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Reducing Parental Conflict Outcomes Framework Guide

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Bethan Le Maistre, Dr Pippa Davie, Olivia Martin, Karen Noble

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Getting started

What does the guide contain?

The guide provides step-by-step guidance on applying EIF's **Reducing Parental Conflict (RPC) Outcomes Framework** as well as potential workshop content and local area examples. These can be adapted as required to reflect your local context and priorities.

How to use the guide

This guide is designed to support local areas to develop a local RPC outcomes framework. The guide can support you to:

- develop an outcomes framework to improve the understanding of parental conflict and its impact on outcomes for children and young people.
- understand the links between local parental conflict risk factors, local RPC support for families and outcomes for children and young people.
- consider the measurement tools and indicators that can be used to measure the impact of your locally prioritised outcomes.

Who is the guide for?

The RPC outcomes framework guide is designed to support local leaders, those responsible for commissioning or delivering local RPC programmes, and RPC coordinators to consider what risk factors can influence parental conflict and child outcomes, and to consider how these can be measured. The guide is based on projects with local areas to develop an RPC outcomes framework for their local context.

If you would like to discuss this further prior to or during your local project, please contact: info@wweicsc.org.uk.

Introduction to the outcomes framework

What is the RPC outcomes framework?

The **RPC outcomes framework** (see figure 1 below) highlights what risk factors can influence parental conflict and ultimately affect child outcomes. It explains that risk factors fall into three categories: relating to individual parents; the parental relationship; and the family or economic circumstances. These are in turn associated with the central risk of children being exposed to harmful conflict between parents. The outcomes fall into four domains: social and emotional; physical; cognitive; and behavioural.

Why develop an RPC outcomes framework?

One of the key challenges, noted by local areas, is the difficulty in measuring the impact of parental conflict and in particular its impact on children and young people.

By using the RPC outcomes framework and adapting it to the local context, key stakeholders can develop their understanding of the relationship between different outcomes and the links between interparental conflict and outcomes for children relevant to the local context. Informed by an understanding of local needs and RPC support, the outcomes framework can be adapted to focus on specific outcomes of interest based on the local context. It will help measure the impact of RPC support and inform future planning and development.

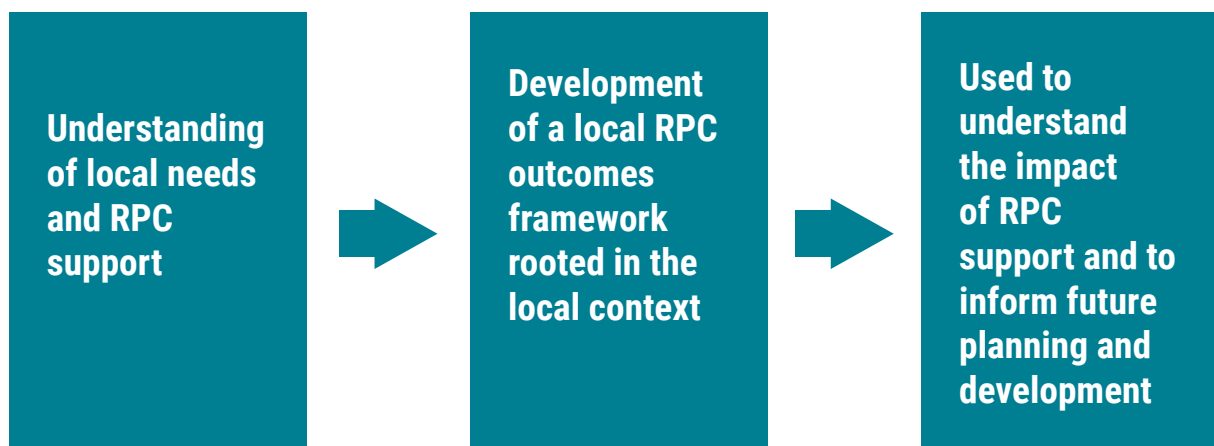
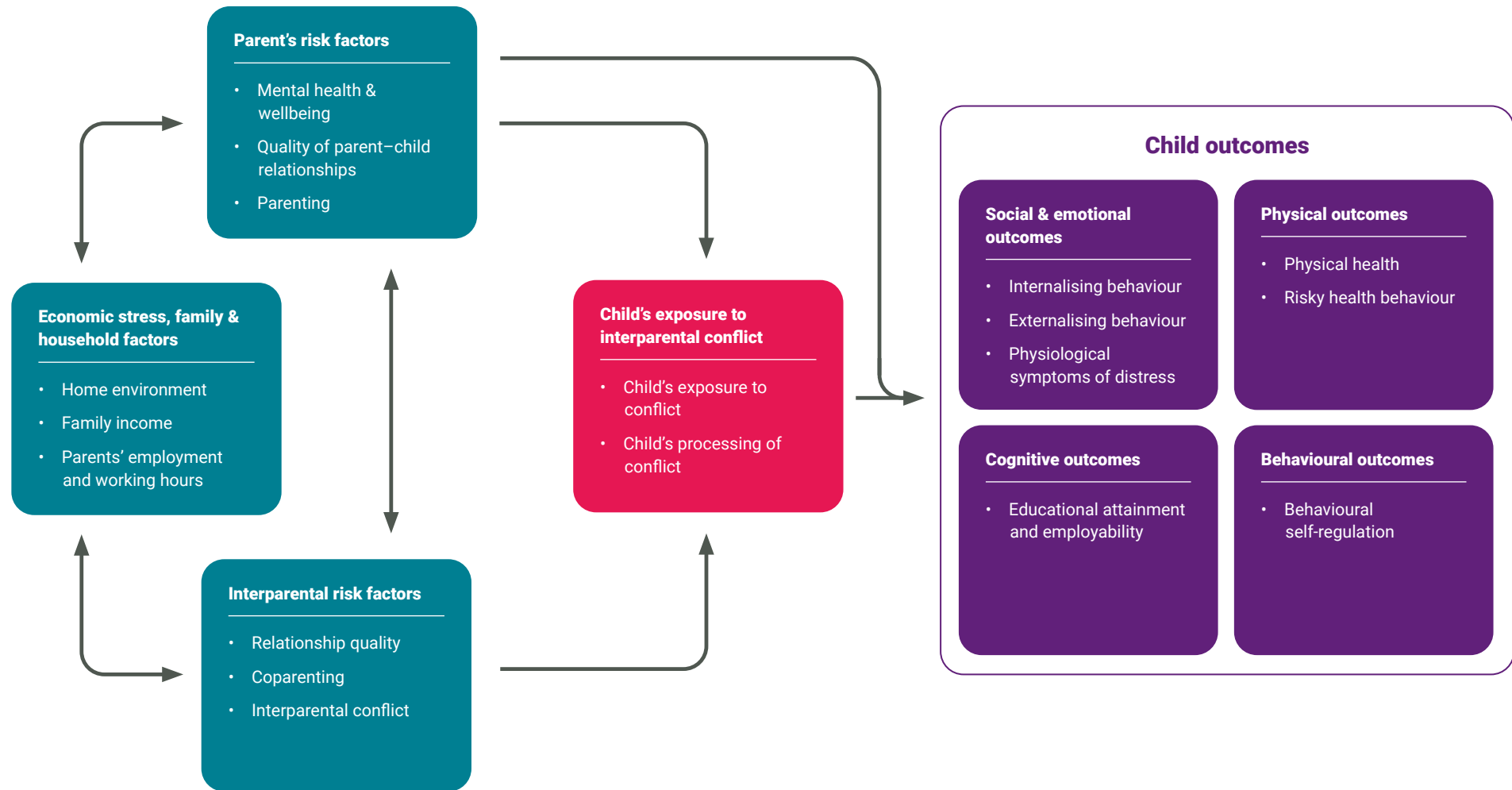


FIGURE 1: RPC OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK



Developing an RPC outcomes framework

The diagram below sets out the steps in developing your local outcomes framework for RPC. These steps are explained in more detail below. Where supporting resources are provided, these are included at the end of this resource.



Step 1: Preparing to develop your local RPC outcomes framework

Purpose – this step is important in order to:

- clarify the objectives for your project.
- develop a project plan.
- consider how this framework fits with existing frameworks and strategies.

These are explained in more detail below.

LOCAL AREA TIP

We scheduled regular meetings to keep the work on track and broke down our activities into achievable steps as part of a project plan. This made the overall project less daunting.

Clarify the objectives for your project

Initially it is important to clarify the objectives for developing a local outcomes framework for RPC. Some examples are shown below.



Develop a project plan

A further activity that forms an important part of the project set up is developing a project plan. The **draft project plan** included in the resources section of this guide can be used as a template and can be amended depending on the aims of the project. It is also important to establish the right team to deliver the activity set out in the project plan, for example it may be appropriate to include a range of agencies such as, representatives from the community and service users, as well as those with expertise in data analysis or performance monitoring. Typically, when local areas have completed similar projects, the process has taken a minimum of six months, this might take longer if there are also plans to develop an **RPC needs assessment** as part of the work.

Consider how this framework fits with existing frameworks and strategies

Finally, it is important to consider how the local RPC outcomes framework will interact with existing strategies and plans to ensure it can be embedded in ongoing development. For example, your outcomes framework could align with the **Supporting Families Outcome Framework**.

Step 2: Enabling senior and strategic buy-in

Purpose: One of the overarching aims of the RPC outcomes framework is to enable key stakeholders in local areas to develop their understanding of the relationship between different outcomes and the links between interparental conflict and outcomes for children. An initial stakeholder workshop with strategic leads supports this aim and creates a shared understanding of what the project seeks to achieve.

LOCAL AREA TIP

Having an initial meeting for senior leaders was key to ensure buy-in and to identify the people who were best placed to contribute to the outcomes framework workshop.

To begin to identify who should be invited to attend the workshop, you might consider the services or agencies that are involved in supporting families from the perspective of known RPC risk factors. The list below provides a starting point. You should also consider which local stakeholders should attend the workshop:

- Children's and adult's mental health and wellbeing services
- Early Help
- Children's social care
- Maternity services
- Health visiting services
- Drug and alcohol services
- Parenting support
- Employment services
- Youth justice
- Youth services
- Police
- Domestic abuse services
- Early years settings
- Education settings
- Public Health.

We have included a draft set of slides within the [resources section](#) of this guide to support the delivery of the workshop. When planning the workshop the aims should be agreed and the resources adapted accordingly.

The workshop with strategic leads is an opportunity to consider the impact of parental conflict on existing concerns for key agencies, for example children's challenging behaviours in school, or perinatal mental health for health visiting services.

LOCAL AREA TIP

We organised an initial meeting for senior leaders. At the meeting we presented the need for a shared outcomes framework and the research evidence base for a focus on child outcomes. We discussed the impact of exposure to parental discord on children, and the parental and interparental factors known to increase risk. The group was asked to identify staff members to take part in a workshop where we would develop our outcomes framework.

Around 15–20 people attended this first event and gave an enthusiastic response, including: colleagues from Families Together; the voluntary sector; children's social care; the education sector; health visiting; Home Start; and senior managers from both the Council and Public Health. There was a clear appetite for improving neighbourhood working, linking in with the Family Hubs agenda, the role of RPC champions across different agencies, and the importance of being able to demonstrate impact so that 'thinking RPC' can be embedded into a model of practice.

Step 3: Gathering further information – support offer and population needs

Purpose: This step helps to ensure that the outcomes you decide to focus on locally are closely linked to the needs of the population in relation to the risk factors identified in the framework.

LOCAL AREA TIP

When we started this work, we wanted to focus mainly on the identification of measurement tools. However, the preliminary work to reflect on risk factors and outcomes of interest was crucial to understand what we wanted to measure. Thinking about local population needs and parental conflict support gave us something to inform our discussions. Our recommendation for others would be to work on a shared outcomes framework to reflect not only on how to measure changes, but also on why changes are needed, and how they can be supported by the existing services and interventions.

Population need

If you do not already have a good understanding of your local population needs and how these relate to RPC then a key step in developing your local RPC outcomes framework would be to develop an RPC needs assessment. A needs assessment is a systematic method for reviewing the presence of certain characteristics or conditions in the population that are associated with parental conflict. The **RPC needs assessment template** is a useful tool to consider your local data. We would suggest completing an RPC needs assessment in advance of developing your local RPC outcomes framework.

The evidence indicates that factors such as economic stress, family and household factors, and parents' poor mental health can influence interparental conflict. Understanding the prevalence of these factors is an important step in assessing local parental conflict need; particularly amongst parents who are more likely to experience them. For example, parents at key transition points, such as becoming a parent, when children start school or those experiencing relationship breakdown.

More detailed guidance and a list of questions to help understand the prevalence of risk factors in the local population is included within the **needs assessment guide** and a draft template has been developed to help you structure your needs assessment.

LOCAL AREA TIP

Understanding our local population needs data

Prior to our shared outcomes framework workshop, we decided to use the EIF outcomes framework tool to reflect on the ways that risk factors lead to parental conflict, exposing children to conflict and resulting in poor child outcomes. We gathered population data on relevant risk factors to bring this to life in the local context. We drew on a range of available data sources so that in the workshop we would be able to apply the known risk factors and child outcomes to our local population.

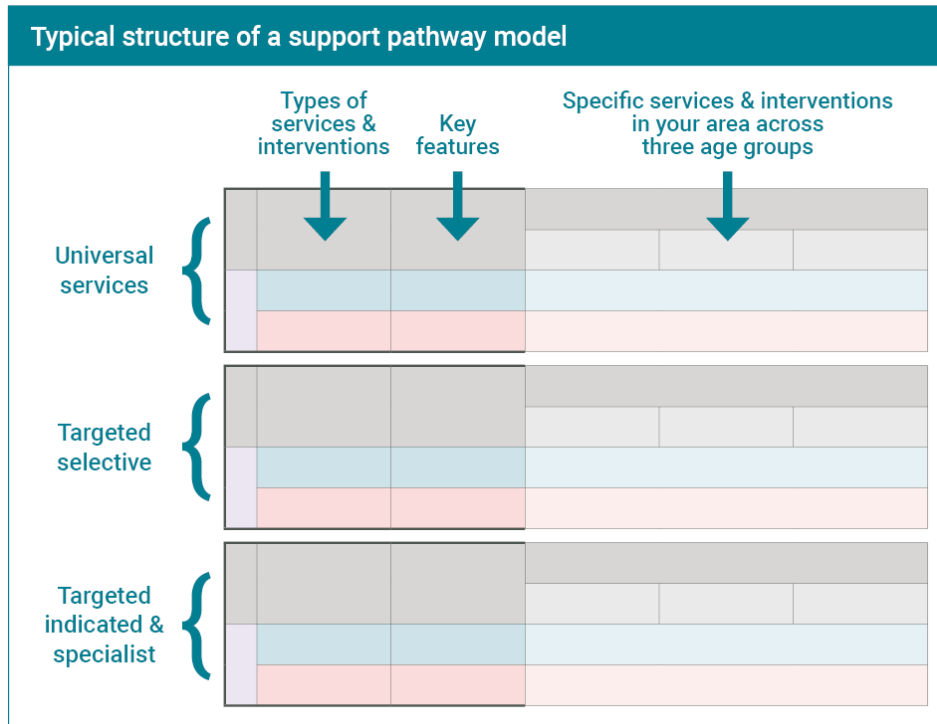
The local support offer

Purpose: Alongside the information on population needs an understanding of the local support offer helps to identify the local outcomes of interest. This step begins to make links between the support in place for families and the outcomes they seek to improve. This will also support you to identify where particular outcomes are already being measured across different agencies

You could use EIF's guide on [developing a relationship support pathway](#) for families to design a survey to better understand your local RPC support offer. The survey should be completed for all interventions and support that is available in the local area which aim to reduce the impact of parental conflict on children; whether directly working with couples, co-parents, individual parents, children, or family groups or indirectly through training practitioners for instance.

When completing this step it is important to consider the specific outcomes that services are seeking to improve as this will help, alongside the information regarding population needs, to identify the local outcomes of interest (see figure 2 below for an example support pathway structure).

FIGURE 2: EXAMPLE SUPPORT PATHWAY STRUCTURE



Step 4: Convening a stakeholder workshop

Purpose: To bring together stakeholders to consider the local evidence and to use this to develop a local RPC outcomes framework.

LOCAL AREA TIP

During this work it was helpful to have the support of others to move it forward and share ideas and best practice. Working together allowed us to feel we were not working in isolation and enabled our colleagues to have a better understanding of the importance of this work and the RPC agenda. Constructive challenge and feedback from someone not familiar with the area or the desired outcomes can provide a fresh perspective.

We found it challenging to engage some key agencies often involved with families where there is a risk of parental conflict, such as police and maternity services. This has led us to develop a range of engagement strategies – for example through known contacts – to ensure attendance, and to plan follow-up conversations with those agencies unable to attend the workshop. We are also planning to offer brief awareness raising sessions to key staff within these agencies.

A second workshop which includes those responsible for delivering support or services can be held to develop and agree your outcomes framework. The stakeholders that attend this workshop could be nominated by the strategic leads that attend the first workshop. Those attending should have a good understanding of the following within their service:

- What outcomes are being measured?
- How are these outcomes being measured?
- Is an outcomes framework already being used, how is this applied?
- How do existing outcomes align with the evidence on reducing parental conflict and the impact on children's outcomes?

The case study below articulates how one local area facilitated their outcomes framework workshop. This local area followed a similar structure to that set out in the slides in the [resources section](#).

LOCAL AREA TIP

The outcomes framework workshop

By stepping back from a focus on delivery and looking instead at what improved child outcomes would look like, we sought to orientate ourselves to the contributions of our different agencies and how we could measure impact together.

We presented some evidence of the impact of parental conflict on child outcomes and some key population statistics, and we linked local data to the risk factors and child outcomes included in the EIF outcomes framework. This helped us to explore how agencies see a different part of the whole picture of families' lives and experiences.

The aim of the second part of the workshop was to identify outcomes of interest based on the local population and local offer. To guide the discussion, we asked participants to interrogate a working draft of a framework rather than starting from scratch. We asked participants (working in small groups) to identify the desired outcomes they felt were most important to the local population and our local offer.

The final part of the workshop was aimed at identifying practical and relevant outcome measures. Based on the previous discussions, we reflected on the importance of using valid outcome measures. We asked participants to report if they were already using outcome measures and to list all the outcome measures they could think of that would help identify parental conflict and consider impact.

The proposed slides provided in the [resources section](#) can be used to shape your outcomes framework workshop, taking account of how the session may need to be adapted to meet the overarching project aims. You should also consider the information attendees will need in advance of the workshop such as a summary of your local population needs and RPC support offer.

Step 5: Co-producing a framework that is easy to grasp and meaningful

Purpose: In order that your RPC outcomes framework can be clearly understood and applied it is important to present this in a clear and accessible way. The process of developing your framework also helps to identify what information should be included.

Providing a **draft framework** for attendees of the outcomes framework workshop, such as the example shared in the resources section, can help to support thinking and to frame the conversation around local outcomes of interest. This can then be developed further following the workshop.

When developing your outcomes framework it is important to consider the following:

- Is the information relevant to your overarching project aims?
- Are there existing outcomes frameworks in your local area that could be adapted for this project to support consistent messaging and alignment?
- How readily available is the data you wish to use for each measure? For example, is it already collected, if not is it easy to collect? This will be considered further in the final step: identifying suitable measurement tools.

Step 6: Identifying suitable measurement tools

Purpose: This step considers how child and family outcomes specified in your local outcomes framework can be measured.

Initially you may want to consider information that is already being collected locally to understand the impact of support for families on outcomes for children and young people. This might include management data and existing outcome measures.

FIGURE 3: RPC MEASURES SELECTOR

Child outcomes OR Parent or couple relationship outcomes

Measure	Psychometric Features	Implementation Features
Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL/6-18)	4/4	1/4
Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)	4/4	4/4
Mood and Feelings Questionnaire (MFQ)	4/4	4/4
Revised Child Anxiety and Depression Scale (RCADS)	3/4	3/4

Further to this, EIF has developed some practical resources to help local areas select validated outcomes measures that are appropriate to their local context. A good starting point is the **RPC outcomes framework** as for each outcome, measures that could be used to measure them are listed. **EIF's practical guidance** on selecting and using valid, reliable and practical measures to evaluate interventions may also be of interest.

Another useful resource is the **RPC Measures Selector**, shown in figure 3 which asks users to answer a few questions before suggesting potential measures to meet their requirements.

As we learned from the local area example above it may also be helpful to consider this with stakeholders in your outcomes framework workshop, this will support a better understanding of what is already being used to measure outcomes, and whether existing measures could be used in understanding the impact of interventions on outcomes for families and children affected by parental conflict.

Using your local RPC outcomes framework

The final structure for your RPC outcomes framework will depend on your initial project aims but will likely be similar in structure to the framework template shared below in the resources section.

An effective local outcomes framework for RPC will be one that is not only evidence based but also manageable to maintain, embedded in 'mainstream' organisational performance reporting and used to inform strategic planning and service development.

It can also be effective in engaging other services to understand the role they play in improving child outcomes. The outcomes framework can also be shared with partners, such as those mentioned at the beginning of this guide, to help with their strategic planning.

Resources

» **Outcomes framework project plan** [\[DOWNLOAD\]](#)

A template project plan for development of a local outcomes framework for RPC which can be amended to reflect your local project aims and activity.

» **Workshop 1: Draft slides** [\[DOWNLOAD\]](#)

Draft slides that can be updated and used to structure an initial strategic lead workshop.

» **Workshop 2: Draft slides** [\[DOWNLOAD\]](#)

Draft slides that can be updated and used to structure a stakeholder workshop to develop an local RPC outcomes framework.

» **Shared outcomes framework template** [\[DOWNLOAD\]](#)

A suggested structure for the local RPC outcomes framework that can be introduced as part of workshop 2 to develop and prioritise outcomes of focus.