Specialist public health or community nursing e.g.: health visiting, midwifery, CAMHS				
Police				
Education services (e.g. schools, colleges, early years settings including pastoral staff, Designated Safeguarding Leads, SENCOs, school family support workers and teachers)				
Youth offending				
Other (fill in)				

2. Does your local area currently offer or plan to offer any of the following interventions which were tested as part of the four contract package area trials which ended in summer 2022?

	Yes	Plan to	No
Mentalization Based Therapy (MBT)			
Family Transitions Triple P (FT-PPP)			
Enhanced Triple P (E-PPP)			
Parenting When Separated (PWS)			
Incredible Years Advanced (IY)			
Within My Reach (WMR)			
Family Check Up (FCU)			

3. Does your local area offer any other RPC interventions? (either externally commissioned or internally developed)

Please record the name of the intervention below and select 'externally commissioned' 'internally developed' or 'other'	Externally commissioned	Internally developed	Other

4. How many RPC trainers do you have in your local area? (individuals who are trained and accredited/experienced to a level where they can train others)

Please write in your best estimate

5. Do you collect/use the following data on parental conflict?

	Yes	No
Issue data – referral: parental conflict is captured as an issue at referral		
Issue data – assessment/review: parental conflict is captured as an issue at assessment or review stage		
Outcome data: parental conflict is captured as an outcome, whether successful or not		
Qualitative data: parental conflict is captured in action plans or case notes in the case management system.		
Do you use Supporting Families needs and outcomes data to support your RPC planning?		

6. Is parental conflict included within the following strategic documents? (you may select more than one)

	Yes	No
Early Help strategy		
Children and young people plan		
Community safety strategy		
Stand-alone 'healthy relationships' (or similar) strategy		
Supporting Families Early Help System Guide self-assessment		
Others (please specify)		

7. How aware of the RPC agenda are the senior leaders in your area?

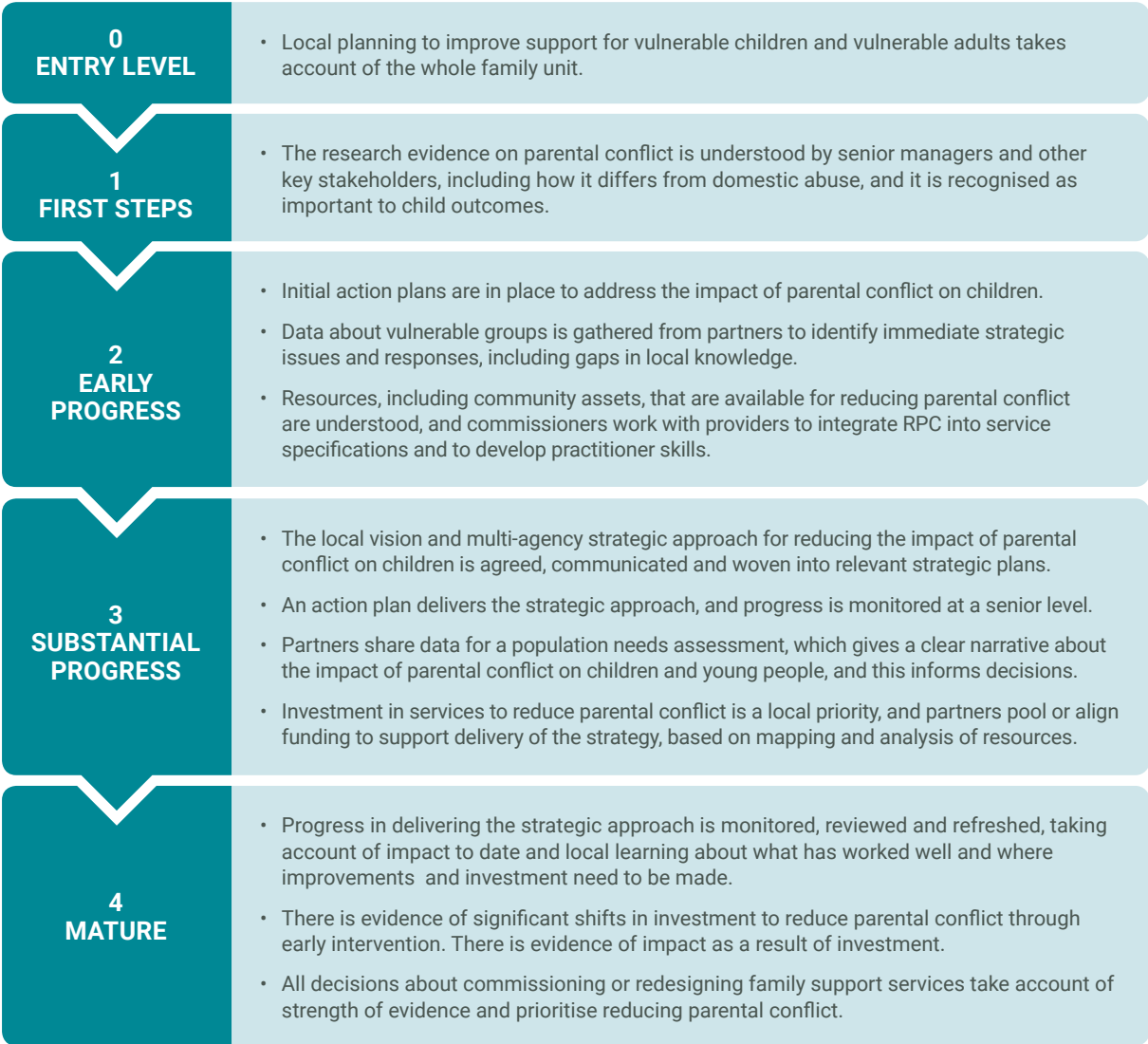
	Not aware	Somewhat aware	Very aware
Local authority children's services			
Health			
Police			
Education			
Voluntary and community sector			
Other (please specify)			

8. Does your local area provide RPC information and activities online? If yes, please provide links if you are willing to share with others.

	Yes	No
Online service or intervention for parents		
Signposting on children's services web pages		
Leaflets		
Posters		
Social media		
Videos		
Others (please specify)		

# Reducing Parental Conflict Planning Tool

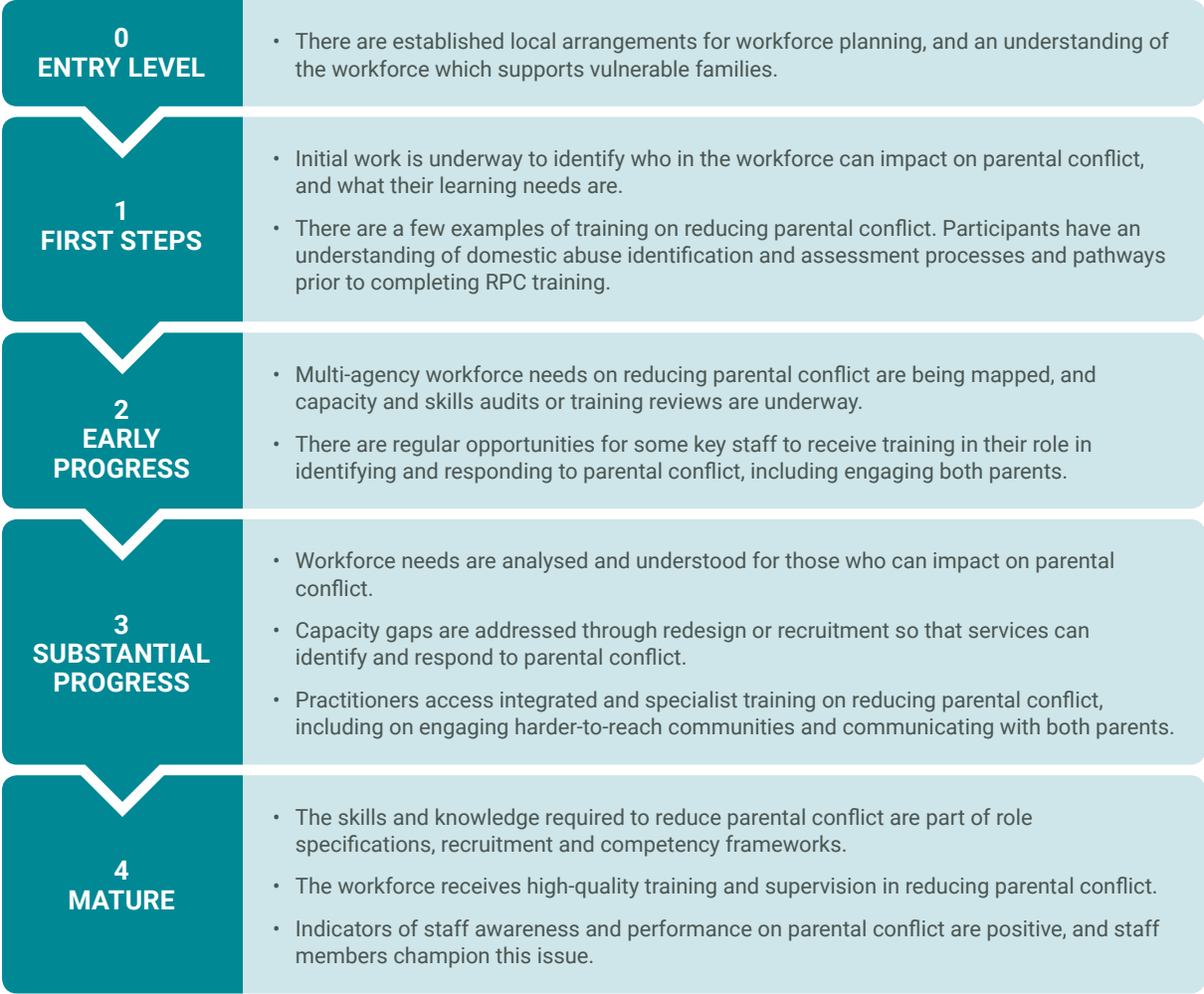
<b>PLAN</b>	<b>1. STRATEGY</b>
	<p>This element focuses on the local vision, strategic approach and plan for reducing the impact of conflict between parents on children. It considers how well community needs are understood, how data is used, and what the shared priorities are for taking action. It also considers how resources are aligned between partner organisations to support delivery of the local strategy. The strategic approach can be set out in an RPC-specific written strategy or integrated within wider early intervention family strategies.</p>





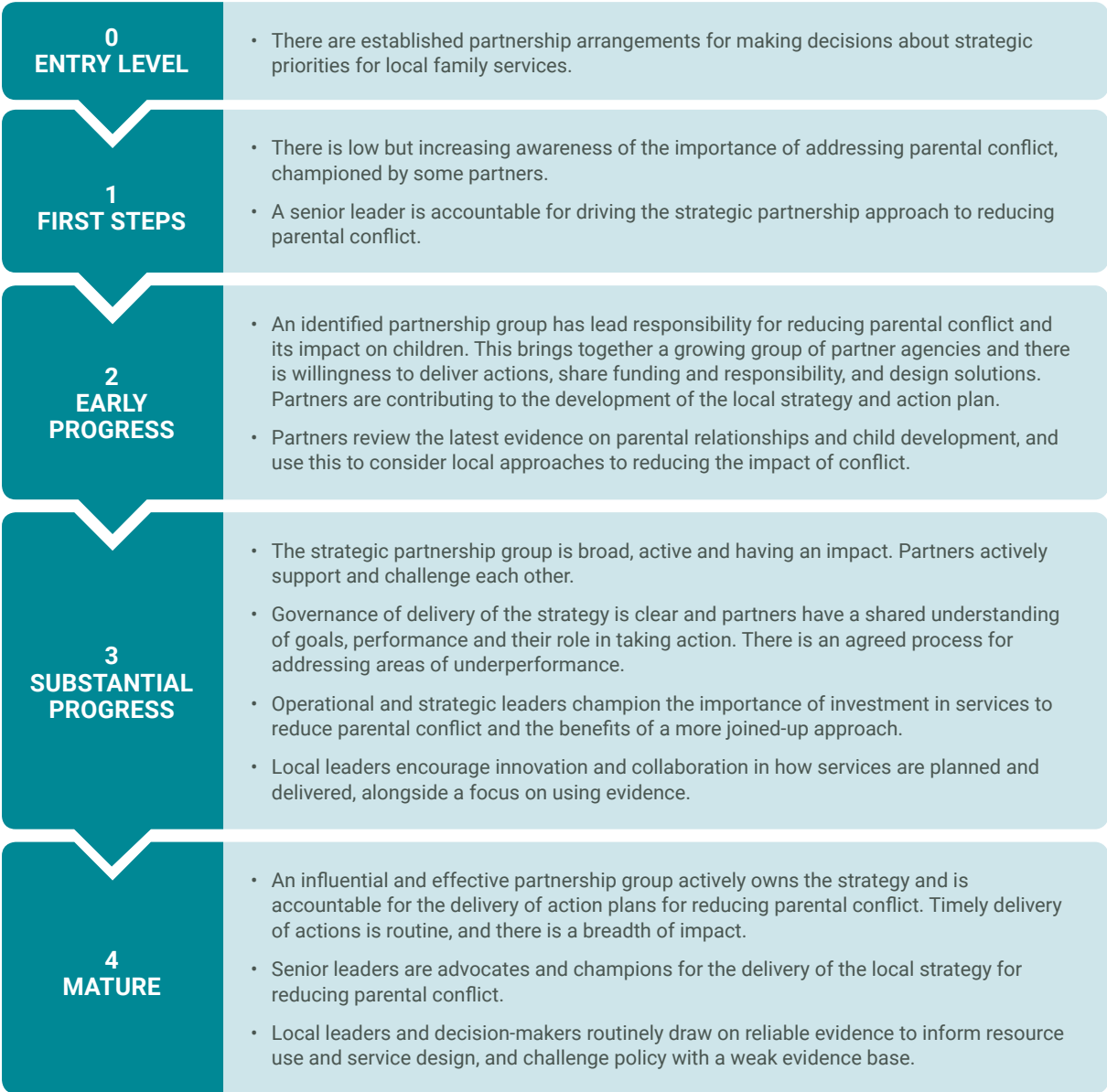
# Reducing Parental Conflict Planning Tool

<b>PLAN</b>	<b>2. WORKFORCE</b>
	This element focuses on local arrangements for ensuring that the multi-agency workforce has the right skills and confidence to deliver the local strategy for reducing the impact of conflict between parents on children. This includes analysing workforce needs across the system, and delivering capacity and capability through redesign, recruitment and training.



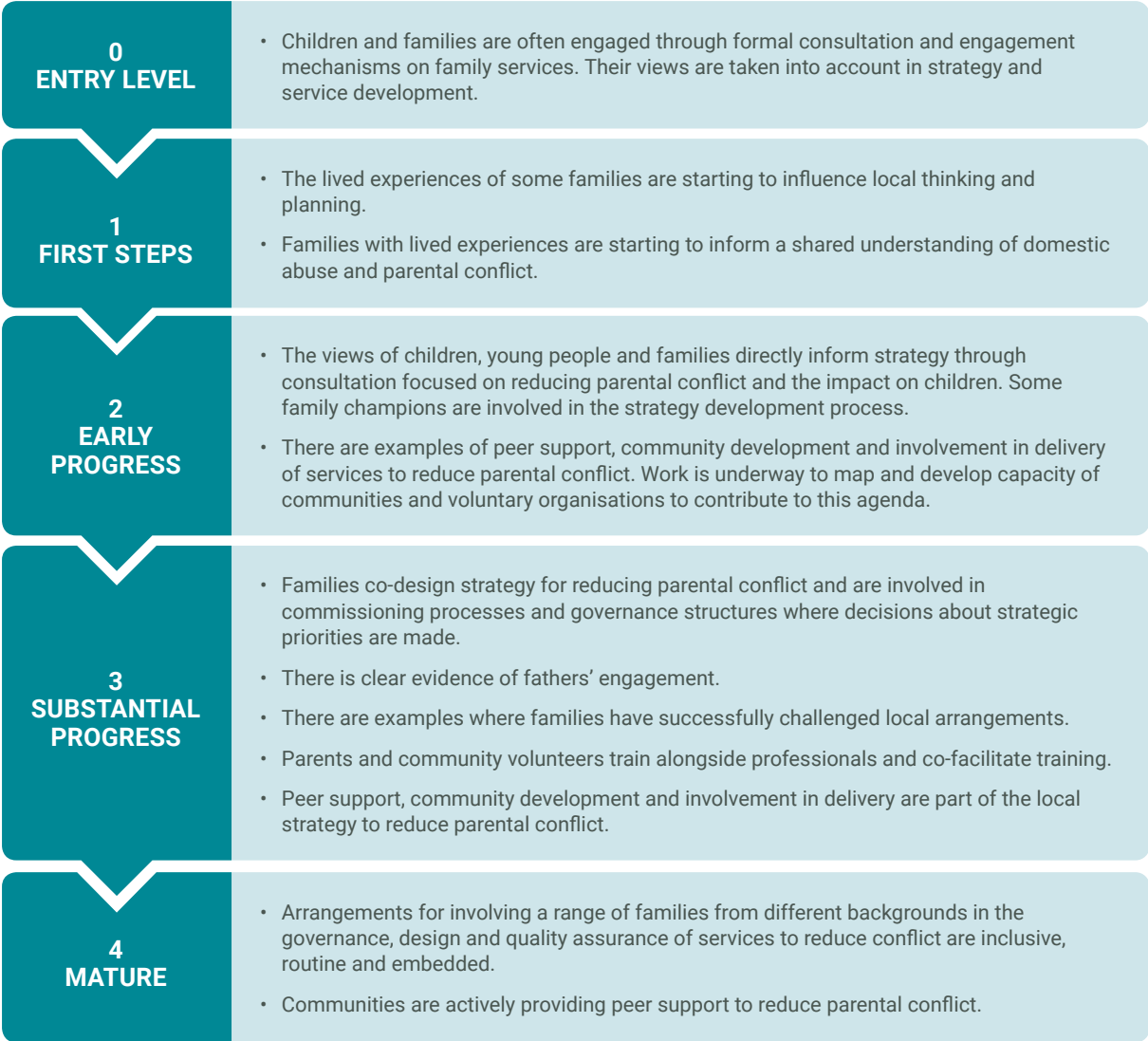
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<b>LEAD</b>	<b>3. PARTNERSHIP</b>
	<p>This element focuses on strategic leadership and partnership working to drive forward delivery of the local strategy for reducing the impact of conflict between parents on children. It focuses on core children’s services partners as well as adult mental health services, domestic abuse services, homelessness services, alcohol and substance abuse services, and probation and prison services. This element also includes how leadership is distributed across the community and local organisations.</p>



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<b>LEAD</b>	<b>4. COMMUNITY</b>
	This element focuses on how families and the local community are engaged in the design and delivery of the local strategy for reducing the impact of conflict between parents on children.



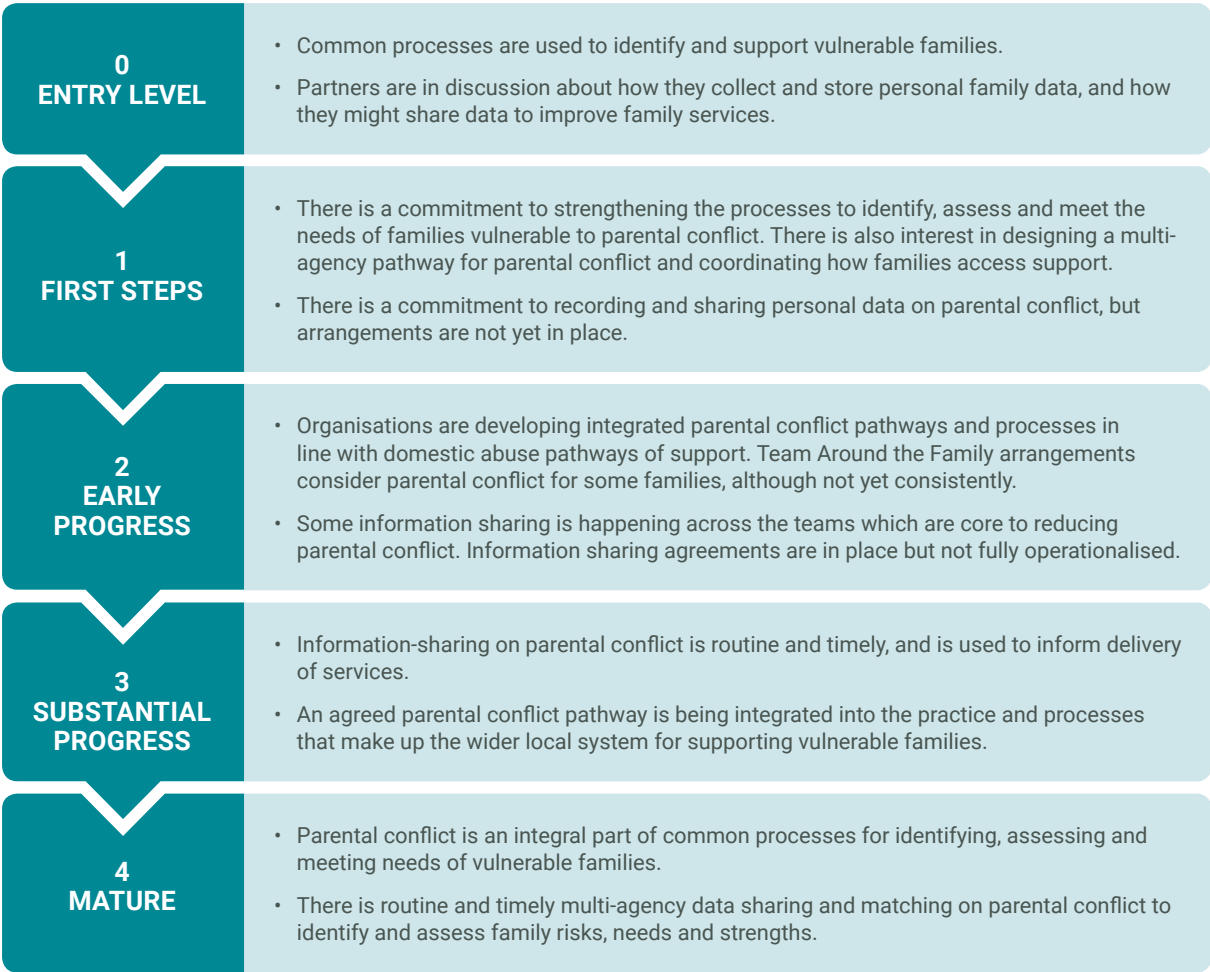
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<b>DELIVER</b>	<b>5. SERVICES &amp; INTERVENTIONS</b>
	This element focuses on how, at an operational level, local services deliver support to reduce parental conflict, including evidence-based programmes, and the way that information about parental conflict is made available to families.



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<b>DELIVER</b>	<b>6. COORDINATED WORKING</b>
	This element focuses on how local services collaborate using common systems and processes to identify, assess and support vulnerable families, and on the arrangements for collecting and sharing personal data to support care planning.

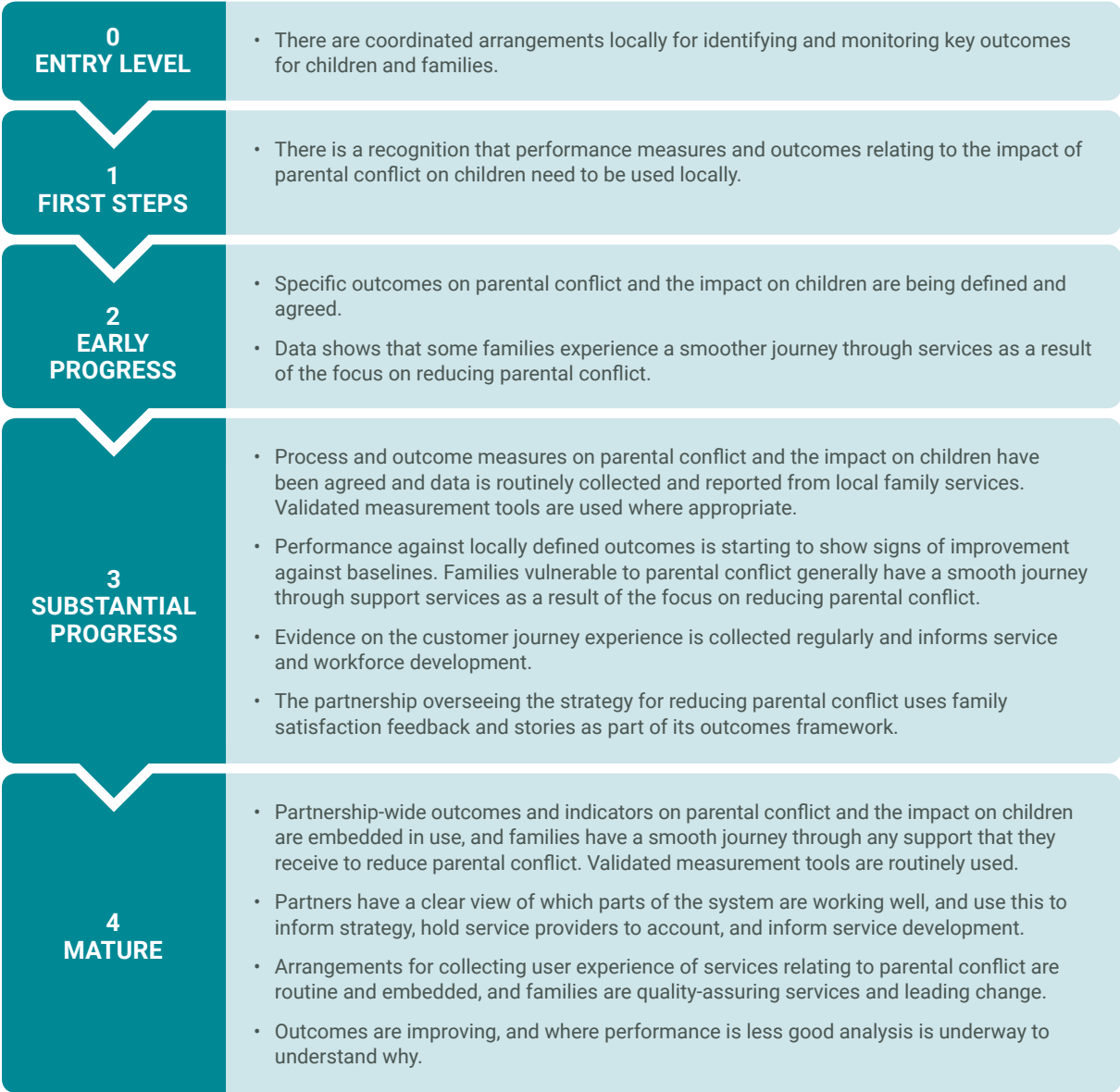


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**EVALUATE**

## 7. OUTCOMES & EXPERIENCE

This element focuses on how progress in reducing the impact parental conflict on children is measured, and what the experience of support is like from the perspective of families. It includes using tools like an outcomes framework which is specific to reducing parental conflict, or integrating measures of conflict and its impact within wider child and family outcome frameworks.

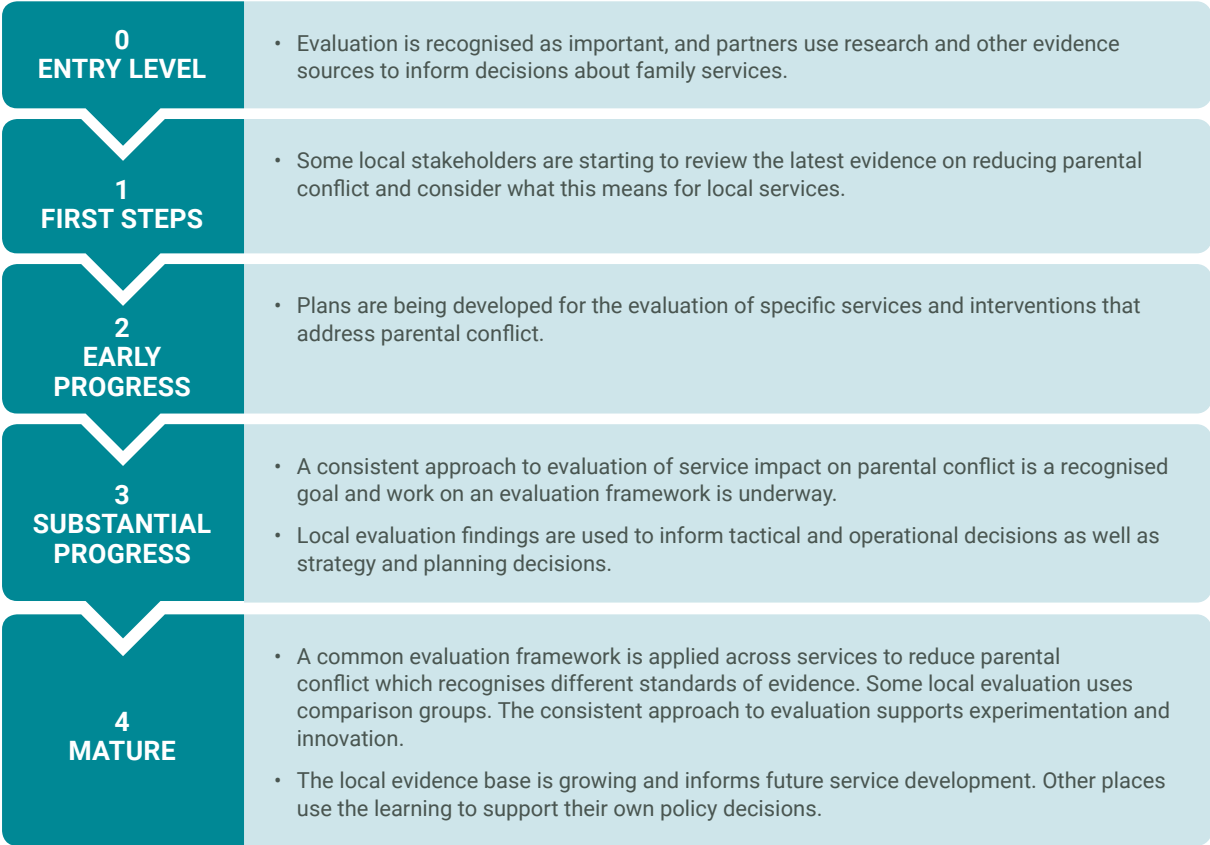


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**EVALUATE**

## 8. EVALUATION

This element focuses on how local partners find and apply external evidence on reducing parental conflict from research and practice, as well as generating robust local evidence where there is a need to innovate.



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