



*Action for
Children*

Parenting after separation

Insights from Parent Talk 2023/24

Parenting after separation: Insights from Parent Talk 2023/24

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Summary

This report provides an insight into the specific challenges some parents¹ in the UK face. Parent Talk is Action for Children's free online advice and information service for parents. The service offers expert and trusted advice, support and reassurance through information, advice and guidance (IAG) articles and one-to-one live chats. This report analyses data from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

What are parents looking for help with?

In 2023/24, Parent Talk's IAG pages were accessed by 468,786 parents 711,532 times. When grouping by theme, articles about additional needs and disabilities were accessed the most times (26% of page views), followed by parenting and relationships (22%) and mental health and wellbeing (15%). '*Co-parenting with a controlling ex-partner*' was our most visited article this year, with 46,158 views, a 52% increase on last year.

We had 4,783 conversations with 2,758 parents through specialist one-to-one support. The majority of cases involved mental health and wellbeing related issues (51%), followed by parenting and relationships (44%) and child behaviour (34%).

Parental separation and conflict

This year, our parenting and relationships pages have seen the largest rise in demand from parents seeking advice through Parent Talk. The overall number of views on pages relating to parenting and relationships issues has risen by 46% since last year. We analysed a sample of one-to-one chats on this theme to find out what parents are struggling with.

One key issue stood out: parents are struggling following a separation due to ongoing conflict or abuse. It's estimated that there are 3.8 million children living in separated families in Great Britain.ⁱ While not all of these families will be struggling to resolve conflict, the potential number of children impacted is high.

In particular, parents were looking for support in relation to co-parenting and contact arrangements. And in some cases, parents felt they were being coercively controlled.



"I need advice on my child's father. My child is not washing or brushing their teeth when they go to see him. They don't get out of bed. I'm worried about my child's future with their Dad as a role model. I've tried for years to speak to [their dad] and reason with him but he either ignores me or tells me I'm overreacting."

¹ In this report we use the word parent to refer to anyone in a parenting role including kinship carers, foster carers or special guardians.

Following a separation where there's unresolved conflict or abuse, parents tell us they feel the strain on their own mental health. They feel burnt out and often struggle to cope. They also report changes in their children's mental health, wellbeing and behaviour.



“Everything I do is wrong. It's literally making me ill and I'm so stressed.”

Parents seeking support following separation often come to us at a loss. They have either received help which has ended or can't access the right support to meet their needs. The parents we've supported this year are seeking timely and trusted advice and reassurance, and need help navigating other systems, like local family support and other early help services. Their support needs vary over time as children grow and their family situation changes.



“Over the weekend my son's dad took him to the pub and got really drunk. He's only six. Social services are involved and they still want me to let him go there this weekend... I can't have direct or indirect contact. Does that mean my mum can't contact him either? She's our third party who we've been arranging contact through.”

Conclusion

Good parenting and parental relationships are strong protective factors for children, providing them with the basis to thrive. It's important we support parents struggling to manage ongoing conflict or experiencing abuse post-separation to reduce stress and help mediate the impact on their children. Early help services are well-placed to do this. They can support families and protect children by addressing issues as soon as they arise.

We recommend the government should strengthen early help services by:

1. **Making sure all parents can access universal family support services which includes a digital offer.** Universal services, such as antenatal classes, are an important entry point to engage with families. They allow professionals to build relationships with local families and identify any issues as early as possible.
2. **Investing in targeted support for families experiencing multiple challenges.** This should include having co-located multi-disciplinary teams designed to offer wrap-around, co-ordinated and targeted early help – or 'family help'. These teams should be based in community settings and integrated with wider services.
3. **Integrating services so there's 'one front door'.** All local authorities should have 'one front door' to their early help services such that all families know where to go to access help, should they need it. This should build on the Family Hub model with sufficient funding provided to support all local authorities to integrate their services.

4. **Making sure communities have the right specialist provision for their local area.**
That should include specialist domestic abuse services for children and adults and interventions to reduce parental conflict where they are needed.

About Parent Talk

At Action for Children, we provide practical and emotional care and support to parents through hundreds of services across the UK, including Parent Talk. Parent Talk is our free online service for parents of children aged 0-19, or up to 25 for children with additional needs and disabilities, which launched in 2020. The service offers expert and trusted advice through online IAG articles on common parenting issues, and experienced parenting coaches offer support and reassurance via one-to-one live chats and a recently introduced WhatsApp service.

We offer advice and a listening ear to parents on a wide range of issues. Common topics include mental health and wellbeing, supporting children with additional needs, challenging behaviour, and parenting and relationships. We fill gaps in support for parents when time-limited interventions to support their family have ended and for those who are on, or whose children are on, waiting lists. We connect them with the right services to meet their family's needs.

A recent independent evaluationⁱⁱ has found that Parent Talk increases parents' self-efficacy by providing the information they need, increasing their knowledge, skills and confidence, and supporting them to resolve their concerns or problems. Increased parental self-efficacy has been shown to improve outcomes for children.

The evaluation also found that Parent Talk:

- Improves family relationships including, between the adults involved with the children.
- Reduces stress levels.
- Improves parental wellbeing.
- And may, through timely access to Parent Talk support, reduce the likelihood of situations escalating. In turn, this may have the effect of reducing demand for publicly funded crisis services.

Methodology

This report analyses data collected through Parent Talk between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024 to draw out insight on the specific challenges that some parents in the UK face. We looked at IAG article views including the total number of views, unique views and views by theme. We also looked at the data gathered through one-to-one chats with parents.

We analysed the total number of parents supported and identified common themes. These themes were explored further through an in-depth analysis of a sample of anonymised chats. Some details have been changed to protect parents' anonymity.

By doing this, we can see overall themes in the data, and which issues are most prominent. We also compare with previous years to track trends.

What are parents looking for help with?

In 2023/24, 468,786 parents accessed our IAG pages and we supported 2,758 parents through specialist one-to-one support. Around 88% of parents supported were from England, 5% from Scotland, 5% from Wales and 2% from Northern Ireland. This is broadly similar to the population level split across the UK, with a slight over-representation of parents in England and Wales.

Information, advice and guidance (IAG) pages

Our IAG pages were accessed by 468,786 parents 711,532 times. When grouping by theme, articles about additional needs and disabilities were accessed the most times, with over a quarter of all page views about this topic. This is followed by parenting and relationships and mental health and wellbeing.

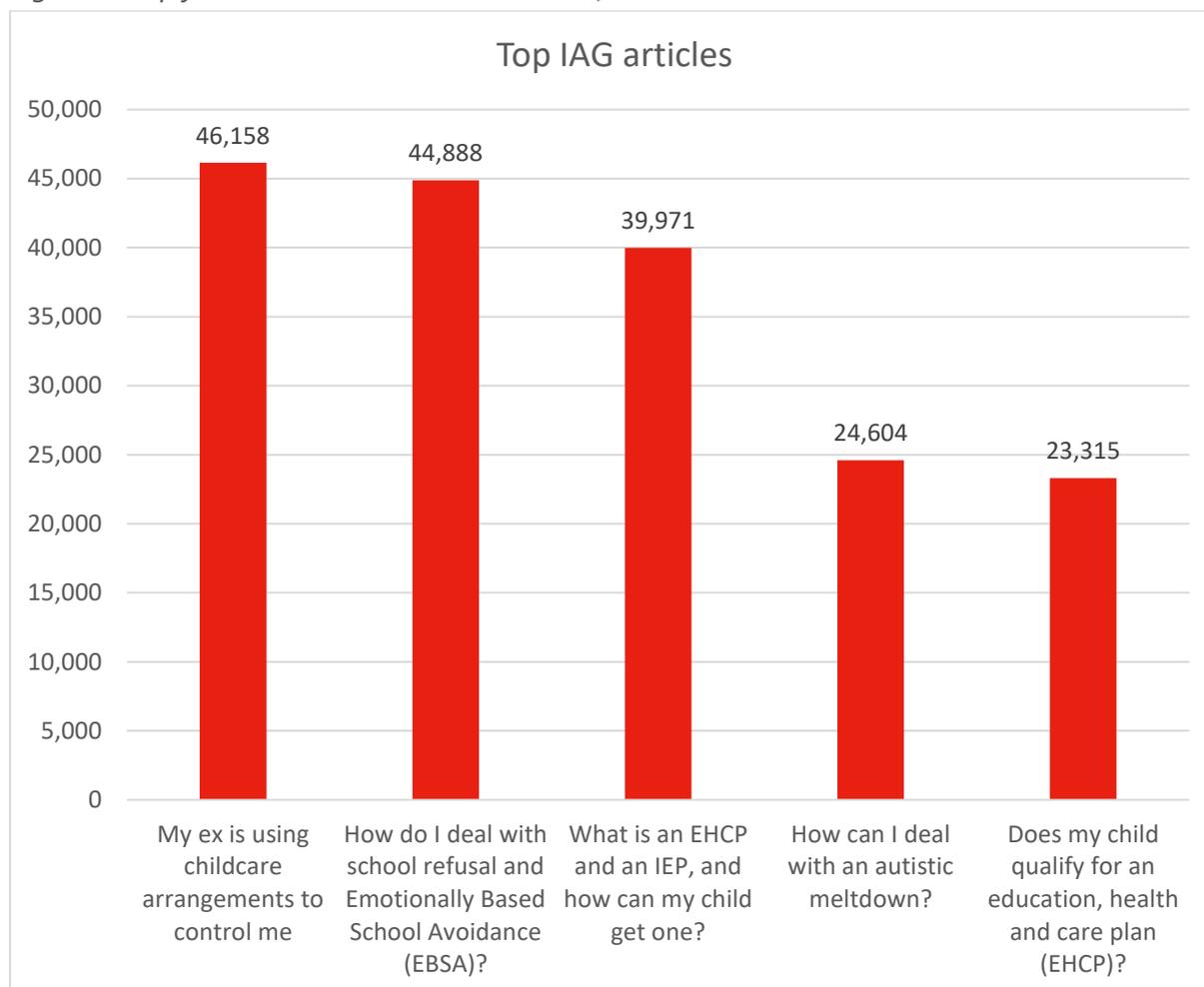
Table 1: Top IAG pages grouped by theme.

Top IAG themes	Page views	% of page views
Additional needs and disabilities	188,295	26%
Parenting and relationships	154,280	22%
Mental health and wellbeing	107,963	15%
Behaviour	103,870	15%
Education	64,586	9%
Stages and development	35,822	5%
Activities	23,794	3%
Sleep	19,087	3%
Nutrition and healthy eating	13,835	2%
Total	711,532	100%

The single most viewed article – accessed by 35,459 parents 46,158 times – was on coercive control in relation to childcare arrangements. Page views for *'Co-parenting with a controlling ex-partner'* have increased by 52% since last year. This is explored in more detail below.

The second most accessed article on the website was *'How do I deal with school refusal and Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)?'*. We took an in-depth look at this issue in our previous Parent Talk Annual Report.ⁱⁱⁱ

Figure 1: Top five most accessed articles 2023/24.



One-to-one chats

The one-to-one support offered to parents on Parent Talk took place across 4,783 conversations. The majority of cases involved mental health and wellbeing related issues (51%), followed by parenting and relationships (44%) and child behaviour (34%).

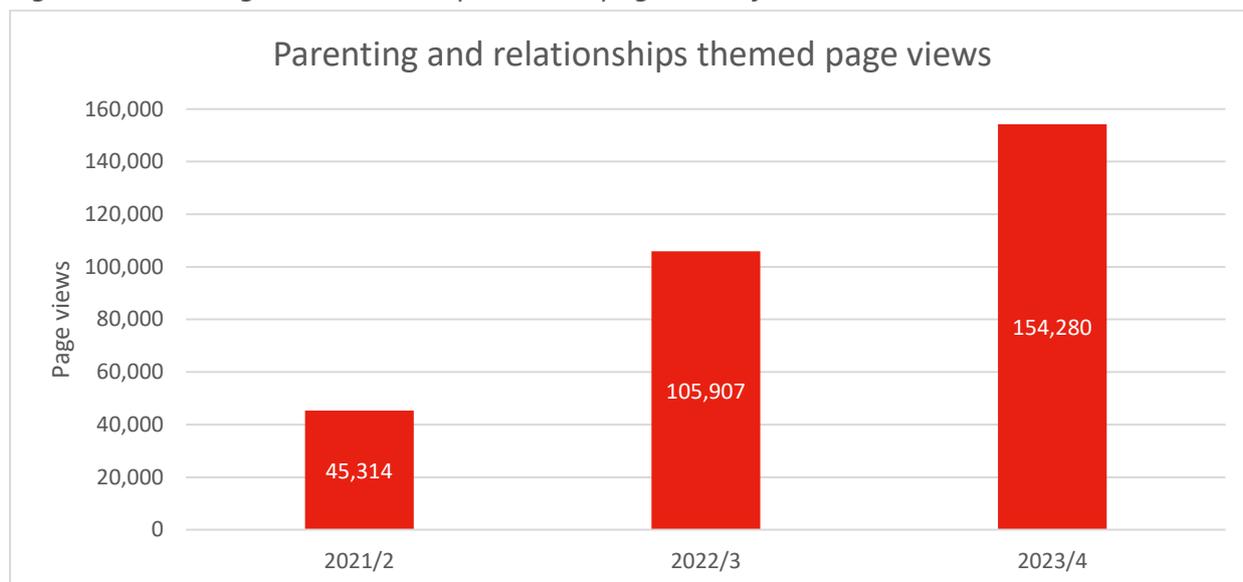
Table 2: Top five one-to-one chat themes by number and percentage of cases.

Top one-to-one needs	Number of cases	% of cases
Mental health and wellbeing	1,392	51%
Parenting and relationships	1,188	44%
Behaviour	920	34%
Practical	755	28%
Additional needs and disabilities	669	25%

Increased need for parenting and relationships support

The overall number of IAG page views for parenting and relationships issues has been steadily increasing over the past three years.

Figure 2: Parenting and relationships themed page views from 2021-2024.



Page views on parenting and relationships themed pages rose by 46% since last year – from 105,907 to 154,280 views. This was the largest increase in demand across the whole site. Over one in five (22%) page views across Parent Talk are for issues relating to parenting and relationships.

This has been driven by a significant increase in views on the page *‘Co-parenting with a controlling ex-partner’*. The vast majority of visits to this page were from organic google searches (90%), demonstrating a real rise in need.

The theme of parenting and relationships can cover a broad range of topics. By looking at the most viewed articles in this theme, shown in Table 3 below, common topics include parental separation, childcare arrangements, and parental mental health and wellbeing.

Table 3: Top five parenting and relationships themed pages by total views.

Article	Views	Site ranking
<i>Co-parenting with a controlling ex-partner</i>	46,158	1 st
<i>How can I cope with not seeing my child after a separation?</i>	17,785	7 th
<i>I’m worried my child isn’t safe with the other parent</i>	15,661	10 th
<i>How do I deal with parental burnout?</i>	15,294	11 th
<i>I’m struggling to cope as a parent</i>	11,431	14 th

Over 40% of parents looking for one-to-one chat support in 2023/24 raised a parenting and

relationship issue. We analysed a sample of these chats to give some insight into what's happening. One key issue stood out – parents are struggling after a separation.

Parental separation and conflict

Why are good relationships between parents important?

Parents are crucial for their child's development, and it's important that they can communicate well and work together to support their child to thrive. While conflict is common between parents, when it's unresolved it can have a significant impact on their children's outcomes. Children exposed to frequent, destructive conflict are more likely to experience depression or anxiety, have physical health problems, develop behaviour problems and do worse at school.^{iv} It can have a lasting effect on children into adulthood, negatively impacting their adult relationships, wellbeing and employment opportunities.^v

It's estimated that there are 3.8 million children living in 2.4 million separated families in Great Britain.^{vi} A further 12% of children in couple-parent families are living with at least one parent reporting relationship distress, and this is higher (around 20%) for children in families where their parents aren't working.^{vii} While not all of these families will be struggling to resolve conflict, the potential number of children impacted is high.

When families face problems, getting the right support at the right time is essential. The right support means that a child can grow up to thrive, and a family can overcome challenges. Intervening early to reduce parental conflict has the potential to improve children's outcomes at school and their mental health. It is likely to ease pressure on other vital services like schools, health services, local authorities and the family courts. This is doubly beneficial considering that many services for children and families are overburdened, and the associated costs of not intervening early are high.

What issues are separated parents experiencing?

The most common issues separated parents were looking for support for through Parent Talk were co-parenting and childcare arrangements.

Parents shared concerns about how their ex-partner is parenting their child. This ranged from concerns about their child's safety and welfare, to diet, to introducing a new partner, to a lack of guidance and boundaries.



“I need advice on my child's father. My child is not washing or brushing their teeth when they go to see him. They don't get out of bed. I'm worried about my child's future with their Dad as a role model. I've tried for years to speak to [their dad] and reason with him but he either ignores me or tells me I'm overreacting.”

Concerns over a child's welfare were more common when a parent reported a history of abuse, manipulative behaviour or parental mental health problems.



“For the last few years, me and my children’s father have been going through a divorce, after years of domestic violence. I have always told their dad that I don’t think he looks after them properly. They’ve come home this weekend and told me they went on a journey in the car and my youngest, who’s three, wasn’t in a car seat.”

There were a high number of chats from separated parents about childcare arrangements. Latest figures estimate that 52% of all children in separated families see their non-resident parent at least fortnightly.^{viii} It can therefore be a constant source of conflict.

Many parents reported a breakdown of relationships and communication with the other parent. The following quote is from a new partner of a father struggling to manage childcare arrangements with his children’s mother.



“[My] partner’s ex attacked him several times in front of [the] children during pick up, so pick up at her brother’s was decided. She then continued to harass my partner via calls and messages, and then started harassing me. Both of us blocked her and all communication was through her brother. Her brother then advised if my partner doesn’t unblock her, he can’t see the children. My partner offered to communicate through an app but they declined and decided to continue communicating through the children’s uncle.”

There was a mix of parents who had court-ordered childcare arrangements and those that didn’t. This affects the type of support that parents can access. For example, if the contact is court-ordered and a parent doesn’t keep to the arrangements, parents can report this to the courts and get legal advice to enforce the order. If it isn’t court-ordered, then parents need to come to an agreement themselves or through mediation. There’s a high number of parents that choose to agree childcare arrangements outside the courts. Reasons for this include parents feeling like they can resolve the issue themselves and/or because they can’t afford to go to court.

Regardless of whether there is a court order or not, parents were experiencing similar challenges keeping to previously agreed arrangements. Some parents feared that they wouldn’t be able to see their children again.



“I want to stick to the order however enforcing it will be like ‘poking the bear’”



“My ex is stopping me from speaking with my little girl. When she agrees she doesn’t turn up or is late by roughly an hour. The agreement is informal. I can’t afford a solicitor.”

Coercive control

This year we have seen an increase in the number of parents looking for support because they think they’re being coercively controlled by their ex-partner through childcare arrangements.

What are coercive or controlling behaviours?

Coercive or controlling behaviours are defined slightly differently, but they’re a range of acts that are threatening or humiliating and used to punish their victim, make their victim feel subordinate, isolate them from sources of support, exploit their resources and capacities for personal gain, deprive them of the means needed for independence and regulate their everyday behaviour. These behaviours are defined as abusive in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and were made offences in the Serious Crime Act 2015. There were 43,774 offences of coercive control recorded by the police in England and Wales (excluding Devon and Cornwall) in the year ending March 2023.¹

In our one-to-one chats with parents, a range of coercive or controlling behaviours were described including one parent taking control of when they see their child outside of what was agreed, repeatedly putting the other parent down, humiliating, degrading or dehumanising them, making threats and intimidations and refusing to pay child maintenance support (CMS).



“I’m attempting to co-parent with my ex-partner who was very controlling and emotionally abusive during our relationship (this was the reason why I left). He continues to attempt to exert control over me via our child and childcare arrangements, money etc... I feel this is him again attempting to control me and to dictate mine and my child’s life.”

In many of the cases where coercive control was mentioned, parents disclosed a history of abuse. Many of the parents (majority mothers but some fathers) looking for help mentioned that their family had already had support through organisations like Women’s Aid to leave their abusive relationships. But now they have separated from their abuser, they didn’t know what support was available to help their family recover. And some were still experiencing abuse.



“I have received support from a number of programmes however these usually finish supporting you after so many months/weeks... My son is having therapy via school, on and off for the past couple of years. But I feel that the pressure from his dad is increasing.”

How is unresolved conflict impacting families?

The main consequence for parents experiencing coercive control, or struggling to manage conflict or disagreement following a separation, was high levels of stress and low wellbeing. Over two-thirds (68%) of parents looking for one-to-one support for parent and relationships issues mentioned a mental health or wellbeing need.

Parents often contact us because they're struggling to cope and feeling burnt out. Having to manage conflict while parenting at the same time can be extremely challenging. It can add pressure to already stressful situations. Parents worry they might not be able to see their children again if the relationship breaks down.



“I'm literally at the point where I don't want a life, I will just work 24/7 that way my ex cannot kick-off. Everything I do is wrong. It's literally making me ill and I'm so stressed.”

Parents were also seeking help for their child's mental health and behavioural issues following separation. This was sometimes the key reason parents were looking for support through Parent Talk.



“I'm concerned about my daughter. I'm told it's anxiety. She's experienced so many adverse child experiences. We've been in the family courts most of her life. She has two-hours supervised contact with her mother. Her older sister was supervising the contact but has since stopped due to her mother's behaviour. Once contact stopped, I had abusive messages from her mum... My daughter doesn't want to go to school, I get calls where she tells me she is ill but she isn't (in my opinion). I don't know where to go from here.”



“I need some advice on how to manage my five-year-old's challenging behaviours. Her Dad and I separated four years ago, and over the past few months, her behaviour has deteriorated significantly.”

Managing children's needs in addition to conflict and parental mental health issues can have a significant effect on a parent's ability to cope.

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Of the parents looking for support around parenting and relationships, around one in five (19%) mentioned that at least one of their children had a special educational need or disability (SEND). More may have had a child with SEND but didn't mention this to the parenting coach (a trained family support worker) during the one-to-one chat. In these cases, parents felt that the other parent either did not understand their child's needs, or that their child was struggling with the change including moving between houses. This seemed to exacerbate co-parenting and/or childcare disagreements.



"My daughter's father is refusing to look after her whilst I'm in hospital. I'm not able to reason with him as I have an order against him. He previously stalked and harassed me. My daughter has additional needs... It will confuse her greatly if she stays anywhere else whilst I'm in hospital. I don't have anybody else to look after her whilst I'm there."

Children with SEND are around one and a half to two times more likely to experience a mental health problem than their peers.^{ix} Their parents often also experience higher levels of stress than parents of children without disabilities.^x It's important there are specialist parenting services available that can provide the right support to families with a child with SEND.

What support do parents need?

Many of the parents we supported had already been in touch with a range of support services. This included solicitors, family courts, mediation, domestic abuse organisations, other charities and counselling. Some were also getting help through schools or children's social care. But for a whole host of reasons, this support wasn't adequate in the moment they were seeking help from Parent Talk, or they were experiencing barriers to accessing the right support.



"I had a support worker when I first separated from my ex and underwent therapy also. I'm currently with a counsellor which is funded through a domestic abuse charity as I've been finding things difficult. It was only a few weeks ago during drop off, that my ex called me pathetic and swore at me in front of our son. It seems that even though I've left, the behaviour continues."

Advice and reassurance

Parents were often looking for practical advice. Through chatting with parents, our parenting coaches were able to give advice around setting up parenting plans, suggest apps to

communicate through, tips to help re-engage with their ex-partner, and promote healthy communication. In this case, a parent needed timely, impartial and reliable advice.



“Over the weekend my son’s dad took him to the pub and got really drunk. He’s only six. Social services are involved and they still want me to let him go there this weekend... I can’t have direct or indirect contact. Does that mean my mum can’t contact him either? She’s our third party who we’ve been arranging contact through.”

Sometimes parents needed reassurance that what they are experiencing is challenging, or in some cases, abusive. They needed someone to talk to help them understand the situation they were in. Our parenting coaches provide encouragement and empowerment to help parents take the next steps. This might include contacting a GP, or having a conversation with their child, their child’s school or contacting social services.

The below extract is an example of a parent looking for both practical advice and reassurance.

Parent:
how I’m parenting our kids. They’re very controlling. My solicitor’s advised me to refuse any phone contact with him but he reminds me in every email exchange that I’m refusing to pick up the phone. Will this be seen negatively against me?

Parenting coach: *Thanks for explaining. I’m sorry to hear you’re experiencing these difficulties. When you say seen negatively against you, do you mean by court? Are you going through court at the moment?*

Parent: *We’ve tried to keep it out of court. But he has threatened it a few times.*

Parenting coach: *Okay, who are worried about it being seen negatively by?*

Parent: *If it ends up in court or when the children are older it will look like I haven’t tried.*

Parenting coach: Okay, so communication with separated parents can often be really difficult. You're not alone as other parents do often find it hard too. The best way of co-parenting is when parents can communicate openly and easily with each other in a manner of ways about and for the children. Sometimes though this isn't possible due to the level of conflict. It sounds as if your choice of communicating by email and text is effective enough, so you are communicating about the children. Some parents choose to use an app to communicate. This helps as tone is monitored and all the chats are saved.

Parent: Thank you I have suggested a parenting app previously and he refuses to use them.

Parenting coach: That's a shame. It can be helpful when responding to difficult emails to remember to keep things completely focused on the children. If there are blaming tones or finger pointing, try to not to respond to these. You don't need to defend or explain yourself - just respond with facts. I'll send some links to support learning about effective co-parenting.

Parent: That's what I do but he says I'm refusing. I just don't want to start an argument.

Parenting coach: It sounds like you are doing this just right. Sometimes ex partners will use contact about the children as a way to control the other parent in a coercive way. It sounds like you have recognised this and are keeping yourself safe.

Parent: I'm trying! Thank you for your assurance that I am doing the right thing.

Parenting coach: You are welcome. Please do come back to us if you'd like to chat any more about this or anything else, another time.

Support navigating other systems

Parents often needed help navigating other systems like local family support and other early help services. Different local systems can be tricky to navigate at the best of times, but when a parent is experiencing high levels of stress, it's even harder.



"The mental health support worker referred me to parenting help via an agency which isn't actually operating anymore."



"I just get told I need to go to court and change things that way... I don't have any money."

Parenting coaches can connect parents to local services and talk to social services on their behalf. This helps remove some of the burden from parents who might be feeling at capacity.

Some parents felt that they had fallen through the gaps of support. Their cases were either too complex or didn't meet the threshold for support.



"My girls' father now has split custody through the courts and this has made his controlling behaviour worse. All the professionals I've spoken with are telling me to go back to court but they won't help me. How can I go back to court without their support? The girls have been referred to a councillor through school but they don't see her regularly as she doesn't have time. If it's not regular, how will the girls trust her and open up? I feel powerless and my kids are suffering."

The most common form of support parents reported their child receiving was counselling. Some were on waiting lists through local charities or the NHS, some were accessing it through school or some opting to go private. But often, parents were still struggling to manage the conflict and not receiving support themselves.

Ongoing support

The impact of unresolved conflict and domestic abuse can develop throughout a child's life. Parents will need different support as their child grows older and their needs and wishes change. Relationships between parents can also breakdown at any time and families may regularly revisit services to ask for help.



“I haven't seen my 15-year-old daughter in four years as her mum took custody, refused contact and moved away. My daughter contacted me through social media... She now wants to live with me as she's finding living with her mum too stressful. I'm worried I won't be very good at looking after a teenage girl and I'm worried what her mum's going to do if she finds out.”

Conclusions and recommendations

This report indicates a rise in the number of parents looking for support dealing with conflict after separation, particularly around co-parenting and contact arrangements. Combined with the robust evidence about the impact of parental conflict on outcomes for children, this suggests that tackling family conflict should be a focus for government and local authorities when supporting families. Early help services are well-placed to both support families with and protect children from parental conflict.

Efforts have been made by government to help reduce parental conflict. For example, the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) Reducing Parental Conflict programme provides funding to support workforce training, the delivery of interventions for healthy parental relationships, and coordination of work across partners. But the future of the programme is uncertain, and funding is due to end in March 2025.

This report also shows how coercive control can continue once a couple have split up. It highlights the need for specialist interventions to support families and children with experience of abuse to recover and deal with ongoing abuse. And how these services should be well-connected with early help and family support networks.

The findings from this report give some nuance to the types of issues parents and children are experiencing as a result of conflict or abuse, and how this can impact their overall outcomes. When families face problems, getting the right support at the right time is essential. For families experiencing conflict or abuse, this should include, but not be limited to, accessible mental health support for both parents and children.

In their manifesto, Labour committed to introducing mental health hubs in every community and to establish mental health support in all schools. As children and families who experience unresolved and ongoing conflict or abuse are likely to need mental health support, it is important that community mental health hubs and schools are closely linked with early help services, like Family Hubs. This would help make sure that children and families can access a range of services to address all their issues, and get back on track. Special attention should also be paid to the needs of families of children with SEND, who are more likely to experience stress, to make sure there are appropriate services for them to access across family support and mental health services.

Families experiencing conflict also need immediate practical advice, help navigating other systems and someone neutral to offload to when experiencing conflict. This helps reduce some of the burden on parents. Findings from this report suggest that some parents are struggling to access support or don't know where to turn.

While the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) funds programmes such as Planning Together for Children to support families involved in the courts, little is out there for families resolving issues outside of the courts. This is where early help services can step in. The existing Family Hub model aims to join up and enhance services delivered in local authority areas so all families can access the support they need. It can therefore work well to make services more accessible for parents and help them navigate their local systems. However, current funding for the Family Hubs programme has only been provided to 75 local authorities and is due to end in March 2025.

This report shows how online support services for parents can affectively advise and support parents and put them in touch with local services. Online support services, like Parent Talk, enable parents to address issues which impact their children earlier than they might have done and before the situation needs more resource intensive support.^{xi} Online support services for families should be considered and developed as an important element of a national longer-term early help or family support strategy.

The newly formed government should consider reducing parental conflict an important part of their plan to break down barriers to opportunity. The following recommendations provide some policy solutions. However, what is really needed is wider reform of the way children's services are provided and funded – to create a well-functioning early help system. This is instead of continuing to patch-up the system with additional pots of money and time limited schemes.

Recommendations for government:

1. **Make sure all parents can access universal family support services which includes a digital offer.** Universal services, such as antenatal classes, are an important entry point to engage with families. They allow professionals to build relationships with local families and identify any issues as early as possible.
2. **Invest in targeted support for families experiencing multiple challenges.** This should include having co-located multi-disciplinary teams designed to offer wrap-around, co-ordinated and targeted early help – or 'family help'. These teams should be based in community settings and integrated with wider services.
3. **Integrate services so there is 'one front door'.** All local authorities should have 'one front door' to their early help services such that all families know where to go to access help, should they need it. This should build on the Family Hub model with sufficient funding provided to support all local authorities to integrate their services.

4. **Make sure communities have the right specialist provision for their local area.** That should include specialist domestic abuse services for children and adults and interventions to reduce parental conflict where they are needed.

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- ^{xi} Rübner Jørgensen C et al. 2024 [Parent Talk: Filling a support gap for parents through an online service](#)



Safe and happy childhood

Action for Children protects and supports children and young people, providing practical and emotional care and support, ensuring their voices are heard, and campaigning to bring lasting improvements to their lives.

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