

 **Foundations**

What Works Centre for Children & Families

# ENGAGING PARTNERS IN EARLY HELP AND FAMILY SUPPORT



# SESSION OVERVIEW



- **The Early Help Partnership**
- **Key partners: health and education**
- **Understanding police involvement**
- **Discussion**

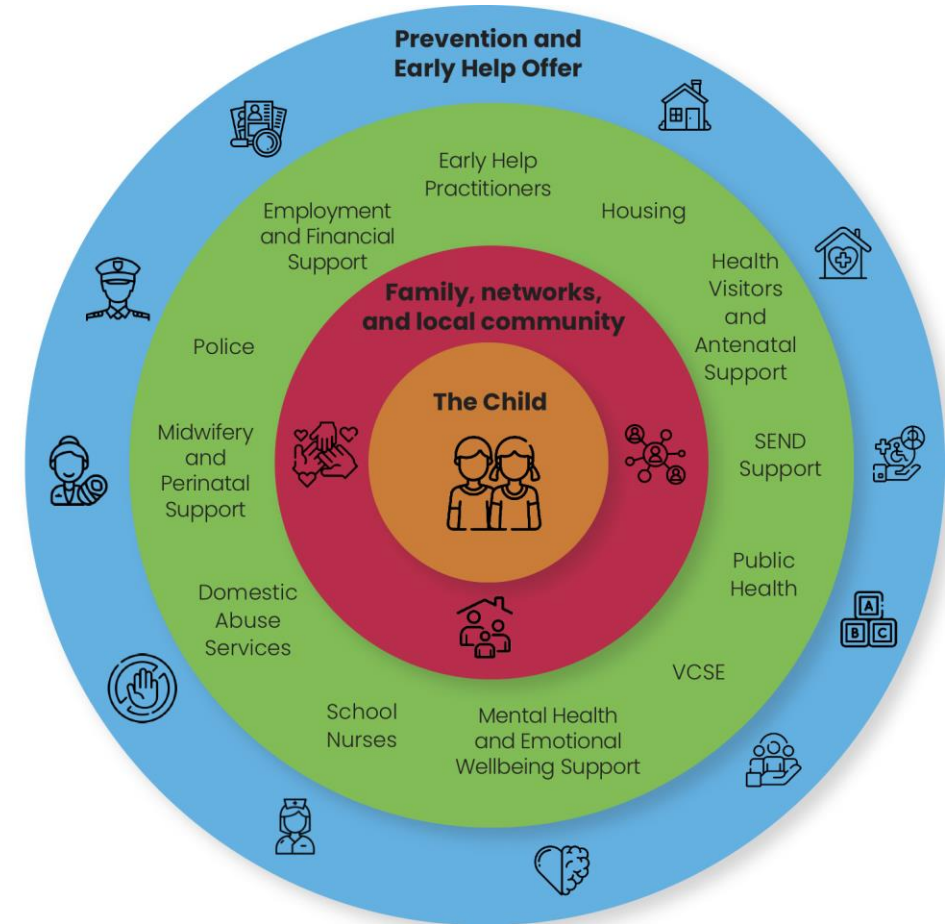
# EARLY HELP PARTNERS



A range of partners in Early Help work together to provide coordinated and holistic support for children and families.

**“Partners involved in the RPC initiative locally include EH, Social Care, Education, Health, Mediation Services, Housing, Domestic Abuse Services, CAMHS, the Voluntary Sector, Youth Services, and the Police”**

Results from Round 5 (2024) of the planning tool indicated a mixed picture in terms of partnerships across LAs and different partners.



*North Tyneside Council*

# EARLY HELP & PARENTAL RELATIONSHIPS



“Parental conflict isn’t always the presenting issue for families working with Early Help but it is often there under the surface when families are facing difficulties. I saw the difference when practitioners asked about relationships and were able to bring in specialist provision to build resilience and better equip families to cope. Parents may be wary of accessing support because they are worried about the perception professionals may have of relationship difficulties. The notion of relationship support is new to most people, including our practitioners, and having those conversations earlier helps to normalise getting support.”

Supporting Families Coordinator



**KEY PARTNERS: HEALTH AND EDUCATION**

# SPOTLIGHT: HEALTH



In the planning tool, most LAs reported **strong co-ordinated working and collaboration** to deliver healthy relationships services. For example, **work with health teams** across all stages of RPC identification, assessment and support. Teams included:

- GPs
- Health Visitors
- Midwifery
- Public Health
- Social Prescribers
- Emotional & mental health services
- Sexual health services
- Health boards and NHS Trusts

# SPOTLIGHT: HEALTH



**Health referral pathways** to the local authority parenting offer which reduces waiting times for support.

**RPC training for health professionals** and their involvement on steering groups and in relationship support programme co-delivery.

**Health systems including a parental conflict flag or tick-box** to highlight families needing support and recording receipt of RPC support using a 'healthy relationships intervention' case note.

**Co-location** of trauma and mental health professionals in multiagency integrated Front Doors enabling direct contact between these professionals and the RPC coordinator.

# SPOTLIGHT: HEALTH



“As part of the holistic needs assessment, health visitors and school nurses have discussions with children, young people and families around parental relationships, including parental conflict. Training is provided to help staff to have strengths-based, appropriate and helpful conversations to inform these assessments.”

Head of Children’s Public Health Nursing



# SPOTLIGHT: EDUCATION



A variety of work with schools was reported which included specialist school-based or school-focused staff.

Several professionals played key roles in supporting schools with RPC efforts:

- **Named school social workers or Early Help** as part of a Team Around the School approach who shared information, co-ordinated discussions and made decisions with schools, and other relevant agencies
- **Early Support Consultants or Team Around the Family Support Officers (TAFSOs)** who supported schools in a whole-family approach and initiated TAFs
- **Partnership Family Help Officers** seen by the RPC lead to ‘have a good understanding of what actions to take and the support to provide to school when parental conflict is evidenced’
- **Safeguarding Children in Education Teams** who have attended RPC training sessions, become RPC Champions, and now roll out RPC training to School and College Designated Safeguarding Leads

# SPOTLIGHT: EDUCATION



Hosting evening **bespoke training sessions** for Education & Early years settings.

Streamlining **referral processes** for staff and parents to refer to healthy relationships pathways.

Engagement with schools through the **School Improvement Team** and working closely with EH practitioners in school.

Close links to the **Educational Psychology Team**, contributing to parent events such as “Emotional barriers to school attendance”.

# SPOTLIGHT: EDUCATION



## Working with Family Hubs & Schools in Bradford

Challenge: lack of alignment between schools and the Relationships Matter offer.

Actions:

- **For practitioners working directly with families:** Relationships Matter toolkit training for practitioners who can complete direct work with families. The toolkit is a ‘pick n mix’ of resources and can be used as one-off pieces of work. Those who attend this training are also given the 6 structured sessions resource booklet (if required) for more intense interventions with families.
- **For professionals:** Relationships Matter awareness and signposting training, for practitioners who may not be able to complete direct work with families, but would be able to signpost for support.
- **For parents:** An information session, ‘Planting the Seed’, to share information about Relationships Matter and the resources and support available to parents.

*Working with Family Hubs and schools in Bradford - Foundations*



# UNDERSTANDING POLICE INVOLVEMENT IN PARENTAL CONFLICT

# UNDERSTANDING POLICE INVOLVEMENT IN RPC



- Police often encounter families in conflict, making their involvement key to early identification and referral to support services.
- Recent analysis conducted by Foundations, on self-report data in the RPC planning tool, suggests that there have been challenges with engaging the police as key partners.
- Therefore, DWP commissioned Foundations to conduct a project between August 2024 – January 2025 to explore police involvement in reducing parental conflict.

**“We would like to strengthen our partnership working around RPC with the police, however, recognise that this is a national ambition and a common barrier that is being shared across many Local Authorities.”**

**-Planning Tool**

# INVOLVEMENT OF POLICE



- Most stakeholders we spoke to believed that the **police do or could play an important role** in local action to tackle conflict between parents.
- Several implied that their **general remit** as police officers, which included risk reduction, prevention, and early intervention, **was highly compatible with the aims and goals of reducing and responding to parental conflict.**
- **Police involvement in RPC was perceived by police and local area stakeholders to have several benefits**, including de-escalation of conflict when it is occurring, stopping repeat incidents, and preventing harm to others.
- **Certain police teams were identified as having key opportunities** to identify parental conflict early and signpost families to appropriate support: Neighbourhood teams, including Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), Early Help Officers and Vulnerabilities Officers.
- These teams were perceived to have the time, 'soft skills', experience and aligned interests, to undertake this work.

# ENABLERS AND BARRIERS TO POLICE INVOLVEMENT

## Barriers

- Difficulties identifying police contacts
- Lack of visibility for RPC training opportunities
- Limited time and capacity for police to talk about parental conflict with families

## Enablers

- Senior leadership buy-in
- Tailored training
- Clear referral pathways and knowledge of available support
- Considering terminology used with families
- Clear evidence of impact on policing outcomes

# CASE EXAMPLE: TRAINING



**Key finding: Local areas with the best engagement from police developed bespoke police training on RPC, in addition to their RPC training general offer.**

Police stakeholders suggested the most useful training was short, clear, and incorporated real-life examples. Training packages, already in use with schools and social workers were seen as suitable for adaptation.

## **Case example: RPC training for police**

Training for police in reducing parental conflict in one local area is:

- delivered 1-2 times per year by the local authority reducing parental conflict trainer and police workforce development team.
- mandatory for all new police constables
- Part of multi-topic training carousels held at police headquarters
- A bespoke co-designed session based on real police cases and video clips
- Focused on impacts of parental conflict, identifying, responding and signposting



# CASE EXAMPLE: SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES



**Key finding: The process of recognising and recording parental conflict and distinguishing this from cases of domestic abuse can be complex. Police officers may be concerned not to mistake domestic abuse for parental conflict.**

**Case example: reviewing a range of evidence to identify relationship conflict and help families get the right support.**

In one local authority, **a community police officer and the lead for a local children's charity have worked closely together** to address parental conflict since 2020.

They come together each morning to:

- **Review police safeguarding forms and incident logs** from police call outs to families with children aged 4-11 years
- **Review police bodycam footage** to see what parents said, how children responded, and to observe the home environment
- Explore whether the families already have **involvement from children's services or other agencies**

They take their findings to a triage meeting with Early Help, children's services, housing and domestic abuse workers to decide if social service involvement is needed. The PCO will ring the parents as a follow-up to the police attendance and arrange to visit them. This is predominantly well received by parents. The PCO helps families undertake a short initial needs assessment to identify ways to reduce the stresses within the family home.

# SUMMARY OF ENABLERS TO COORDINATED WORKING ACROSS THE PARTNERSHIP



A single and consistently used multi-agency referral pathway



Multiagency co-location and close working



Multi-agency panels



Family Hub model



Consistently used assessment toolkits



Use of shared datasets, documents and systems