

This content was created by the Early Intervention Foundation before merging with What Works for Children's Social Care to become Foundations.

The content contains logos and branding of the former organisation.

This document is an annex to ‘Talking with families about parental relationships: Practical tips and guiding questions’, a guide published by the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) in October 2022.

The guide is available to download at <https://www.eif.org.uk/resource/talking-with-families-about-parental-relationships-practical-tips-and-guiding-questions>

Methodology

Data collection

The recommendations included in this guidance were formulated based on findings from 10 online focus groups with a total sample of 45 participants (up to 10 participants per focus group). All participants were practitioners currently working in local areas across England to support different groups of families with parental conflict. Participants were recruited via email, whereby the purpose of the focus groups was outlined.

Each focus group prompted participants, via pre-prepared questions, to jointly reflect on the most effective language to communicate about parental conflict with a particular group of parents. This included: **parents with mental health difficulties, minority ethnic parents, parents belonging to the LGBTQ+ community, parents of children with special needs, and separated or separating parents.** Two focus groups were held for each group of parents. Practitioners self-selected which focus groups to participate in, and were encouraged to sign up for focus groups centring on the groups of parents whom they had the most experience of supporting.

Limitations

It must be noted that our methodology comes with limitations:

- A main element of focus groups is group interaction. Participants may have been influenced by the opinions of others, or been more prone to voice their agreement, rather than disagreement, with the opinions of another participant. Relatedly, more socially acceptable opinions may have more been likely to emerge from the discussion.
- The demographics of participants (race, gender, age, occupation) could not be kept homogenous, to accommodate participants’ varying availability. This may have amplified the likelihood that some group members would dominate the discussion.
- Although the same moderator was used across groups, their presence may have altered group interactions.

Analysis

All focus groups were transcribed. Using transcriptions and additional notes made during focus groups, two researchers conducted a content analysis. During analysis, common themes across focus groups centring on the same group of parents were identified. Subsequently, common themes across all 10 focus groups were identified.

Themes tailored to specific groups of parents were used to produce sets of guiding questions for practitioners (pages 8–10 of the guidance), while themes applicable to all parents were used to produce key recommendations (pages 4–7). Drafted outputs were reviewed with a subgroup of participants (‘member checking’) to ensure that their thoughts were adequately reflected in the guidance.

A note on reflexivity

In qualitative research, reflexivity refers to the practice of researcher(s) acknowledging the manner in which they may affect or shape research processes and outcomes. As researchers, we approach this work with in-depth knowledge of the Reducing Parental Conflict (RPC) programme. However, we do not have prior experience as practitioners working directly with families. This viewpoint may have shaped our interpretation of findings.