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Reducing Parental Conflict Programme Evaluation

Report on early implementation

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Executive summary

Introduction

Parents play a critical role in giving children the experiences and skills they need to succeed. However, studies have found that children who are exposed to parental conflict can be negatively affected in the short and longer terms.¹ It can impact on children's early emotional and social development, their educational attainment and later employability - limiting their chances to lead fulfilling, happy lives.

The Reducing Parental Conflict (RPC) programme aims to help avoid the damage that parental conflict causes to children through the provision of evidence-based parental conflict support, training for practitioners working with families and enhancing local authority and partner services. The programme seeks to address conflict below the threshold of domestic abuse.

As a learning initiative, evaluation is central to the RPC programme. Findings from this evaluation will contribute to the wider evidence base on what works for families to reduce parental conflict and will support local authorities and their partners to embed the parental conflict agenda into their services.

The evaluation consists of 3 strands which correspond to 3 programme elements:

- **Face-to-face intervention delivery:** To assess how the face-to-face² provision of evidence-based interventions in 31 local authorities, clustered in 4 geographical areas, is implemented and delivered and the impact of the interventions in reducing parental conflict and improving child outcomes.
- **Training:** To study whether and how the training of practitioners and relationship support professionals has influenced practice on the ground. Focusing on the identification of parents in conflict, building the skills and confidence to work with, or refer, parents in conflict and the overall support available.
- **Local integration:** To examine whether and how local authorities across England have integrated elements of parental conflict support into mainstream services for families and with what success.

This is the first output from the RPC programme evaluation, providing interim findings on early implementation.

¹ Harold et al. (2016) What works to Enhance Inter-Parental Relationships and Improve Outcomes for Children. London: Department for Work and Pensions.

² The programme was designed to test face to face intervention delivery and this report covers a period prior to the C19 pandemic and the necessary switch to remote delivery.

Findings

Baseline awareness of parental conflict and its impact

- Prior to being approached by the RPC programme, it was common for local authorities not to have thought about tackling parental conflict below levels amounting to domestic abuse. In many areas parental conflict had not historically been seen as a policy area or priority. The few notable exceptions tended to have experience of the Local Family Offer.³
- Surveyed before the programme, only one local authority felt they were progressing the reducing parental conflict agenda well. Significant barriers were a lack of common understanding of what constituted parental conflict, reported by 57% of LAs, and a lack of key-worker confidence reported by 53%.
- A significant early challenge local authorities reported was working out at what point conflict in a relationship becomes destructive. They appreciated that conflict in relationships is very common and were struggling to find mechanisms to help distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable conflict.

Perceptions of RPC programme impact and potential

- The programme has raised the profile of parental conflict through highlighting the evidence of its impact on children's outcomes and providing a common language to communicate and record parental conflict that does not amount to domestic abuse. In the past domestic abuse and parental conflict have been conflated into a single issue.
- Local authorities and stakeholders were positive about the potential of the programme to:
 - improve outcomes for children in their area; and
 - reduce the strain on more resource-intensive services through early intervention in parental conflict.
- However, resource constraints and the necessary focus of local authorities on delivering statutory services led some to question whether the inroads made by the programme are sustainable, particularly when the dedicated funding ends.

The value of the Regional Integration Lead role

- The 6 Regional Integration Leads (RIL), who were seconded from local authorities to DWP to assist with embedding the programme, have been valuable in persuading local authorities to engage with the programme. Their backgrounds, working in local authority settings, has enabled them to talk credibly about how the programme could fit in to other local authority activities and contribute towards tackling local priorities.
- Contact between the RILs and local authorities has been fairly frequent. Just under half of local authorities (45%) reported having contact with their RIL at least fortnightly with a further third (31%) reporting monthly contact.

³ The Local Family Offer was piloted in 12 local authorities in England and developed innovative local strategies to support families to sustain a safe and nurturing environment for their children. The findings from the Local Family Offer informed the development of the RPC programme.

- RILs were instrumental in helping local authorities to complete their applications for the Strategic Leadership Support (SLS) and Practitioner Training (PT) grants (74% of local authorities agreed). RILs provided guidance on how to complete the forms, examples of what other local authorities had done and made suggestions for other local authorities to link with.

The Strategic Leadership Support grant

- The SLS grant was made available for local authorities and their partners to use in ways that best suit them and their aspirations in respect of reducing parental conflict. As such it was very well received and seen as extremely flexible.
- The SLS funding was most commonly intended to be used, at least in part, to pay for multi-agency working groups focused on reducing parental conflict (63%), to fund events and conferences (58%), for needs assessments or data analysis (44%) and staffing, both internal (44%) and external (22%).
- Impacts of the SLS grant were yet to be realised but there was emerging evidence that grant-funded activities were helping to drive awareness of parental conflict among practitioners and at a strategic level.

The Practitioner Training grant

- The PT grant was provided to local authorities to purchase training developed specifically for the programme for frontline practitioners and their supervisors.
- The training consists of 4 modules and a workshop as follows:
 - Module 1: Understanding parental conflict and its impact on child outcomes
 - Module 2: Recognising and supporting parents in parental conflict
 - Module 3: Working with parents in conflict
 - Module 4: Parental conflict: The role of supervisors and managers
 - Train the Trainer: a 2-day workshop for individuals delivering the training in Modules 1-4.
- The training focus of the programme was central to its appeal as a possible pathway to equipping practitioners to intervene early, reducing resourcing pressure in the longer term. Nearly nine in ten (86%) local authorities reported that practitioner training was important in helping them to embed the RPC programme into their service.
- Although widely welcomed some managers and commissioners found the PT grant too rigid and wished that they had been able to choose their own (local) training provider, trainers and/or use the grant to purchase venue space. Some also reported difficulties with booking the training whilst others were overwhelmingly positive about the booking process.

The RPCP training

- Findings relating to the delegate experience of the training are indicative, being based on ~3 months of survey data, with the survey remaining live for a further 8 months to build the evidence.

- It is clear that the training covered new ground for the majority of those practitioners participating. Most delegates (70%) had never received training on parental conflict before, either specifically or as part of broader development activities, and views on the content of the training were positive.
- Three-quarters (74%) of respondents said the training was very relevant to the situations they face at work and the parents they work with and three-quarters (76%) believed that they will be able to make use of what they have learnt through the training in their day-to-day roles.
- Practitioners were most positive about modules 1 (understanding parental conflict), 2 (recognising parental conflict) and 3 (working with parents in conflict). They felt these modules were useful and on average gave them a score of 4.4 out of 5. Practitioners were slightly less positive about module 4 (the role of supervisors) and Train the Trainer, which both scored an average of 3.9 out of 5. Results for module 4 and Train the Trainer are based on small numbers of surveys so this will be an area of future monitoring.
- Among delegates and wider stakeholders, the anticipated longer term impacts of the practitioner training were:
 - improved recognition of parental conflict as a concept;
 - early intervention in cases of parental conflict; and
 - increased confidence among practitioners in addressing parental conflict.

Evaluation

This is the first output from the RPC programme evaluation, providing interim findings on early implementation from research covering training and local integration.

The following data collections were completed in 2019 and are reported here:

- Six in-depth interviews with RILs⁴ on the types of activities they had undertaken and the responses of different local authorities.
- An online survey of local authorities (81 respondents) and ten case study visits focused on awareness of, and provision for parents in conflict, prior to launch of the programme, as well as perceptions of the value of the RPC programme. These also covered which elements of the programme local authorities were involved with and what the local area aspirations were in relation to parental conflict.
- Thirty manager and commissioner interviews to discuss how the SLS and PT grants had been spent and their impacts so far.
- Three months' survey data from wave 1 of the practitioner training longitudinal survey (121 respondents) exploring experiences of the training and perceived impacts on practitioners' ability to identify and support parents.

⁴ Six individuals were seconded from local authorities into the RIL role. Their role is to provide expert advice and support to local authorities and their partners and maximise the opportunities that the programme presents.

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Glossary

<p>Children of Alcohol Dependent Parents (COADeP) Innovation Fund</p>	<p>The government announced this fund to support children living with alcohol dependent parents in April 2018. The fund is also tackling parental conflict among alcohol dependent parents and is co-funded by the Reducing Parental Conflict programme.</p>
<p>Contract Package Area (CPA)</p>	<p>Face-to-face delivery of RPC interventions is taking place across 31 local authorities, which are clustered in 4 geographic areas known as Contract Package Areas. These are Westminster, Gateshead, Hertfordshire and Dorset.</p>
<p>Domestic Abuse</p>	<p>Conflict in a relationship where there will be an imbalance of power and one parent may feel fearful of the other.</p>
<p>Early Intervention Foundation (EIF)</p>	<p>The Early Intervention Foundation is an independent charity established in 2013 to champion and support the use of effective early intervention to improve the lives of children and young people at risk of experiencing poor outcomes.</p>
<p>Frontline Practitioner (FLP)</p>	<p>Local authority colleagues and their partners working with families including those who work for services such as social work, health visiting teams and early years' services.</p>
<p>Local Family Offer (LFO)</p>	<p>The Local Family Offer was piloted in 12 local authorities in England and developed innovative local strategies to support families to sustain a safe and nurturing environment for their children. The findings from the Local Family Offer informed the development of the RPC programme.</p>
<p>Parental Conflict</p>	<p>Conflict in relationships is expressed through many different behaviours which can have an impact on families' lives. When conflict is between parents, it can have negative effects on their children's mental health and wider development. Disagreements in relationships are normal and not problematic when both people feel able to handle and resolve them. But when parents are entrenched in conflict that is frequent, intense and poorly resolved it is likely to have a negative impact on the parents and their children.</p>

Practitioner Training grant (PT)	The Practitioner Training grant is used to buy spaces for staff in the local authority area to attend bespoke RPCP training delivered by Knowledgepool.
Reducing Parental Conflict (RPC) programme	The Reducing Parental Conflict programme is the subject of this evaluation. It aims to help avoid the damage that parental conflict causes to children through the provision of evidence-based parental conflict support, training for practitioners working with families and enhancing local authority and partner services.
Regional Integration Lead (RIL)	There were 6 RILs in England seconded from local authorities to DWP. They are available to provide expert advice and support to local authorities and their partners and maximise the opportunities that the programme presents.
Single Point of Contact (SPOC)	The person based at each local authority nominated to be responsible for coordinating the Reducing Parental Conflict programme. It is likely they are based in Early Help services or similar, but it does vary by local authority. This person is the main point of contact for the RILs.
Strategic Leadership Support grant (SLS)	The SLS grant is used to help local authorities and their partners to raise the profile of parental conflict and fund activities to integrate reducing parental conflict into their provision.
Troubled Families Coordinator (TFC)	The Troubled Families programme provides dedicated support to the most disadvantaged families with multiple and complex problems to change their lives for the better. The role of Troubled Families Co-ordinators is to manage the programme activities.

Chapter 1: Introduction, background and methodology

This chapter outlines the background to the project and provides an overview of the evaluation methodology. It also provides finer details on the elements of the evaluation that have been conducted to November 2019 and the findings that are discussed in this report.

Introduction

Parents play a critical role in giving children the experiences and skills they need to succeed. However, studies have found that children who are exposed to parental conflict can be negatively affected in the short and longer terms.⁵ It can impact on children's early emotional and social development, their educational attainment and later employability - limiting their chances to lead fulfilling, happy lives.

The government wants every child to have the best start in life and reducing harmful levels of conflict between parents - whether they are together or separated - can contribute to this. Sometimes separation can be the best option for a couple, but even then, continued co-operation and communication between parents is better for their children. This is why DWP introduced the Reducing Parental Conflict programme. Backed by up to £39m, the programme is encouraging local authorities across England to integrate services and approaches which address parental conflict into their local provision for families.

Evaluation is central to the Reducing Parental Conflict programme. Evidence from the evaluation of the programme will contribute to the wider evidence base on what works for families to reduce parental conflict and will support local authorities and their partners to embed the parental conflict agenda into their services.

This is the first evaluation report, providing early findings on programme implementation in its infancy.

The evolution of the Reducing Parental Conflict programme

Disagreements in relationships are normal and not problematic when both people feel able to handle and resolve them. However, when parents are entrenched in conflict that is frequent, intense and poorly resolved it is likely to have a negative impact on the parents and their children.

⁵ Harold et al. (2016) What works to Enhance Inter-Parental Relationships and Improve Outcomes for Children. London: Department for Work and Pensions.

Since 2015, the Department for Work and Pensions has been working with a small group of local authorities to test ways of addressing parental conflict as part of their Local Family Offer. The lessons learned from work in these areas informed the development of the Reducing Parental Conflict programme, which was announced in April 2017 as part of *Improving Lives: Helping Workless Families*.⁶

“In the light of the strength of the evidence on the damaging impact on children of parental conflict we are launching a new programme to embed proven parental conflict provision in local areas.”

The Reducing Parental Conflict programme aims to support local areas to embed action to reduce parental conflict and improve outcomes for children.

The RPC programme seeks to address conflict below the threshold of domestic abuse. Where there is domestic abuse there will be an imbalance of power and one parent may feel fearful of the other. If domestic abuse is suspected or identified more specialist support should be offered.

Evidence supporting the Reducing Parental Conflict programme

Research has found that the couple relationship has a significant impact on the parenting behaviours of the individual couple members, as well as on the mental health and longer-term outcomes of the child.⁷

The latest data⁸ shows that parental conflict is a significant issue:

- Where a child lives with both parents in the same household, more than one in ten (12 per cent) of children have at least one parent who reports relationship distress.
- Children living in workless families are 2 times more likely to experience parental conflict than in families where both parents are in work.
- Children in workless families are almost twice as likely to live with at least one parent reporting symptoms of anxiety and/or depression. And they are nearly twice as likely to fail to reach expected levels at all stages of their education.

Delivery of the Reducing Parental Conflict programme

The programme is designed to increase the support that is available and provided to disadvantaged parents in conflict through different elements of activity.

- Face-to-face intervention delivery: Providing evidence-based interventions that are designed to reduce parental conflict and improve child outcomes.

⁶ DWP 2017 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-lives-helping-workless-families>

⁷ Harold et al. (2016) What works to Enhance Inter-Parental Relationships and Improve Outcomes for Children. London: Department for Work and Pensions. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/509368/what-works-to-enhance-inter-parental-relationships.pdf

⁸ DWP 2020 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parental-conflict-indicator-201112-to-201718/parental-conflict-indicator-201112-to-201718#relationship-distress-in-couple-parent-families>

- Training: Provision of training for multi-agency practitioners such as social workers to increase understanding of the parental conflict evidence base, enhance their confidence and ability to identify and discuss parental conflict with parents and apply the evidence-base in family support practice. Provision for supervisors and managers to support their staff in integrating reducing parental conflict is also being delivered.
- Local integration: Provision of funding and support to integrate elements of parental conflict support into mainstream services for families.
- A Challenge Fund to test innovative activity, including digital support (which is out of scope of this evaluation).⁹

Face-to-face delivery of interventions

The face-to-face provision aims to ensure evidence-based parental conflict interventions to improve children's outcomes are more widely available, building capacity and supply in the sector.

Eight interventions that are designed to be delivered face-to-face are being implemented. Some of these have a relatively strong evidence base supporting their efficacy in the UK, but not necessarily for all family types or for different delivery methods. Others have been successful in non-UK settings but have not been tested in the UK. In all cases the interventions being implemented present significant opportunities for learning.

Interventions are of either a moderate or high intensity. Parents are allocated to the interventions on the basis of the level of conflict in the relationship. This is identified via an assessment tool developed for the programme by subject matter experts and known as the Referral Stage Questionnaire. This is administered to parents by a frontline practitioner working with the family. It consists of a range of established assessment scales to identify the types and levels of conflict parents are experiencing. It examines the mechanisms through which child outcomes are affected, or the features of an inter-parental relationship that have been shown to impact on children's outcomes. If either parent scores high for conflict, both parents are offered a high intensity intervention.

Some interventions are delivered in a group setting, some as couple sessions and some on an individual basis. Couples who remain in a relationship as well as those who have separated are eligible. Existing and expectant parents are eligible.

The interventions are outlined in Table 1.1 on the next pages.

⁹ Findings from the digital discovery report. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reducing-parental-conflict-a-digital-discovery>

Table 1.1 Face-to-face interventions

Intervention Name	Brief Description	Intensity
Parents Plus (Parenting when Separated)	Drawing on international long-term evidence, the Parenting when Separated Programme is a 6 session course that highlights practical steps parents can take to help their children cope and thrive as well as coping successfully themselves	Moderate
Parents in Dispute (mentalization)	This aims to help couples, whether separated or together, experiencing high levels of inter-parental conflict gain more perspective in order that they can start to put the needs of their children first. It is based on a model which comprises an initial phase of preparation and assessment, meeting with each parent separately and a second phase of joint sessions with 2 therapists offering 6-12 sessions	High
Family Check Up and everyday parenting	This involves an initial interview, family and child assessment, and feedback. During the feedback session, the provider and parent discuss the family's assessment results. The second step most often includes sessions from the Everyday Parenting (EDP) program. The EDP is a behavioural parenting intervention that is tailored to meet the specific needs and strengths of individual families to strengthen positive parenting skills. This intervention is aimed at both couples and separated parents	Moderate
4Rs 2Ss (Strengthening Programme)	The 4Rs and 2Ss is a curriculum-based practice designed to strengthen families, decrease child behavioural problems, and increase engagement in care. It is delivered as a 16 week multiple family group programme that focuses on addressing parts of family life that have been empirically linked to youth conduct difficulties	High
Triple P Family Transitions	Family Transitions Triple P (FTTP) Level 5 is for separated parents experiencing difficulties as a consequence of separation and divorce. Five group or individual sessions (each lasting 2 hours) are delivered to help parents develop the skills to resolve conflict with their former partner and cope with stress	High

Intervention Name	Brief Description	Intensity
Triple P Enhanced	This is a targeted selective intervention, delivered to individual parents (either one or both parents) whether separated or together. It consists of 4 modules delivered in 3 to 8 individual consultations. The intervention aims to address family factors that may impact upon and complicate the task of parenting, such as parental mood and partner conflict, and problem child behaviours	High
Within My Reach	This is a targeted selective intervention, delivered in a group format to individuals (i.e. not couples), who may or may not be in a relationship. It consists of 14 hours of content. This intervention was originally designed for all adults not specifically parents. It therefore targets relationship outcomes in general, rather than focusing on parenting or parental conflict	Moderate
Incredible Years Advanced	This is for couples and separated co- parents with children aged 4-12 years. It is delivered as 18 weekly sessions for 12-20 parents at a time. The focus is on parents' and children's communication and problem solving skills, knowing how and when to get and give support to family members and recognising feelings and emotions	High

A tender exercise was run inviting organisations to bid to deliver the interventions. Four contracts, covering clusters of local authority areas, were awarded. These 4 areas are known as Contract Package Areas (CPA) and are:

<p>1. Westminster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kensington & Chelsea • Brent • Croydon • Hammersmith & Fulham • Camden • Lambeth 	<p>2. Gateshead</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcastle • Sunderland • Northumberland • South Tyneside • Hartlepool • Middlesbrough • Durham • Stockton • Redcar & Cleveland
<p>3. Hertfordshire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essex • Cambridgeshire • Buckinghamshire • Southend • Peterborough • Thurrock 	<p>4. Dorset</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Somerset • Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole • Plymouth • Devon • Wiltshire • Torbay

The contracts were issued to prime providers in each CPA who separately appointed sub-providers to assist with delivering the interventions.

The interventions started to be delivered between May 2019 and January 2020.

Training

The training provided through the programme is available throughout England and consists of a range of options. It is primarily aimed at frontline practitioners (FLPs).

A training provider, KnowledgePool, was appointed to produce 4 bespoke training modules and a “train the trainer” workshop. The first 3 modules are designed to build upon each other, with module 1 offering an introduction to the concept of parental conflict, module 2 progressing to cover the identification of it, and module 3 building confidence in addressing it, offering tools and support for frontline practitioners working with families. Practitioners can choose which modules they complete and the order they take them in.

The fourth module is designed for supervisors to enable them to support their colleagues working with parents in conflict.

The train the trainer workshop is intended to build the capacity of those already skilled in training to deliver training about parental conflict and the impacts of it. It is designed to be a two-day workshop.

The content of each module is outlined below.

- **Module 1: Understanding parental conflict & its impact on child outcomes:** This module focuses on raising awareness of the evidence base surrounding parental conflict and increasing understanding of the impact on child outcomes, followed by reflections on how to apply this evidence base into areas of work.
- **Module 2: Recognising and supporting parents in parental conflict:** This module aims to help with recognising relationship distress at an early stage and identifying when this could be damaging, build confidence on effective questioning and communication techniques and provide guidance on practitioner roles in discussing parental conflict with parents.
- **Module 3: Working with parents in conflict:** This module delivers information on applying the evidence-base to family support practice. It gives practitioners the opportunity to learn and practice skills and strategies to enable parental engagement in effective parental conflict support.
- **Module 4: Parental Conflict: The role of supervisors and managers:** This module aims to equip supervisors and managers with the knowledge and tools to support front line practitioners in addressing parental conflict.
- **Train the Trainer:** Two-day workshop designed to familiarise and upskill trainers, enabling them to confidently deliver the complete programme of Reducing Parental Conflict classroom-based training modules.

Local authorities have been provided with a Practitioner Training grant they can use to buy the training most suited to their local needs from KnowledgePool. They can liaise with KnowledgePool about the mode of delivery of each module with some modules being delivered online enabling practitioners to access them at a time that best suits them. Local authorities decide which practitioners access the training.

Training has been available since April 2019.

In addition to the training delivered by KnowledgePool there is a ring-fenced budget to train relevant professionals to deliver interventions such as the 8 being delivered face-to-face. At the time of writing this training has not started.

Local integration

The local integration element of the programme covers all areas of England. It aims to encourage local areas to consider the evidence base around parental conflict and integrate support for parents in conflict into existing provision.

To support local areas with integration DWP recruited a team of 6 Regional Integration Leads (RILs). The RILs are seconded from local authorities to DWP and are available to provide expert advice and support to local authorities and their partners to maximise the opportunities that the programme presents. Two RILs have been in post since April 2018 with the other 4 starting in autumn 2018.

A Strategic Leadership Support (SLS) grant was made available for local authorities and their partners to use in ways that best suit them and their aspirations in respect of reducing parental conflict. This was available from January 2019 and was intended to have been used by March 2020.

Local authorities have been encouraged to use a Planning Tool developed by the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) to help them decide on priorities and track their progress. This was intended to be reviewed on a regular basis and DWP asked for them to be submitted for analysis in May 2019. Local authorities have also been encouraged to access information made available on the RPC online hub hosted by the EIF.¹⁰

Evaluation

Evaluation is central to the Reducing Parental Conflict programme. In January 2019 DWP commissioned a large scale, multi-method external evaluation of the programme. DWP analysts will conduct a complementary internal impact evaluation.

The external evaluation is largely a process evaluation through which the range of activities supported by the programme are being examined to build the evidence base about what works to reduce parental conflict. It is anticipated that this will support local authorities and their partners to embed the parental conflict agenda effectively in their services.

Mirroring the programme design, the evaluation covers the face-to-face delivery of interventions, training and local integration. The main objectives for each element of the evaluation are:

- **Face-to-face intervention delivery:** To assess how the face-to-face provision was implemented and delivered across the participating areas as well as capture the impact of the interventions in reducing parental conflict and improving child outcomes.
- **Training:** To study whether and how training with practitioners and relationship support professionals has changed practice on the ground in terms of the identification of parents in conflict, support available and the skills and confidence of practitioners to identify conflict, discuss with parents and make referrals to available provision.
- **Local integration:** To examine whether and how local authorities have integrated elements of parental conflict provision into mainstream services for families and how this differs by area.

The next table shows the different evaluation components that were ongoing or completed at the time of this report. All elements included in Table 1.2 are discussed in this report.

¹⁰ <https://reducingparentalconflict.eif.org.uk/about/hub>

Table 1.2: The RPC programme evaluation elements completed or ongoing at the time of this report

Integration	Training	Face-to-face delivery of interventions
Depth interviews with Regional Integration Leads (wave 1)	Depth interviews with local authority managers and commissioners (includes coverage of SLS)	No fieldwork on intervention delivery had started at the time of this report.
Online survey of local authorities (follow-up 1)	Online survey of practitioners trained (wave 1) ¹¹	
Case studies of local authorities (wave 1)		

Table 1.3 shows the different evaluation components that had not been completed at the time of this report.

Table 1.3: The RPC programme evaluation elements to be completed in the future and included in future reports

Integration	Training	Face-to-face delivery of interventions
Depth interviews with Regional Integration Leads (wave 2)	Depth interviews with practitioners trained	Depth interviews with referral staff (referring parents to interventions)
Online survey of local authorities (follow-up 2)	Online survey of practitioners trained (wave 2)	Survey of intervention delivery providers
		Survey of participants (6 months after attending intervention)
Case studies of local authorities (wave 2), which also includes visits with providers	Parental Conflict Intervention Training research	Survey of non-completing participants
		Depth interviews with participants

Methodology

This section provides detail on the approach taken for each of the evaluation elements covered in this report.

¹¹ Throughout this report, findings are based on the initial 3-months of fieldwork of the online practitioner survey. This fieldwork was ongoing at the time so findings are subject to change.

In-depth interviews with Regional Integration Leads (wave 1)

Six RIL posts were created for the RPC programme to provide support across all 151 upper tier local authorities. RILs were seconded from local authorities to DWP to provide this support for the duration of the programme. The first RIL in post began in their role in April 2018. Each RIL was assigned one of the following regions to support - London, South East, Midlands, South West, North East and North West.

A 2-hour face-to-face interview was conducted with each of the RILs, between the 5 and 22 March 2019. The interviews with RILs explored the context of the local authorities they were working with and the progress that local authorities had made in addressing parental conflict. The interviews also explored experiences and key challenges of the RIL role. A semi-structured topic guide was used for the interviews.

Online survey of local authorities (follow-up 1)

The survey of local authorities was conducted online between 11 June and 6 August 2019.

The survey invites were sent to the Single Point of Contacts (SPOC) that local authorities had nominated for communication relating to the RPC programme. Contacts from all 151 local authorities were invited to take part. A week after the initial email invitation was sent a reminder email was sent to all the SPOCs that had not completed the survey. A fortnight after the initial invitation was sent a final reminder was sent. The survey achieved a 53% response rate (81 local authorities completed the survey). The survey took an average of around 15 minutes to complete.

A breakdown of the characteristics of survey respondents is provided in Annex 2.

Case study visits to local areas (wave 1)

Ten case study visits with local authorities and their partners took place between 17 July and 16 August 2019. The case studies consisted of in-depth interviews and/or mini groups with the RPC lead and other staff that had been involved in the development of strategies to reduce parental conflict.

The local authority areas were selected to ensure a spread across regions, a mix of those who were located in Contract Package Areas (CPAs) and those who were not, as well as a range in terms of the number of RPC activities undertaken. A breakdown of the characteristics of the case studies is provided in Annex 3.

The case studies covered what each local area was doing before the programme, what they had been planning and/or had implemented to date, and what their local area's aspirations were in relation to reducing parental conflict. A semi-structured topic guide was used to aid the discussions.

In-depth interviews with managers and commissioners

Thirty telephone interviews were conducted with managers and commissioners of services related to reducing parental conflict.

The interview invitation went out to the SPOCs, who either took part in the interview themselves or nominated another member of staff who they felt would be better placed to provide information on use of the SLS and PT grants.

The majority of respondents were working within local authorities, with only a couple working in a commissioned service or third sector organisation. Most were working within Early Help, though some were working within statutory services. Most respondents had overall responsibility for RPC activities in their area and held fairly senior roles reporting direct to the head or director of service.

The interviews lasted around 45 minutes and took place between 27 September and 19 November 2019. These interviews covered how decisions were made about how to spend the SLS and PT grants, how it was spent and the impact of the grants.

An outline of the roles of the participants and the departments they worked in is given in Annex 4.

Frontline practitioner training survey (wave 1)

This survey was ongoing at the time of writing and hence this report presents interim findings based on around 3 months of data.

The survey explores frontline practitioners' experience of attending the training and their perceptions of its impact on their skills and abilities to identify and work with families who would benefit from help to resolve conflict, and/or signpost families to appropriate interventions.

The survey is being conducted online and invites are issued monthly to all those attending training in the previous month. At the time of the production of this report, a total of 542 frontline practitioners had undertaken at least one of the training modules or the Train the Trainer option (delivered by the designated Training Provider). All were invited to participate in the survey and 121 had responded to the survey when the data was drawn for reporting; a response rate of 22%.

On average the survey took around 14 minutes to complete.

The profile of respondents to the survey is shown in Annex 5.

Chapter 2: Local integration

This section discusses: the local authority context before the programme was in place, initial contact with the programme, ongoing contact with Regional Integration Leads (RILs), the Strategic Leadership Support grant application and what reducing parental conflict plans have been put in place or are underway. Findings are from interviews with the 6 RILs, 10 case study visits with local authorities and their partners, 30 interviews with managers and commissioners, the first wave of the follow-up survey with local authorities and the initial baseline survey conducted by DWP.

Prior awareness and introduction to the programme

RILs reported that local authorities had very different levels of involvement with addressing parental conflict prior to the start of the RPC programme.

They felt that in many areas parental conflict had not historically been seen as a priority. Often, they felt it had not really been considered as a policy area before.

RILs reported that, prior to the programme, sometimes there was confusion between parental conflict and domestic abuse, with some local authorities conflating the two into a single issue.

During the case study visits in July and August 2019, local authorities reinforced the findings from the interviews with RILs, as they also reported considerable variation in the understanding of parental conflict prior to formal involvement in the programme.

The following section describes the types of awareness and activity around parental conflict that preceded the start of the programme. Only a few areas had high prior awareness, with the vast majority having moderate to low awareness.

Pre-existing activity in local authorities with higher prior awareness

From the case study visits it was apparent that the few areas with an advanced understanding of parental conflict had already integrated it into their discourse and had developed programmes addressing the issue prior to the RPC programme.

These local authorities reported having multi-agency approaches directly focused on reducing parental conflict and had been working with partners in the area on projects to tackle the issue in the years before the launch of the RPC programme. They had programmes targeting parental conflict dating back 2 to 3 years, involving schools,

health workers and social workers. For one of these areas their involvement emerged from their existing domestic abuse programmes, from which they commissioned a local service to specifically target parental conflict.

“The DWP work has been built on a seed-bed of multi-agency work on parental relationships and conflict.”

These areas reported strong prior awareness of the evidence base around the impact of parental conflict on child outcomes.

RILs reported that sometimes these enhanced levels of prior engagement occurred in regional pockets, where a strong lead local authority had shared learnings and occasionally pooled resources with neighbouring authorities. They found that prior action was often triggered by being a Local Family Offer (LFO) area. The LFO was piloted in 12 local authorities in England and developed innovative local strategies to support families to sustain a safe and nurturing environment for their children.¹² The findings from the LFO helped to develop the RPC programme.

RILs found that some of these legacy LFO local authorities had already made plans for where addressing parental conflict should sit within the authority and had commissioned training or workshops (separately to RPC programme funding) to speak to different agencies about parental conflict and co-ordinate the approach to addressing this issue.

During the interviews with managers and commissioners between September and November 2019 a few also mentioned that their local authority had undertaken parental conflict activities before the RPC programme. One area mentioned that they had been influenced by an academic at their local university whose area of expertise was parental conflict. This academic support, alongside funding from the Troubled Families programme, allowed them to set up a multi-agency task group to push forward activities, training for frontline workers (not started prior to the RPC programme), trials of new interventions and investigations of how their parenting courses could incorporate elements of parental conflict support.

In another instance, a manager and commissioner stated that they felt that parental conflict had been highlighted in their local authority as they had adopted a restorative approach which emphasised conflict resolution and ensuring that all parties were involved in this process. As their local authority was fairly small, they had a strong multi-agency approach where services were joined up and communication between organisations was good.

“We’re quite a small city and a unitary local authority with one CCG [Clinical Commissioning Group], one health provider etc., we are much more kind of multi-agency working. And the restorative approach was chosen to bring together agencies to give us a shared language and a shared approach to practice right across the city.”

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-family-offer-pilot-evaluation-of-phase-1>

Pre-existing activity in local authorities with moderate prior awareness

Typically, in the few case studies that fell into this group with moderate awareness there was an appreciation that parental conflict was an issue, but prior to the RPC programme they lacked the tools or language to target it specifically. There was recognition that poor parental relationships could be damaging to children, but there were no processes for recording these relationships or risks systematically.

“It’s there, we knew about it, but we didn’t have any of the tools to deal with it.”

Some of the local authorities involved in the case studies had touched on parental conflict through their service delivery prior to the RPC programme. In some of these authorities, practitioners referred parents to relationship support providers to mediate the outcome of a dispute, or parental conflict was sometimes discussed in an assessment but these cases were not formally recorded as parental conflict. One local authority ran parent education classes looking at how parent behaviour affects children. Another directed parents to other services (e.g. finances, employment) to address the possible sources of parental conflict but did not offer targeted support for addressing the conflict itself.

Areas with moderate prior awareness tended to have conceptualised addressing parental conflict as early prevention in domestic abuse cases, rather than as a related but separate priority.

A key challenge these local authorities were experiencing was working out at what point conflict in a relationship becomes destructive. They appreciated that conflict in relationships was very common and were struggling to find mechanisms to help distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable conflict.

“We know there’s conflict in every relationship but at what point does it become destructive?”

The manager and commissioner interviews conducted in autumn 2019 also found local authorities where frontline practitioners were aware of parental conflict but there was a lack of policies, guidance and mechanisms for recording these instances as parental conflict. This, in turn, meant that cases were either not recorded or were recorded inaccurately; for example, there were cases in which parental conflict was recorded as domestic abuse, even though the professional knew that the case fell below the threshold of abuse.

Some managers and commissioners in these areas of moderate awareness made the point that sometimes the main barrier to moving the agenda onwards prior to the RPC programme had simply been funding. They reported that competing pressures meant their attention and resources were more focused on ensuring that their statutory services were secure and being delivered, and more ‘specialist’ work like reducing parental conflict was either not pursued or was dropped to free up resources for the provision of statutory services.

“I think [family mediation work] just slipped off the agenda. And probably like a lot of local authorities undergoing a series of restructures, reorganisations, making sure that our very basic core offer was well in place, and then starting to focus on more of this specialist type provision where we felt there was a gap.”

Funding constraints in areas in which parental conflict was seen to sit, such as Early Help, were also cited as a reason for the lack of development of these services. One manager and commissioner also felt that the evidence collected within Early Help was not as highly regarded as data collected by statutory services due to it being more qualitative than quantitative and sometimes anecdotal. This meant that it was often more challenging to ensure that their budgets and work were appreciated and funded appropriately.

“I think [Early Help is] not statutory so if we’re having to reduce what we do and only provide what we have to according to the government’s agenda, then obviously the statutory work gets protected. I think also in Early Help we haven’t always been as good as we could be about collecting data and telling our story about how influential we are in the work with families – we’ve got lots of anecdotal information, stories from families, case studies, but they haven’t always carried as much weight as the official data.”

Pre-existing activity in local authorities with low/no prior awareness

Most commonly local authority case studies had little to no explicit understanding of reducing parental conflict as an issue prior to the launch of the RPC programme. For some their first contact with the concept was through the bid to become involved in the programme.

These areas did not run programmes addressing parental conflict. Some aspects of parental conflict may have been touched on in their domestic abuse work but rarely in a consistent way. In one area it was said that *“practitioners may be looking at it as domestic abuse but with both parents being perpetrators”*.

In one area the impact of parental relationships on child behaviour had only recently been acknowledged.

“What we’ve had in the past is that it’s all been about kids’ behaviours and it’s actually only in the last few years we’ve really been convinced that actually it’s not about children’s behaviours, it’s about parenting behaviours.”

In other areas, there was a limited pre-existing awareness of parental conflict impacting on children’s outcomes but they had felt that it was an issue beyond the existing remit or skill level of their practitioners. In one area it was put that *“the statutory line is that’s private law”*, meaning that arguments between parents and mediating between parents was not something that was the local authority’s responsibility to address, unless the conflict was impacting the wellbeing of a child or children in the household to the extent that raised a statutory concern. Some of these areas had previously concluded that parental conflict was not something within their power to influence.

Interviews conducted in autumn 2019 with managers and commissioners also found that a lack of knowledge of the impact of parental conflict on child outcomes was a reason for local authorities not previously prioritising the reducing parental conflict agenda. Some mentioned instances where frontline practitioners within Children’s Services had felt that if parents were separated there was no longer any need to

intervene as they did not think the conflict would have a profound impact on the child. In other cases, frontline practitioners had felt that it was not their place to intervene in a situation that they viewed as private.

“It’s quite interesting looking back. There is a box for parental conflict on the assessment form that comes into the MASH [Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub] and that is recorded. But no work has been done round it. It wasn’t until this programme came out that sort of highlighted to us because what had come through from one piece of research with children that were being re-referred under the age of 4 for more than 4 occasions was that parental conflict was one of the highest causes of that.”

Prior awareness from DWP baseline survey

These qualitative findings align with the results of the baseline survey conducted with 92 local authorities between December 2018 and January 2019. The survey demonstrated that the level of understanding and awareness of parental conflict prior to the launch of the RPC programme was mixed.

At this time, over half (57%) of the local authorities surveyed stated that a key barrier to delivering reducing parental conflict provision was a lack of common understanding of what constituted parental conflict. Another key barrier that was highlighted was a lack of key worker confidence in identifying and responding to issues, with just over half (54%) of the local authorities reporting this. Just under a quarter (23%) noted that parental conflict was not on their outcomes framework, and therefore was not being prioritised. Only one local authority believed that they had not experienced any barriers and were progressing well on the RPC agenda locally prior to the programme.

The picture was similarly mixed with regard to awareness of the evidence linking parental conflict to child outcomes. Just over half (52%) stated that they were extremely or moderately aware. A quarter (25%) were somewhat aware and around a quarter (23%) were either slightly aware or not aware of the evidence.

Local authorities also varied in terms of their reports of the proportion of different practitioners who had a good understanding of the effect of parental conflict on child outcomes. In around half of local authorities (49%) most or all practitioners who work with children and families were considered to have a good understanding of parental conflict. However, in almost a quarter (23%) of local authorities, senior staff were not sure how many of these practitioners had a good understanding of the issue. It is worth bearing in mind that some local authorities could have been answering this question in relation to domestic abuse rather than parental conflict as evidence suggests the two were frequently conflated.

Initial contact with the programme

The local authorities covered in case study visits became aware of the programme either through direct contact with DWP or discovering it indirectly through colleagues or external partners.

Contact through DWP

Some of the local authority case studies became aware of the programme through an approach from a DWP contact (occasionally as part of the LFO pilot, or through their RIL). In two areas this happened informally, with the programme raised as a side discussion at meetings or conferences focussed on other topics. For one local authority, however, this process involved more assistance from their RIL, who reached out to highlight the programme, the application process and what involvement for the area would look like.

Others found out about the programme through an email outlining the details of it. For one non-CPA area this was the only contact they had prior to pulling together their bid for the PT and SLS funding grants. For another, this initial email contact was a precursor to more engagement with the programme and their involvement in the CPA, through which they gradually found out more and more about the programme.

Sources other than DWP

For some of the case study local authorities, initial awareness came from organisations that they partnered with on issues around parental conflict and domestic abuse. In one area, for example, a charity operating locally had been active in this sphere and alerted the local authority to the programme.

In some areas, awareness came through other local authority agencies. One area had a shared director and shared services with a neighbouring local authority that became involved in the programme. It was through this relationship that they first came into contact.

Motivations for involvement in the programme

In March 2019, RILs reported that, on the whole, local authorities reacted positively and enthusiastically to the concept of the RPC programme. The local authorities that were case studies in July and August 2019 reiterated this positivity about the principles behind the programme and the need to address parental conflict.

Local authority motivations for involvement with the programme were discussed in the local area visits¹³ and perceived motivations in the RIL interviews. The main reasons mentioned were that the programme:

- offered a route to cost-savings on the provision of higher cost statutory services in the future
- provided the funding to develop programmes that were underway and
- helped to improve outcomes for children and families through addressing a recognised gap in services.

A route to cost-savings on the provision of higher-cost services in the future

Several local authority case studies expressed enthusiasm about the programme as a means to alleviate budgetary pressure.

¹³ Note that the case study areas were purposively selected to include more areas that reported being actively engaged with the reducing parental conflict agenda as outlined in annex 3.

In the short term, some pointed to the additional resourcing available through the programme as a key attraction; it was seen as an opportunity to access training they simply did not have the resource to provide.

The training focus of the programme was central to its appeal as a possible pathway to reducing resourcing pressure in the longer term. By upskilling practitioners and referral staff, local authorities hoped that early interventions would become the norm, ensuring parental conflict would be addressed before it was able to manifest as more severe problems in other areas.

Some of the RILs noted that the programme was particularly timely as their local authorities were already conducting a lot of work around domestic abuse and were keen to reduce the pressure on these services, which one RIL suggested were 'clogged up' by referrals which did not meet the threshold of domestic abuse and were in fact parental conflict related.

"Domestic abuse services often are clogged up with so many referrals, then people don't necessarily meet thresholds as it is parental conflict, rather than the abusive, possessive, controlling relationship. Therefore, RPC would help save on these resources and is important."

Developing existing programmes

For those local authority case studies already active in reducing parental conflict, involvement in the programme was an opportunity to access tools to fill specific gaps in their current offering. It also enabled them to pull their programmes together into a more joined up approach.

In these areas DWP's involvement was seen as a way to focus their existing work and generate the necessary expertise to ensure that their programmes effectively targeted parental conflict.

"The level of expertise that will now be available, the heightened awareness and profile. Until the DWP programme we were in our own burrow doing this work but did feel that we were in the undergrowth trying to make these things happen, but the programme has given us an accelerated pace."

The RILs discussed that some local authorities were looking at ways to develop a broader response encompassing both parental conflict and domestic abuse.

Achieving better outcomes for families by addressing a gap in services

For the local authority case studies that had little or very limited existing parental conflict provision, involvement centred on the need to address an area of weakness.

There was a keen focus on simply raising consciousness of parental conflict as an issue in child outcomes. It was hoped that a "*heightening of awareness*" would bring the issue of reducing parental conflict into the mind set of frontline practitioners.

"To raise awareness with all professionals working with children and provide the tools for those frontline practitioners working with families, so they've got something they can use to examine it with families and reduce it."

RILs discussed that some local authorities with low awareness of reducing parental conflict, were quick to recognise a gap in their service provision for families whose levels of conflict did not quite meet the threshold for current support and whose needs might be met through the RPC programme.

“Really welcomed it, I don’t think I’ve come across one single person who hasn’t been interested in the programme...all very positive!”

Initial concerns about the programme

Although generally the response to the programme was positive, RILs encountered some initial concerns from local authorities. These concerns primarily focused on the involvement of DWP in the programme, resourcing pressure and practical considerations.

Concerns about DWP involvement

Some local authority areas that participated in the case studies felt that DWP’s approach should have included more consultation with local authorities and greater communication throughout the development and delivery of the programme. Typically, these areas had tried to input local understanding but felt it was not taken on board, which led to them feeling frustrated. The RILs also noted that they had passed on feedback from local authorities, but it did not always appear to be actioned. They too noted that involving the local areas earlier would have been beneficial.

“The whole point of using local authorities is their knowledge, experience and expertise. If you work with someone for those reasons and then don’t listen, you’re squandering a resource.”

RILs reported that some local authorities found it hard to grasp how reducing parental conflict fell under DWP’s remit and would have expected such an initiative to be led by the Department for Education (DfE). RILs reported that some local authorities felt that DWP’s main motivations were around increasing employment and reducing the cost of welfare payments rather than improving outcomes for families.

Resourcing pressure

Short-term and longer-term concerns around resourcing pressure were mentioned as initial concerns in the local authority case studies and RIL interviews.

For some, short-term resourcing pressure was seen as a possible drawback of involvement in the programme. For one local authority, the concern was about the loss of practitioners from their day to day work to take part in further training. Another local authority had found it a challenge to simply secure a programme lead within the area. In the short-term RILs had found that some local authorities had raised concerns about the level of funding available to support the implementation of the programme particularly in the context of funding constraints and a need to set spending priorities very carefully. RILs noted that some local authorities were anxious about the programme encroaching on, or taking away from the successes achieved through domestic abuse programmes.

A more long-term concern was raised during the local authority case study visits and RIL interviews around how, given their financial limitations, they would embed the learnings of the programme after it had finished. The question here was *“How do you take what we have learnt and embed it in the wider environment of having to make savings when everyone is stretched on the ground?”*. It was felt that more long term DWP support would be needed to maintain a lasting impact.

Practical considerations

RILs reported reservations from local authorities about the abilities of the contractors responsible for delivering the practitioner training, either because they had not heard of them before or they connected them with poor performance in other areas. Local authorities felt that the quality of the training was pivotal to the success of the programme, and one RIL shared this concern:

“It will make or break the programme, if it is good and well received it will make the programme successful and equally if it is bad and not well received or taken up it will break the programme.”

RILs themselves were keen to input into the practitioner training but felt there was insufficient time for them to do this adequately.

The role of Regional Integration Leads (RILs)

By the time they were interviewed in March 2019 RILs reported that they had identified a main point of contact in most of their local authorities and were developing good relationships with them. They found that local authorities were pleased to have somebody with a local government background to deal with and were receptive to communications from the RILs. Regular contact was predominantly taking place via email and telephone, however, the RILs said they had seen most local authorities face-to-face at least once by the time the interviews took place in March.

RILs reported that every local authority had its own unique structure and hence the most suitable department or agency to take the lead on the programme differed between them. RILs found that some local authorities, and particularly those with lower awareness of the RPC agenda, were unsure about where the programme should sit, and RILs sometimes had to do some work to identify their point of contact. This was complicated further by the fact that several local authorities were in the middle of restructuring their services. The single point of contact (SPOC) therefore varied between middle-management to more senior staff such as the Director of Children’s Services, Head of Service or Assistant Head of Service.

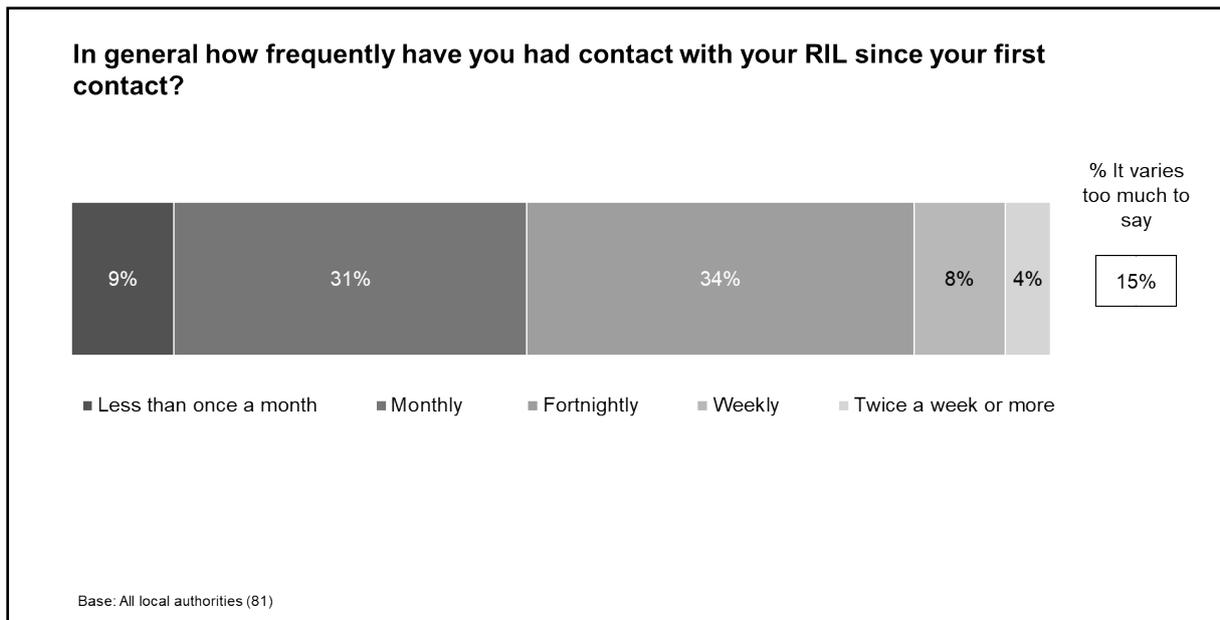
RILs felt that the seniority of the SPOC was an indicator of how serious the local authority was about embedding the programme throughout their services. They would have liked to have seen more senior managers involved.

Some local authorities were also receiving funding from the Children of Alcohol Dependent Parents (COADeP)¹⁴ Innovation Fund. RILs felt these local authorities were clear about the differences between the COADeP Innovation Fund programme and the RPC programme. They had not come across any issues or challenges at this stage for local authorities, in being involved in both. RILs generally felt the two programmes complemented each other well.

¹⁴ The government announced new support to help children living with alcohol dependent parents in April 2018. The programme was backed by a three-year £6 million joint fund from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) working with Public Health England (PHE).

When surveyed in summer 2019, local authorities reported varying levels of contact with their RIL; for many local authorities, contact was fairly frequent, with just under half (45%) stating that they had contact with their RIL fortnightly or more frequently. However, a similar proportion (40%) indicated that they had contact with their RIL monthly or less than once a month. The remainder stated that it varied too much to say (15%). Reported frequency of contact is shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: The majority of local authorities had contact with their RIL at least once a month



This variation in amount of contact with RILs was reflected in the case studies. Generally, it was more common for contact to be described as ‘frequent’.

“I’ve spoken to [my RIL] a number of times on the phone and we’ve exchanged emails quite a lot.”

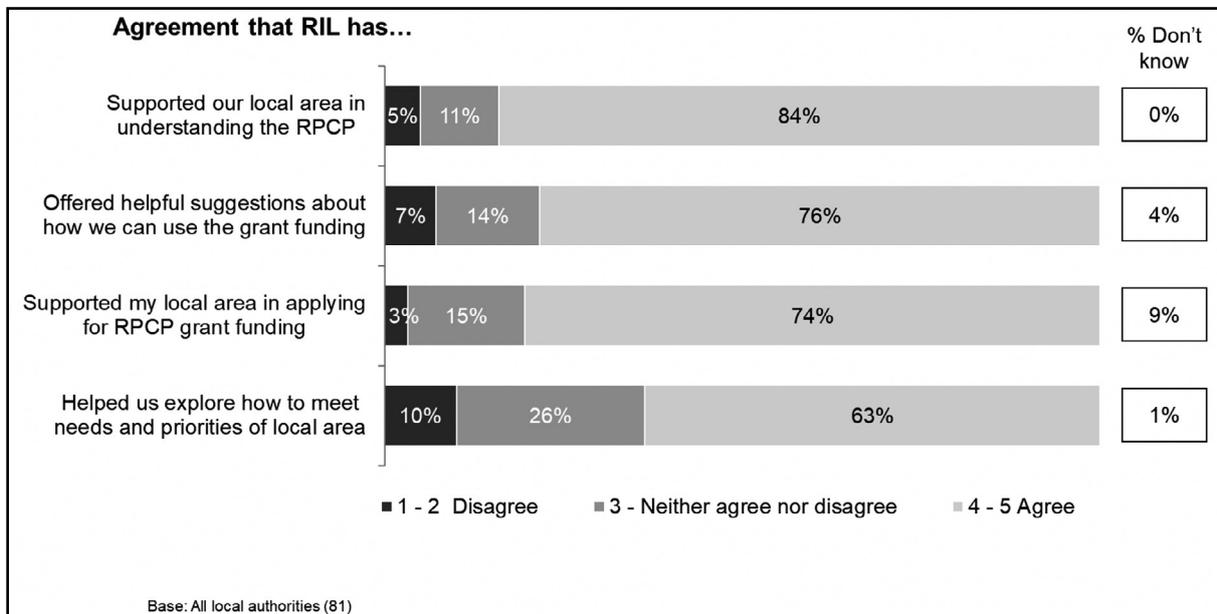
When the case studies were conducted in summer 2019, all local authorities had had face-to-face contact with their RILs at least once, and the majority more than that, either at specific events or meetings held by local authorities surrounding the programme or at more general meetings, such as Troubled Families Coordinators meetings.

Some local authorities described regular, scheduled contact while others had more ad-hoc contact as and when they needed information about something.

Overall, local authorities had positive views of their RILs. In the survey, the majority agreed with statements regarding the helpfulness and supportiveness of their RIL. Most local authorities (84%) agreed that their RIL had supported their local area in understanding the programme. Similarly, around three-quarters of local authorities agreed that their RIL has offered helpful suggestions about how they could use the grant funding (76%) and that their RIL has supported their local area in applying for RPC grant funding (74%). The importance of RILs in helping with the grant

application process was echoed in the findings from the manager and commissioner interviews. Almost two-thirds of local authorities (63%) agreed that their RIL has helped them to explore how to meet the needs and priorities of their local area.

Figure 2.2: Local authorities generally agreed that RILs supported them in understanding the RPC programme and funding opportunities



Discussions at the case study visits made it evident that RILs were valued. It was clear that RILs had explained the programme well to senior members of staff at local authorities and had been on hand to answer their queries.

“We really do share the workload, they unofficially line manage me and that’s really important as she helps me to understand the DWP. They help me understand the bigger picture stuff that’s going on. How we’re going to respond to particular challenges. It’s a really good working relationship.”

“I know that I can pick the phone up and they will be very supportive.”

In addition, there was a perception across a number of local authorities that the RILs had really helped to ‘bridge the gap’ between local authorities and DWP.

Experiences of the RIL role

When interviewed in spring 2019 all of the RILs were finding their role interesting and all were very passionate about the programme. They stated that they enjoyed working with local authorities and that there was a good working relationship between the six RILs who had established a good support network among themselves.

While they felt the role was working well overall, they noted some differences between the approach of central and local government that made their jobs difficult sometimes. For example, they felt that, compared to what they were used to in local government, working with DWP could be quite bureaucratic. As a result, processes took longer than expected and they were unable to make decisions or react as quickly as they would have liked to and were used to being able to.

RILs had encountered some difficulties with the delivery structure of the RPC programme within DWP. They reported that there were a lot of different DWP teams involved with different strands of the programme and they felt that it would have been easier to deal with a smaller team with knowledge across all aspects of the programme. Nonetheless, they appreciated that the DWP is a very large organisation and accepted that part of their role was to help local authorities with navigating its complex structures.

“Our role, I think, is go-between between DWP and local authorities. DWP don’t really understand how local authorities work so it’s great, our job has been to get out there and promote, and I think the take up would’ve been really low if it wasn’t for the RILs involvement.”

Overall, RILs believed that their role was working well. They considered that the fact they were seconded from local authorities was central to this success. RILs felt that being able to relate to the local authorities and thereby gain their trust from the outset had been valuable in helping them to sell the programme to local authorities. They felt they could position themselves as local government colleagues supporting local authorities to get involved with the programme. They all believed in the programme and were pleased they were having a positive effect on its roll-out.

“I believe in the programme passionately and I know the programme could make a real impact on families...I would like to think we have had a positive influence.”

Involvement in RPC programme

Elements of RPC programme local authorities were involved in

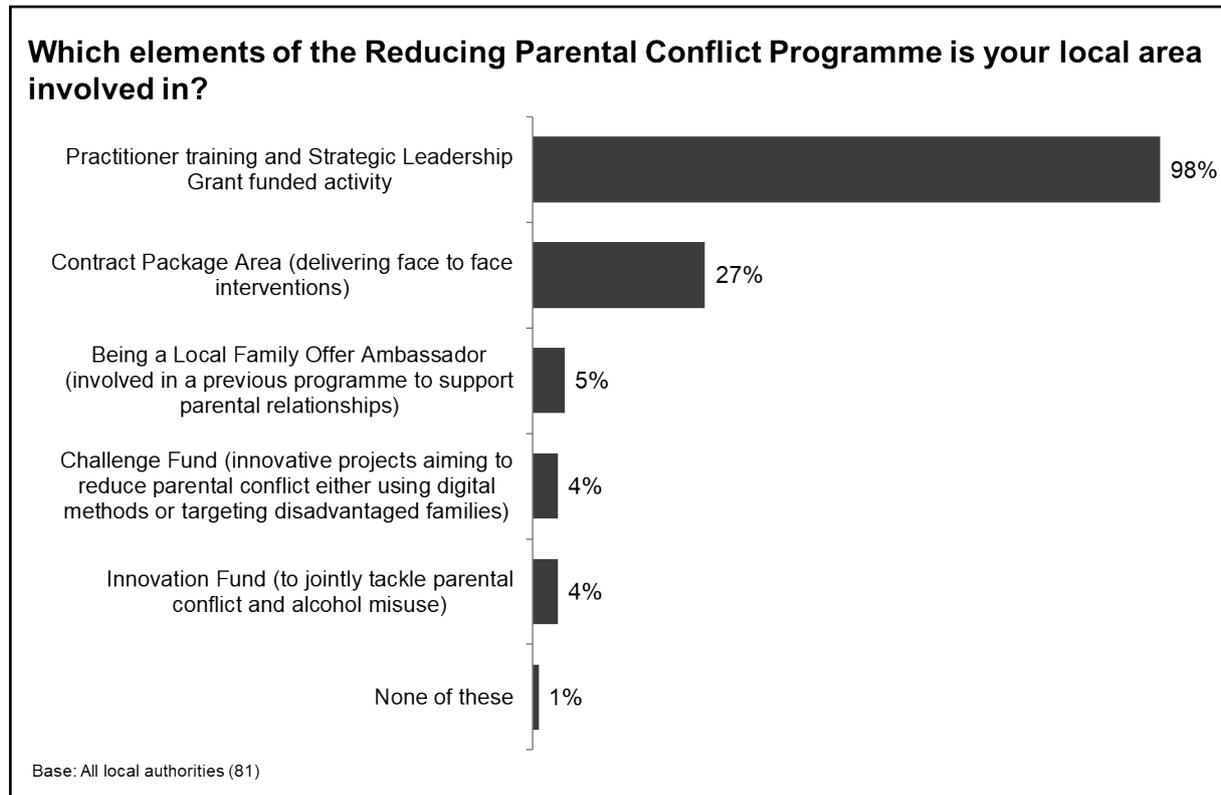
In the survey of local authorities conducted between June and August 2019, they were asked which elements of the programme (and related activities) they had been involved in. They were asked whether they:

- Had been involved with Strategic Leadership Support (SLS) and Practitioner Training (PT) grant-funded activity
- Were a Contract Package Area (delivering face-to-face interventions)
- Were involved in the Children of Alcohol Dependent Parents Innovation Fund (to jointly tackle parental conflict and alcohol misuse)
- Were involved with the Challenge Fund (innovative projects aiming to reduce parental conflict either using digital methods or targeting disadvantaged families)
- Were a Local Family Offer Ambassador (involved in a previous programme to support parental relationships)

The elements that the largest number of local authorities were involved in were the PT and the SLS grant-funded activities of the programme: as Figure 3.7 shows, almost all (98%) local authorities responding to the survey reported being involved in this.

Just over a quarter (27%) of local authorities responding to the survey were in a Contract Package Area to deliver the face-to-face interventions that are part of the RPC programme whereas only 5% were a Local Family Offer Ambassador. A further 4% had been involved with the Innovation Fund and 4% in the Challenge Fund.

Figure 2.3: Nearly all of the local authorities were involved in the PT and SLS grant funded activity



The Strategic Leadership Support grant

The Strategic Leadership Support (SLS) grant was made available to help local authorities and their partners to devise and/or implement strategies for integrating reducing parental conflict into their provision.

Support from Regional Integration Leads

RILs and local authority staff stated that RILs provided a lot of support to local authorities around the grant application process at the outset of the programme. This included providing examples of completed funding bids and holding regular conversations to answer queries and provide encouragement.

“They gave us some examples of what it [grant application] might look like, they were very helpful actually getting all that done.”

Several of the case study areas spoke about how they had decided how to spend the SLS funding based on advice from their RIL.

It emerged in the manager and commissioner interviews in autumn 2019 that RIL support through the application process was considered especially valuable in smaller local authorities where administrative support was more constrained.

Early engagement with reducing parental conflict

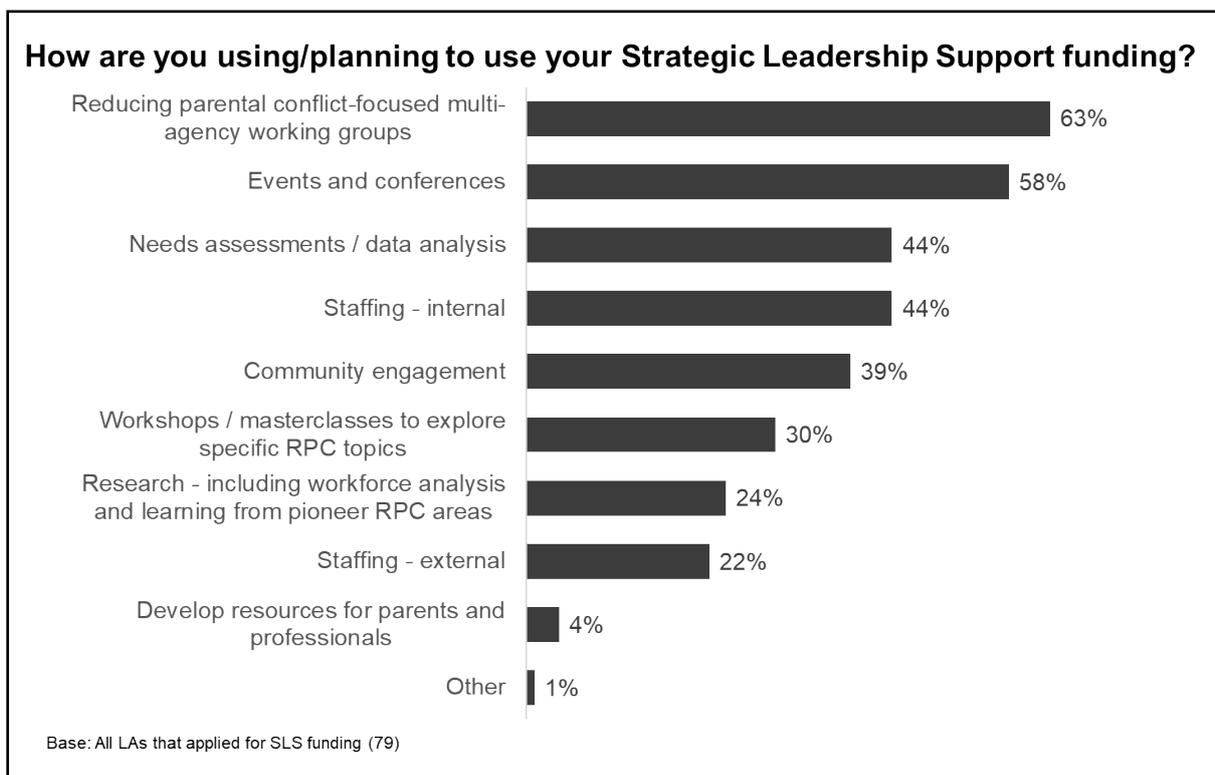
Interviewed around half a year after the application stage, managers and commissioners reflected that a benefit of the process of completing the application for the SLS grant was that it gave programme leads an opportunity to consult with partners and gain buy-in at an early stage.

Intended use of the SLS grant

The SLS funding was most commonly intended to be used, at least in part, to pay for multi-agency working groups focused on reducing parental conflict (63%), to fund events and conferences (58%), for needs assessments or data analysis (44%) and staffing, both internal (44%) and external (22%). Other uses of the SLS grant are shown in Figure 2.4 below.

The majority of local authorities responding to the survey planned to use the funding on more than one area, most commonly selecting 4 different areas (29%).

Figure 2.4 Local authorities were most commonly using the SLS funding on working groups and events and conferences (multiple response allowed)



Actual use of the SLS grant

In autumn 2019, managers and commissioners reported that they had spent at least some of their SLS grant, most commonly around a third. They valued the flexibility about how they could use the SLS grant which allowed them to spend it in accordance with the particular needs and characteristics of their area.

“I think we wouldn’t have been able to do it without it. It’s given us the time and the space to invest in it properly, otherwise it could have been just another thing that we’re bringing in to improve services. It’s given it an identity, focus, whereas it wouldn’t have belonged anywhere.”

Most commonly amongst the 30 interviewees the grant was used to pay someone, either within the local authority or externally, to champion reducing parental conflict in the local area. Some local authorities had joined forces to co-fund such a post and this was felt to provide added value and ensure consistency of approach where partner agencies straddled areas.

Anticipated impacts of the SLS grant

Views on the SLS grant were generally positive and managers and commissioners anticipated that it will have impacts in terms of raising awareness about parental conflict and on strategic buy-in. At the time of the interviews in autumn 2019 it was felt to be too early to confidently identify specific effects of the grant but there was an expectation that engaging in regular conversations and organising events with senior leaders and service staff had, or would have, the following impacts in the future:

- Engender a greater awareness of the impact of parental conflict on families and children, in particular, and how reducing such conflict can prevent negative outcomes.
- Encourage a common or more consistent use of language and terminology to describe parental conflict.
- Help universal and specialist service staff to understand the difference between parental conflict and domestic abuse.
- Encourage the most relevant, and sufficient numbers of, agency and service staff to attend the RPC training funded by the PT grant.

Emerging impacts of the SLS grant

Some managers and commissioners were reporting early evidence of a change in awareness among practitioners and local agencies.

“Some excellent conversations overheard when I’m out in the community where practitioners are getting advice and guidance from each other around parents that are really just struggling to communicate with each other – separated and together... I think it’s just getting a common language, a common baseline of understanding.”

Other less frequently mentioned impacts of the SLS grant included that it had allowed them to make links with other organisations, local authorities or services.

“One of the things that’s come as an extra – and added bonus – that we hadn’t thought of, was the relationship with Cafcass. So, although they cover our area, they’re mainly based in [city], and we haven’t really had a great deal of links, partnership work, with them in the past (...) They’re really keen to find out a bit more about us and see how we can work together more closely.”

The SLS grant was also being used to collect more reliable data on the level of parental conflict in a local area. For example, one area changed its systems and trained staff so that parental conflict was categorised and captured as such by frontline services.

“When contacts come in through our integrated front door [they are] able to identify that and categorise it [as parental conflict].”

Limits of the SLS grant

The perceived modesty and short-term nature of the funding were mentioned by managers and commissioners as limiting factors.

“I think it was good that it was there. I think if it wasn’t there this kind of stuff wouldn’t be happening so much. But I do think if you really wanted to have a proper change across like a council and across all the partners as well, you might need more resource.”

In addition, it was felt the timing of the SLS and PT grants, whereby they coincided, could have been improved, with a preference that the SLS should have been delivered first, to pave way for training funded by the PT grant.

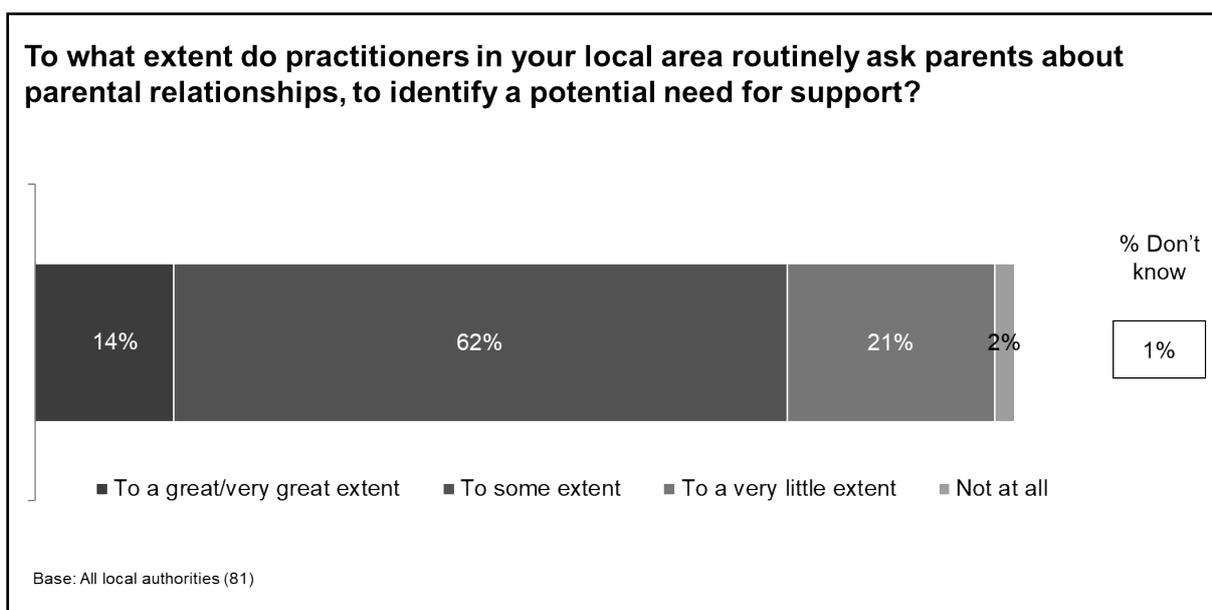
Plans or strategies that have been put in place or are underway

To help understand local authority progress on the reducing parental conflict agenda, they were asked a number of questions about their current activities in summer 2019. Progress was tracked in a follow-up survey, to be covered in later evaluation reports.

The majority of local authorities (83%) felt that practitioners in their local area – at least to some extent – were asking parents about parental relationships in order to identify a potential need for support. However, of these, 62% felt it was happening only to some extent, with just 10% feeling that this was happening to a great extent and 4% to a very great extent. Almost a quarter (23%) felt that it was not happening at all or only to a very little extent.

Overall, the findings are similar to those from the DWP baseline survey, conducted at the end of 2018.

Figure 2.5: In the majority of local authorities, practitioners ask parents about their relationships to at least some extent



Conversations with parents about conflict

Reflecting on whether and how conversations were happening with parents in their local areas in summer 2019, nearly all the local authorities interviewed in the case studies acknowledged that there was room for improvement in how it was approached.

For example, some local authorities described how practitioners in their area had historically tended to ask parents questions about their relationships with the aim of identifying domestic abuse, rather than what is regarded as a 'lower level' of parental conflict. These local authorities appeared mixed in whether they felt the RPC programme would help to change this: one felt that once the training had been embedded and assessments were in place that allowed them to capture parental conflict, they would be better able to record lower levels of conflict, which would alleviate the issue of deciding whether conflict was "destructive" or not, as discussed earlier. Another local authority felt that there was still not much that they could do about it:

"What we do know is that across all agencies, people will ask about a relationship and part of the assessment framework looks at relationships, but unless it's domestic abuse there's not a lot that can be done about it."

This local authority also acknowledged that previous work by practitioners has generally focussed on one parent rather than both together. They spoke positively of learning what could be achieved through working with both parents.

Some other local authorities reported that it came down to the personality and confidence of the practitioner themselves as to whether the issue of parental conflict was being brought up routinely:

"Some are and some aren't. You've got some extremely experienced practitioners that have worked at very high levels and who aren't afraid to have those conversations. And you've got others that are slightly earlier on the journey. Hopefully the training will help to build the confidence around having those conversations - particularly with schools."

There was generally an optimism that holding conversations about conflict would become more embedded as time went on and local authorities had the right assessment approaches to use. Nevertheless, for some local authorities, there was some nervousness that it would take a significant period of time to acclimatise to the new approaches and to ensure that all agencies involved were on board with the new focus. This meant that some felt that it might be difficult to show progress by the end of the evaluation period. (It should be noted that the evaluation does include a follow-up survey of practitioners, which will be conducted 6 months after their training.)

"Those sorts of things take time to embed. There's no way that in February/March next year we'll be able to truly evaluate the impact of the training that's been delivered because some people will only just have had it [...] it can take 6 months to embed something like that into people's work practices."

Some voiced the challenges they were experiencing in bringing potential parental conflict up with parents, in particular a recognition that it can take a significant amount of time to establish a rapport and build trust with parents who might have been going through this for many years. One local authority described how this can be made more difficult by 'a churn' of residents moving in and out of the local area.

In terms of the activities that each local authority was offering in their local area, as Figure 2.6 shows, almost three quarters (72%) of local authorities had family key workers who supported parents experiencing conflict. This included parenting programmes, which could address conflict between parents, but most often focussed on relationships between a child and parents. Only 28% were not currently offering family key workers, but all of these planned to offer it in future.

Two thirds (67%) of local authorities were signposting or referring parents to external local family support services, and just over a fifth (22%) were planning to offer this in the future. A similar proportion (63%) were currently signposting or referring parents to in-house family support services and just under a third (30%) stated that they were planning to offer in-house family support in the future.

Two-fifths (41%) of local authorities were signposting or referring parents to external local specialist parental conflict services, with a further 41% planning to do this in future. Just 4% did not plan on doing this.

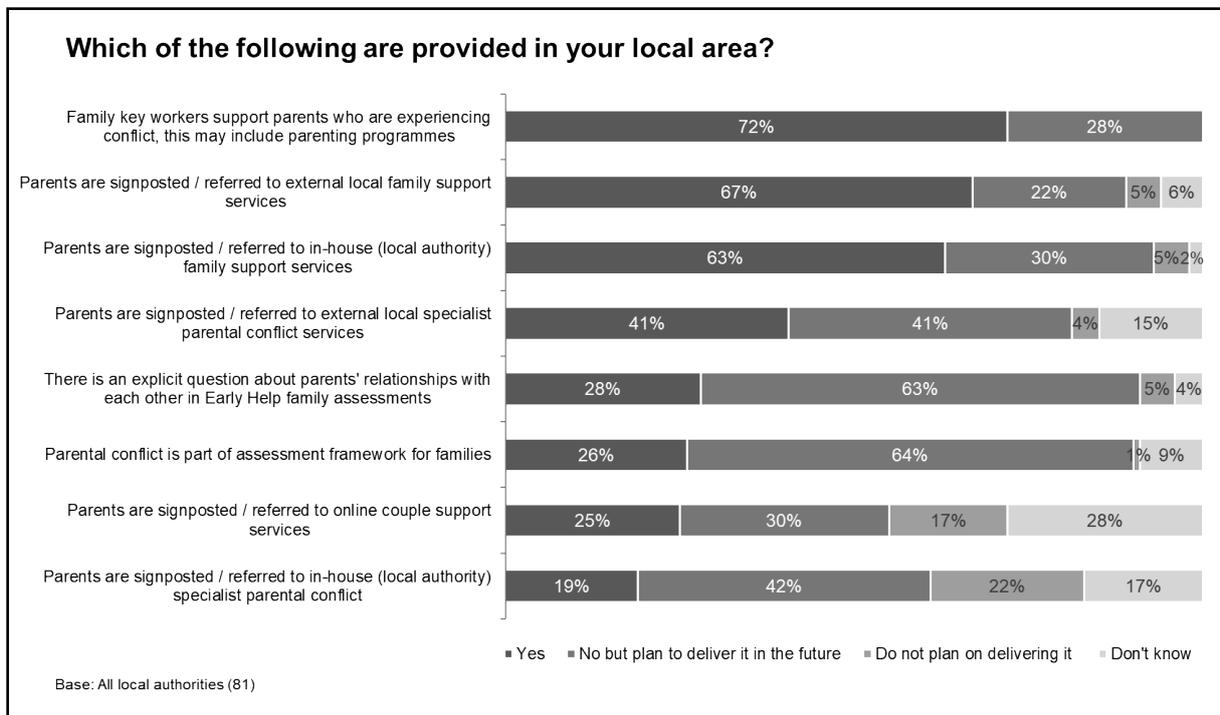
Around a quarter (28%) had an explicit question about parents' relationships with each other in Early Help family assessments, a further 63% of local authorities stated that they were planning to add such questions in the future and 5% were not planning to do this. The number of local authorities that stated they had an explicit question about parental relationships in their Early Help assessments was reasonably in line with the findings in the baseline survey conducted by DWP, where 35% of local authorities stated they had this.

Around a quarter (26%) had parental conflict as part of their assessment framework for families, with 64% planning to add this in the future.

A quarter (25%) were referring / signposting parents to online couple support services, however only 30% planned to do this in future.

Fewer local authorities had in-house local specialist parental conflict services, with just under one in five (19%) currently signposting or referring parents to such services, however, 42% were planning to do this in future.

Figure 2.6: Local authorities were most commonly providing family key workers to support parents in conflict and signposting them to external and internal family support services



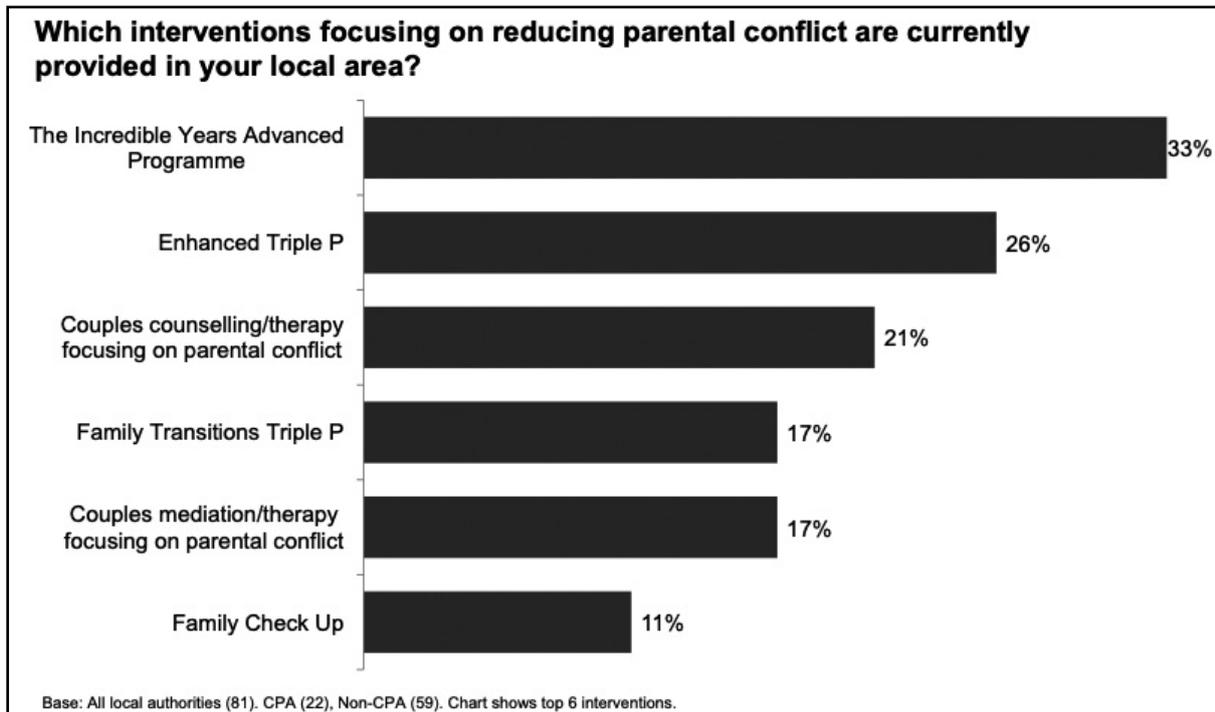
Interventions currently provided

Local authorities were asked which interventions focussing on reducing parental conflict were available in their area at the time of the survey. Just under three quarters (72%) stated that at least one intervention was available in their area and just over a quarter (28%) stated they were unsure or that no interventions were available in their area at the time.

Where interventions were available, they were usually delivered face-to-face, with none of the local authorities surveyed indicating that the interventions were delivered online. In a small minority of cases local authorities were unsure how the intervention was being delivered.

As shown in Figure 2.7, the most common interventions were Incredible Years (33%), Enhanced Triple P (26%) and couples counselling (21%). Note that these figures include local authorities offering interventions through the RPC programme.

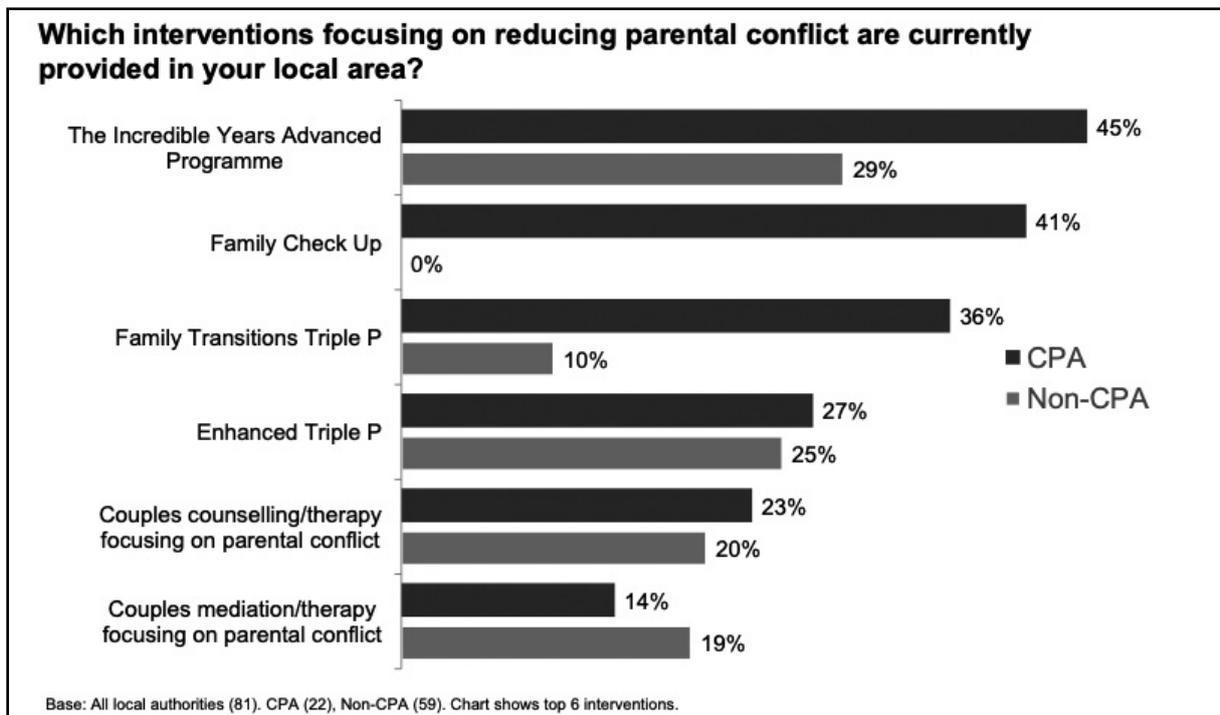
Figure 2.7: The most common interventions provided were Incredible Years Advanced, Enhanced Triple P and couples counselling



Among CPA local authorities who responded to the survey (22) the most common interventions on offer were Incredible Years Advanced programme (10 CPA local authorities offering), Family Check Up (9 CPA local authorities offering), Family Transitions Triple P (8 CPA local authorities offering) and Enhanced Triple P (6 CPA local authorities offering).

Some non-CPA areas reported offering interventions which they were not receiving funding for through the programme. Nearly a third (29%, 17) of non-CPA local authorities said they were offering the Incredible Years Advanced programme and a quarter (25%, 15) stated that they were offering Enhanced Triple P. It is possible that some of these non-CPA local authorities may have confused the moderate Incredible Years and Triple P programmes with the advanced offer.

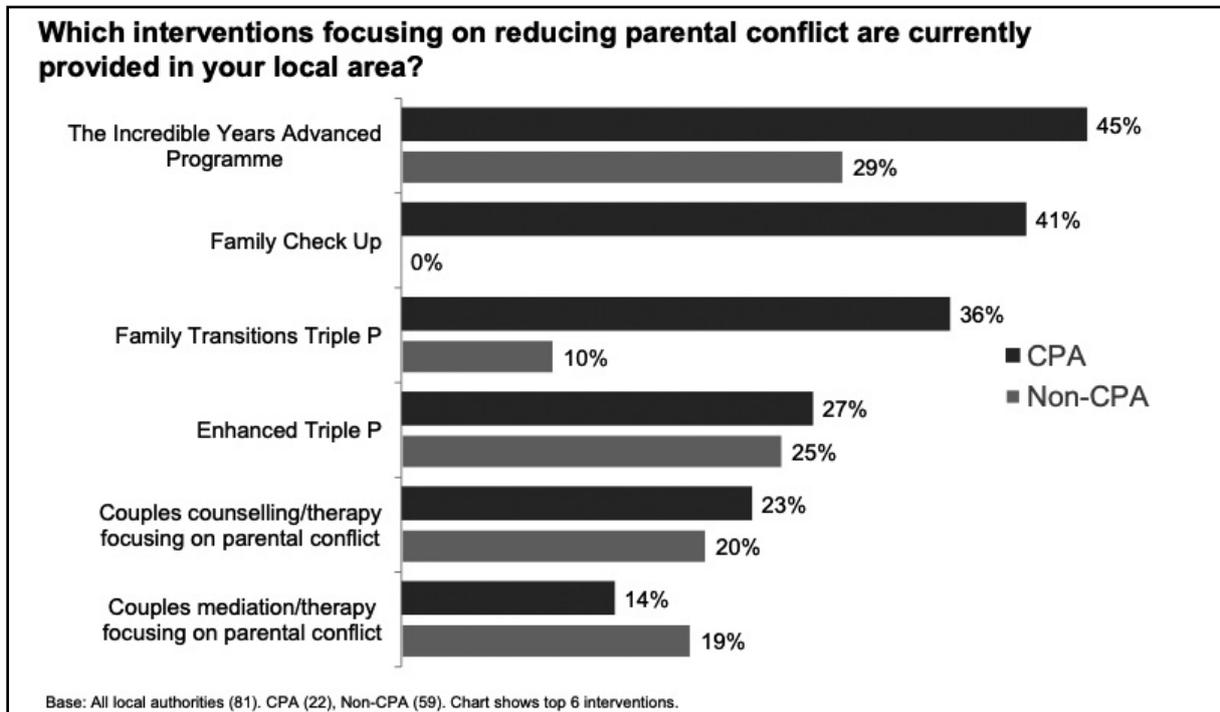
Figure 2.8: Interventions currently provided in the local area, in Contract Package Areas versus Non-Contract Package Areas



Signposting and referrals to available support

Most local authorities (58%) were unsure how many parents known to them in the local area had been signposted or referred to locally available support to reduce parental conflict. This was in line with the DWP baseline survey findings collected in December 2018 and January 2019, where it was found that just over half (52%) of local authority SPOCs did not know the proportion of parents signposted or referred to locally available support.

Figure 2.9: Local authorities reported signposting very low proportions or no parents to local support on reducing parental conflict



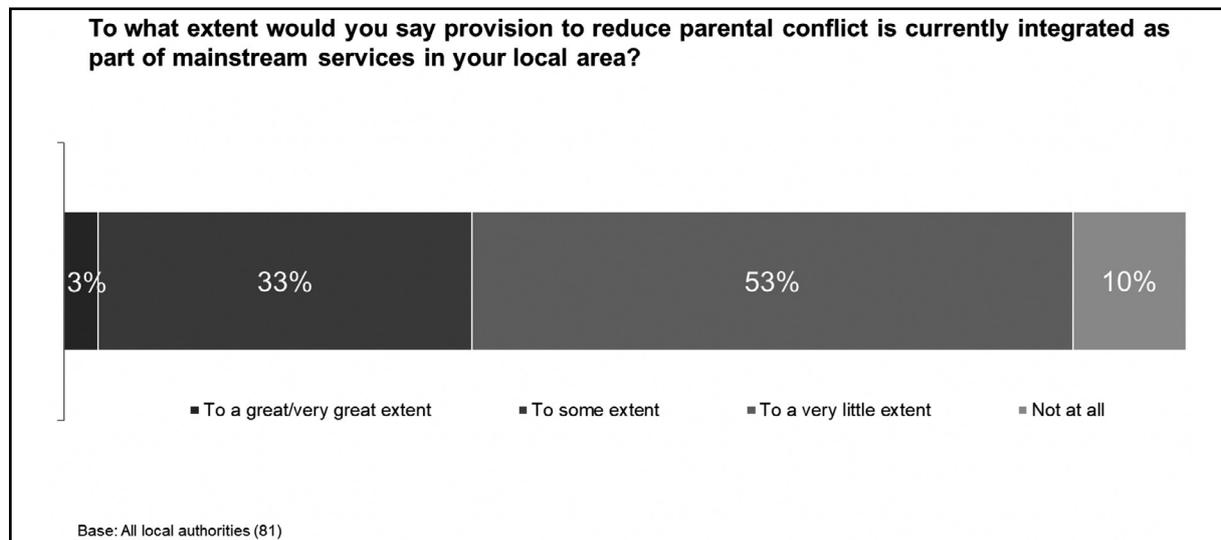
Among the local authorities who signposted parents to other online support (17 out of 81 local authorities), this was most commonly Relate (7 local authorities). Solihull Approach¹⁵ was mentioned by 3. A few other online sources were mentioned but were each referred to by only one local authority.

Integration into mainstream services

Over half of local authorities (53%) felt that provision to reduce parental conflict was integrated into mainstream services to a very little extent, while one in ten (10%) felt it was not integrated at all. Just over a third of local authorities (36%) reported it was integrated to at least some extent, though only 3% felt it was integrated to a great extent.

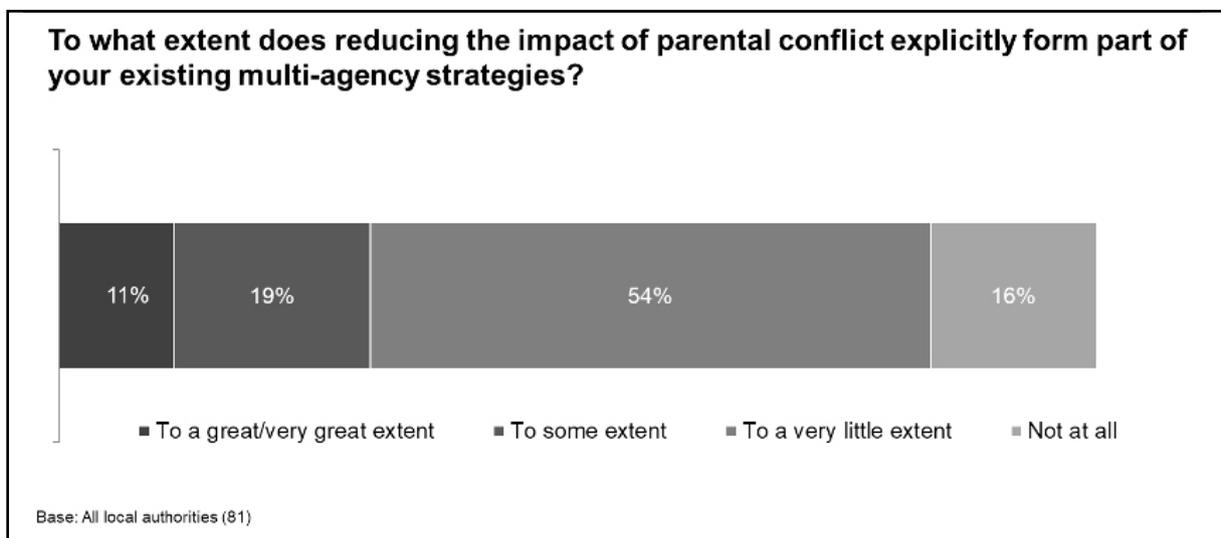
¹⁵ The Solihull Approach is all about emotional health and well-being. Dr Hazel Douglas MBE originally developed the model whilst working with a team of health visitors, child and adolescent mental health services and families - <https://solihullapproachparenting.com/about-us/>

Figure 2.10: The majority of local authorities said that provision to reduce parental conflict is integrated with mainstream services to a very little extent or not at all



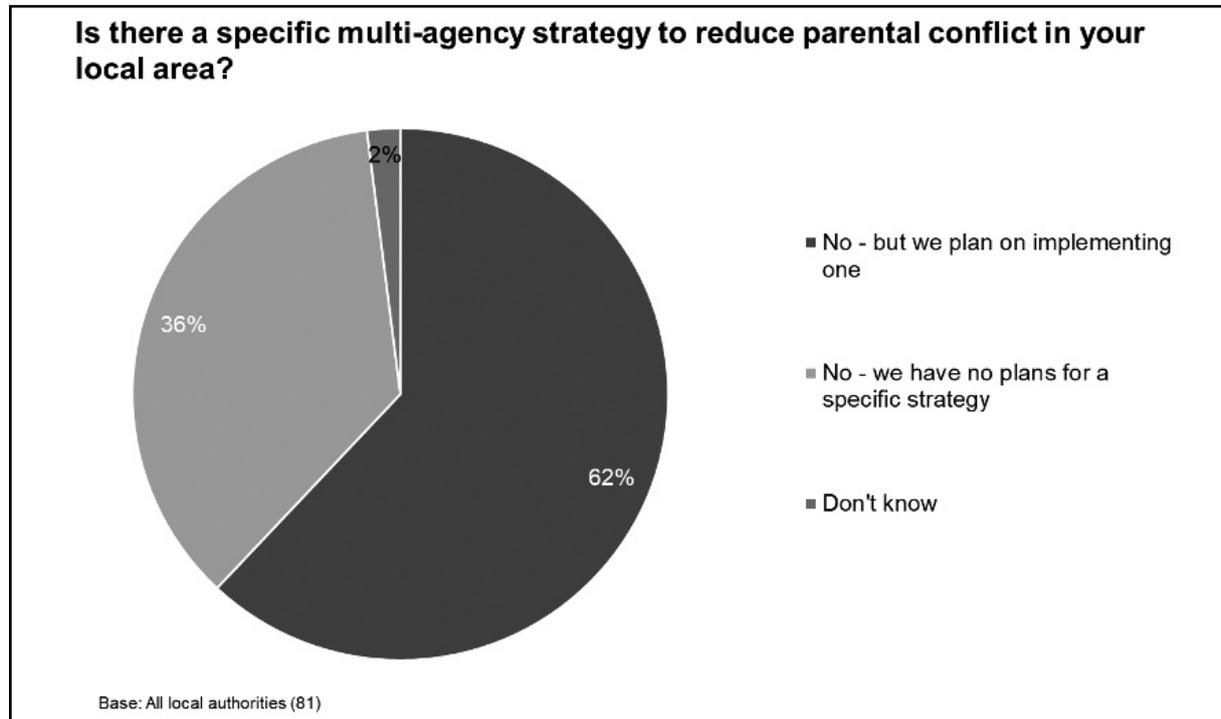
Over half of local authorities reported that reducing the impact of parental conflict explicitly formed part of their existing multi-agency strategies to a very little extent (54%) while 16% reported that this was not happening at all. Around a third (30%) reported it did to at least some extent (11% felt it was to a great or very great extent, while 19% felt it was to some extent).

Figure 2.11: The majority of local authorities said that RPC forms part of existing multi-agency strategies to a very little extent or not at all



No local authorities had yet developed a multi-agency strategy to reduce parental conflict in their local area; however, nearly two thirds (62%) were planning on doing so. Around a third (36%) did not have a specific strategy relating to this and were not planning to put one in place.

Figure 2.12: The majority of local authorities do not have a specific multi-agency strategy around RPC, but plan on implementing one



In the case studies, some local authorities felt it was too early for there to be a specific multi-agency strategy around RPC but stated that they still had partnership working taking place.

“Because we’re all based in Early Help, we do a lot of partnership work anyway. We work a lot with schools, nurseries, health providers, voluntary sector. Part of the planning tool¹⁶ was done from conversations with partners.”

Several spoke of the generally positive reception to working with multiple agencies on the issue, and the fact that it aligned with their strategic objectives even if not yet explicitly written into the strategy.

“Sometimes new initiatives come in and they’re seen as a burden [...] I don’t think I heard anyone say anything of that sort [...] it was ‘This is great; this is the sort of thing we need’. [...] it fits in with our strategic objectives and our whole family-coordinated approach which is multi-agency.”

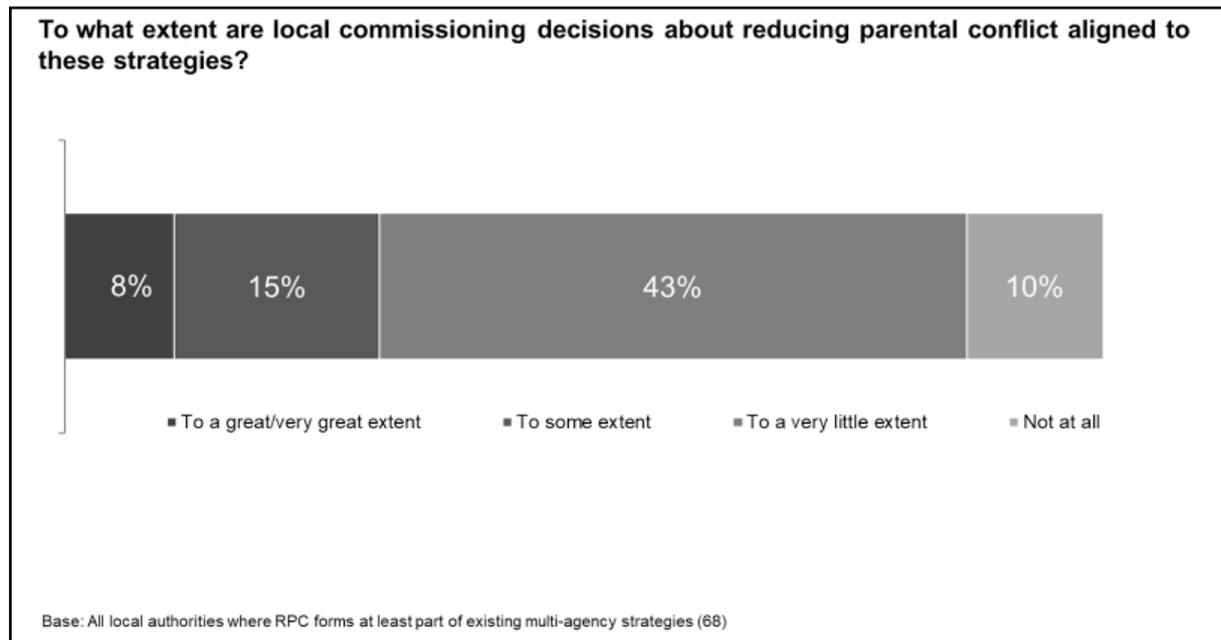
Some just acknowledged that this was a longer-term goal and that strategies took a number of years to action.

“Because we’ve developed our six criteria for the Troubled Families programme, we need to think about which of the criteria [RPC] fits into, because there isn’t one around parenting [...] we’re committed to these [...] we also need to think about what the measure would be for that.”

¹⁶ The Planning Tool was developed with the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) for LAs to use to identify their aspirations and progress in relation to reducing parental conflict.

Of the 68 local authorities who reported that reducing parental conflict formed part of their existing multi-agency strategies (at least to a little extent), over half felt that local commissioning decisions were only aligned to these strategies to a very little extent, if at all. Almost a quarter (23%) felt decisions were aligned to at least some extent and 8% felt they were aligned to a great or very great extent.

Figure 2.13: In more than half of local authorities, local commissioning decisions are aligned to strategy to a very little extent or not at all



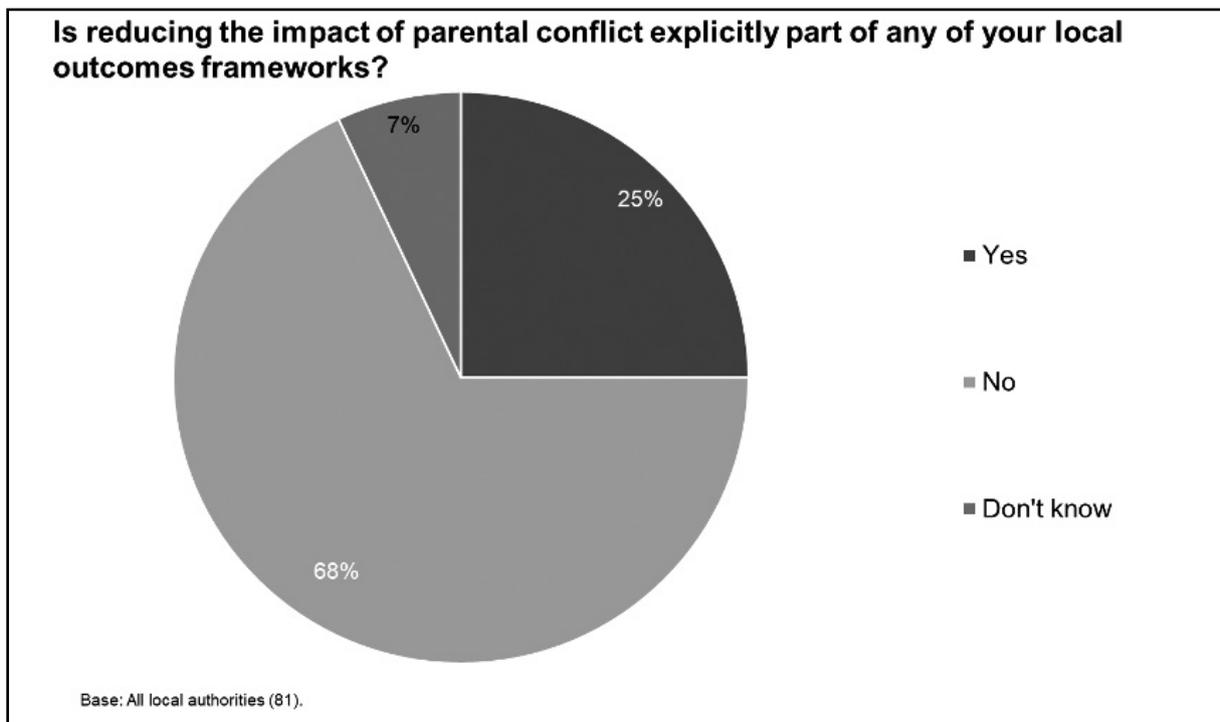
Those local authorities with RPC as part of their strategy were working with a large number of partners to deliver their local strategies. Those mentioned were:

- Early Help teams;
- The LA “front door” team;
- Children’s Social Care teams;
- Commissioned Health Visiting and school nurse providers;
- Commissioned / in-house Children’s Centres/hubs;
- Public Health;
- Early Years & Child Care providers;
- Domestic Abuse service;
- Young People’s services (Youth Workers, Specialist Adolescent Services);
- Youth Offending team;
- Police;
- School Head Teachers;
- Clinical Commissioning Groups;
- Children’s Mental Health Service;
- Children’s Drug and Alcohol services;

- Housing services (LA and provider based);
- NHS Foundation Trusts;
- Attendance Improvement Services;
- Jobcentres;
- Adult drug and alcohol teams;
- Adult community mental health teams;
- Probation services; and
- Fire and Rescue service.

For over two thirds (68%) of local authorities, reducing the impact of parental conflict was not explicitly part of their local outcomes frameworks. Only a quarter (25%) reported that it was part of their outcomes frameworks, while 7% did not know.

Figure 2.14: In the majority of local authorities RPC did not form part of the local outcome's frameworks



Future plans beyond the programme

The manager and commissioner interviews asked about future reducing parental conflict plans beyond the duration of the RPC programme. Several were devising ways of embedding what has been learned from the programme through making effective use of practitioners trained as trainers. For example, one area planned to set up a working group for devising a year-long training programme integrated within the wider Children's Services training programme. Others had been trialling different programmes associated with addressing parental conflict (e.g. How to Argue Better, EPEC Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities) that will become part of a larger programme incorporating the outcomes of the RPC programme initiatives.

At the commissioning level, some foresaw the programme influencing future service commissioning intentions, in order to intervene early and reduce the impact of parental conflict on child outcomes.

Chapter 3: Training

This chapter details local authority use of the Practitioner Training grant and local authority views of the training. The views of frontline practitioners on the training provided through the RPC programme are also discussed. Findings are included from the 6 interviews with Regional Integration Leads (RILs), 10 case study visits with local authorities and their partners, 30 interviews with managers and commissioners, the first wave of the follow-up survey with local authorities (following the initial baseline survey conducted by DWP) and a survey of 121 frontline practitioners (the first 3 months of the survey). The frontline practitioner survey results detailed are only indicative, with many more frontline practitioners expected to complete the survey following their training in the coming months. As such some of the data included is based on small sample sizes and findings should therefore be treated with a measure of caution.

The Practitioner Training grant

A Practitioner Training (PT) grant has been made available to enable local authorities to access training on reducing parental conflict that was specifically designed as part of the programme. It is intended that this will help local authorities and their partners to build capability and confidence among practitioners to identify relationship distress, provide support and refer families to specialist support (where possible and appropriate).

The grant was awarded in the form of numbers of places on the training programme delivered through a designated Training Provider.

Applying for the PT grant

As with the Strategic Leadership Support (SLS) grant, case study interviews with local area stakeholders and interviews with RILs themselves emphasised the help provided by RILs to encourage local authorities to apply for the PT grant. Support mentioned included providing examples of finalised grant applications and frequent contact by phone, email and face-to-face to answer queries or concerns.

In the manager and commissioner interviews in autumn 2019 local authorities mentioned that although the initial PT grant application form was felt to be quite straightforward the subsequent call-off contract that they had to set up with the Training Provider to access the training was more challenging than they had anticipated. Several managers and commissioners reported a drawn-out, back-and-

forth conversation over email with the Training Provider to clarify details and ensure the right information was provided, which in some cases meant that they were not able to book onto the training as early as planned.

“It was all fine until we got to the [call off] contract with [the Training Provider]. So, the form itself was fine ... And then we started to get the first emails from [the Training Provider]. So, what was it, a 260-page contract, hugely unhelpful, never seen one like it in my life and I’ve worked 20 years for the local authority... I think the contract went back and forth 5 times from my end... It was really torturous.”

Intended use of the PT grant

As mentioned in chapter 2, when local authorities were surveyed in summer 2019 the SLS and PT grants were the most commonly reported area of involvement with the programme, with 98% of the 81 respondents saying their local area was involved in grant funded activity.

Local authorities were planning to offer the practitioner training to individuals across a diverse range of public services. All but one (99%) planned to offer it to staff in children and young people’s services, 97% to education practitioners, 96% to health practitioners and 87% to staff in adult services. All local authorities who planned to train health practitioners or education practitioners also planned to train children and young people’s services. It was slightly less common to plan to offer it to emergency services staff (68% planned this). Almost two thirds (63%) of local authorities planned to train practitioners from every group.

Looking at the specific practitioner roles within each service area, the most common practitioners identified to offer training to were Early Help teams (99%), health visitors and school nurses (95%) and education-based practitioners (94%). Local authorities were least likely to identify fire and rescue services (24%), GPs (38%) and adult community mental health practitioners (38%) for training.

Findings from the manager and commissioner interviews chimed with the evidence from the local authority survey about the intention to offer the training widely.

“It’s anybody who’s working within Children’s Services. So, we’ve got anybody from Social Care, we’ve had Mental Health Services, Health Services, Schools, Children’s Centres, Early Help colleagues, Housing – the kind of full breadth ... We have had Education but they’re mainly pastoral support staff rather than senior staff within schools.”

Delays in accessing training

At the time of the manager and commissioner interviews, many of the local authorities had started accessing the training funded with the PT grant. Many had started to access this very recently, but there were others that had not accessed the training by that point but were planning to soon.

The main reasons for some delaying the process of accessing the training included:

- Wanting to raise awareness of the training offer among services first via the activities funded using the SLS grant.

- Internal local authority issues, such as staff changes or restructuring of local services.
- Difficulties in finalising the contract or booking the training with the Training Provider.
- A desire to get more information about the modules before committing practitioners to attend the training.

One particular issue faced by some authorities was coordinating the training offer with access to rooms available free of charge locally.

“The timetable was driven 99% by when can I get a facility for nothing. And in consultation with my colleagues in Adult Education on a Friday at one centre they had a room which was the right size which wasn’t being used. And so, I grabbed it. And that was the determinant of that part of the strategy so far.”

Regarding the difficulties in booking the training, some reported communication issues with the Training Provider who were said to be slow to respond to emails which led to delays in the booking process. This was compounded by local authorities trying to fit the training around practitioners’ busy schedules. A few explained that they did not have the resources to be able to ensure that they could source another professional to fill the gap (or ‘backfill’) when one professional was attending training, and so finding a suitable date could be challenging.

“Even though those people are tired out and would love a day out to go on a course, you just can’t release them because we’ve got massive issues. And so, when you’re dealing with your service managers who say ‘[you need to] back fill’ it’s quite tricky. And so, we haven’t made the flying start we wanted to.”

Some also reported that the Training Provider’s approach was not always complementary to the way in which the local authority worked. An example was given in which the Training Provider would not offer training dates unless the local authority could confirm a room and participants; however, the local authority could not book a room until the Training Provider confirmed the date. In another instance, booked training could not go ahead unless a purchase order was provided. Although in both of these instances they had been able to negotiate a way around these difficulties, they represented additional administrative and time burdens on staff.

However, it is important to note that many managers and commissioners stated that the process had worked well, and some were very complimentary about the process and commended the Training Provider for being so organised and proactive in arranging the training.

“[They] have been fantastic. They chase me every week, ‘book your training’. They’re lovely.”

Anticipated utilisation of grant

Most of the managers and commissioners were expecting to have utilised about half of the allocated resources from the PT grant before the end of 2019, with further training planned in 2020.

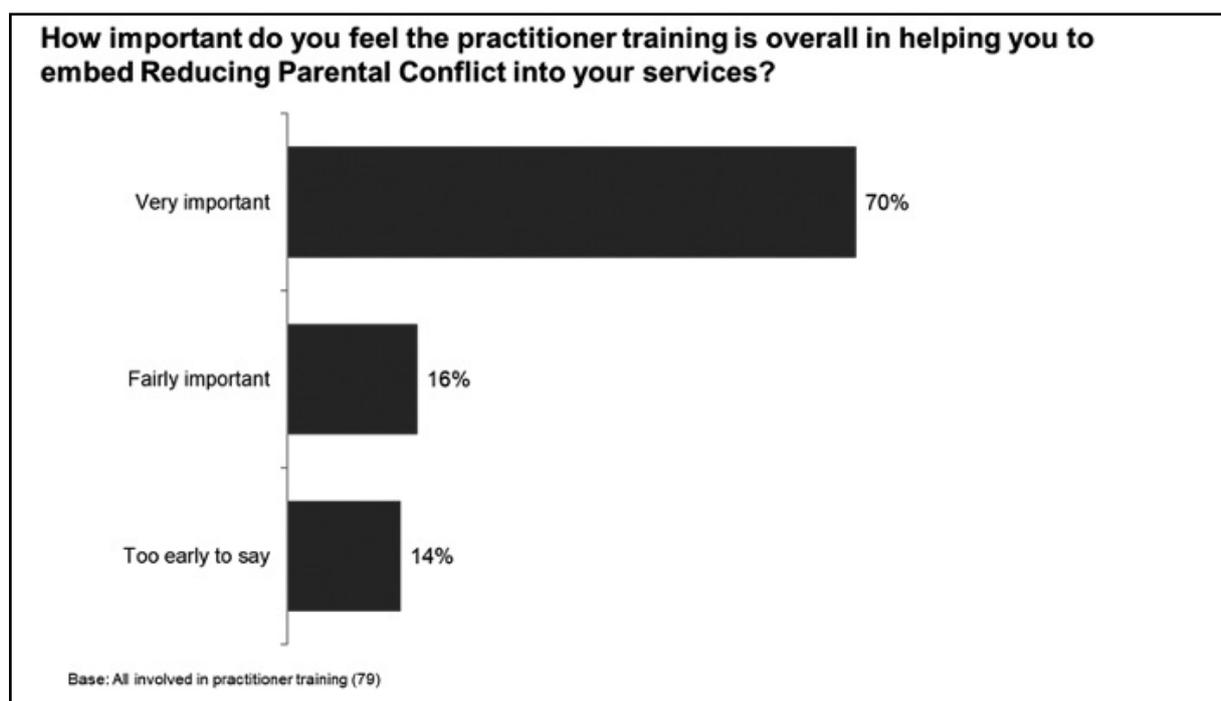
“From the £30,000 workforce programme, I think we’re pretty well advanced. We have a programme that’s booked in that runs from September to December and we’ve pretty much negotiated a whole programme from January to February and March. We would have probably spent something like £29,000 of the £30,000 by the right time. And we’re just trying to negotiate the on-line packages which will cost further. We expect to spend pretty much all of it actually.”

Some managers and commissioners did raise concerns that they would not be able to spend the grant by the end of March 2020 due to the challenges around raising awareness of the training and booking the modules. In some cases, this was because delays accessing training had reduced the training window available to them because they had to book training for frontline practitioners several months in advance.

Importance of PT grant to the RPC programme

Despite some of the issues reported around the processes for using the grant and accessing the training, most local authorities considered the PT grant to be a key part of the RPC programme. Nearly nine in ten (86%) local authorities surveyed in summer 2019 and involved in offering the practitioner training (68 out of 79) reported that practitioner training was important in helping them to embed the RPC programme into their service: 70% felt it was very important and 16% felt it was fairly important. The remainder (14%) felt it was too early to say. One local authority from the case studies felt that the final module of the training, targeted at supervisors, was particularly important because this was most likely to lead to practitioners using the knowledge they had gained.

Figure 3.1: The majority of local authorities felt that practitioner training was very important in helping to embed RPC into services



The managers and commissioners agreed with this and had a positive overall view of the grant itself; some noted that they would have been unable to initiate a training programme around parental conflict without it.

“We would not have been able to apply a Train the Trainer programme at the beginning and then roll out that training across the workforce as we have without the grant. Even if it was brought in-house, I don’t think we could have supported that fully going forward. We wouldn’t have the capacity in that timeframe.”

Emphasising the importance of the training offer to the success of the programme, only a few managers and commissioners were aware of any other training that they could have accessed on the issue of reducing parental conflict. Those that were aware commonly cited the How to Argue Better¹⁷ initiative. A few had commissioned this training to take place alongside the RPC programme training delivered by the Training Provider.

One local authority had undertaken the How to Argue Better training and it had been well received by practitioners. They felt it provided them with more practical tools to address parental conflict than the training provided as part of the programme, which they felt provided more of a theoretical understanding of parental conflict.

Limitations of the PT grant

Although generally welcoming the grant and the training focus of the programme, managers and commissioners expressed some reservations during the interviews in late 2019. They raised some issues around the PT grant in terms of the perceived:

- rigidity of how the grant could be spent
- overlap between the implementation period for the SLS grant spend and the PT grant training.

Some expressed frustration that the PT grant could only be spent on the training from the designated Training Provider (it was referred to as ‘Disneyland dollars’ or ‘Mickey Mouse money’ by a couple of respondents in reference to this) and why it was not opened up to other, more locally based providers.

“I think the trainer’s finding it difficult to deliver it. And I think the main issue with that is that there’s no local knowledge from the trainer’s perspective as to what’s happening in [this area]. It’s actually very difficult to relate the training to anything.”

A few had attempted to overcome this by engaging with the trainers before the training sessions but were frustrated by the fact that they were not assigned a particular trainer to deliver all the sessions in their local area.

Several stated that they would have preferred to have had a longer period between the activities facilitated by the SLS grant and the training. This would have given them more opportunity to develop their strategy for how the training grant would be spent, who would be prioritised to attend, as well as ensuring that the people who needed to attend were given enough warning.

¹⁷ “How to argue Better” - <https://www.realtrust.org.uk/courses/miscellaneous/how-argue-better>

"I think it's really useful. I think the challenge that we've had with all of this is the speed. We're now several months into the grant period and we're having to review, again, what the training offer needs to look like between now and the end of March. It would have been nice to have had the opportunity to have experienced the training before we needed to book things in and roll it out."

Local Authority perceptions of practitioner understanding and awareness

In the survey of local authorities conducted in summer 2019 - at a point when only small numbers had attended the RPC training - local authorities were asked to comment on the level of understanding of the effects of parental conflict on children's social, emotional, and educational outcomes for a range of frontline practitioners (Figure 3.2 and Figure 3.3).

Early Help teams, Children's Social Care teams, domestic abuse workers and local authority 'front-door' practitioners were reported to have the greatest understanding, although it is possible that this reflects the level of interaction that the survey respondent had with different frontline practitioners, especially those working outside of the local authority.

Around half of the local authorities stated that most or all of the practitioners in their Early Help teams (51%) and Children's Social Care teams (50%) had a good understanding of parental conflict on outcomes.

Figure 3.2: Perceptions of the level of understanding of parental conflict on child outcomes varied greatly between different types of practitioners with some very high don't know responses

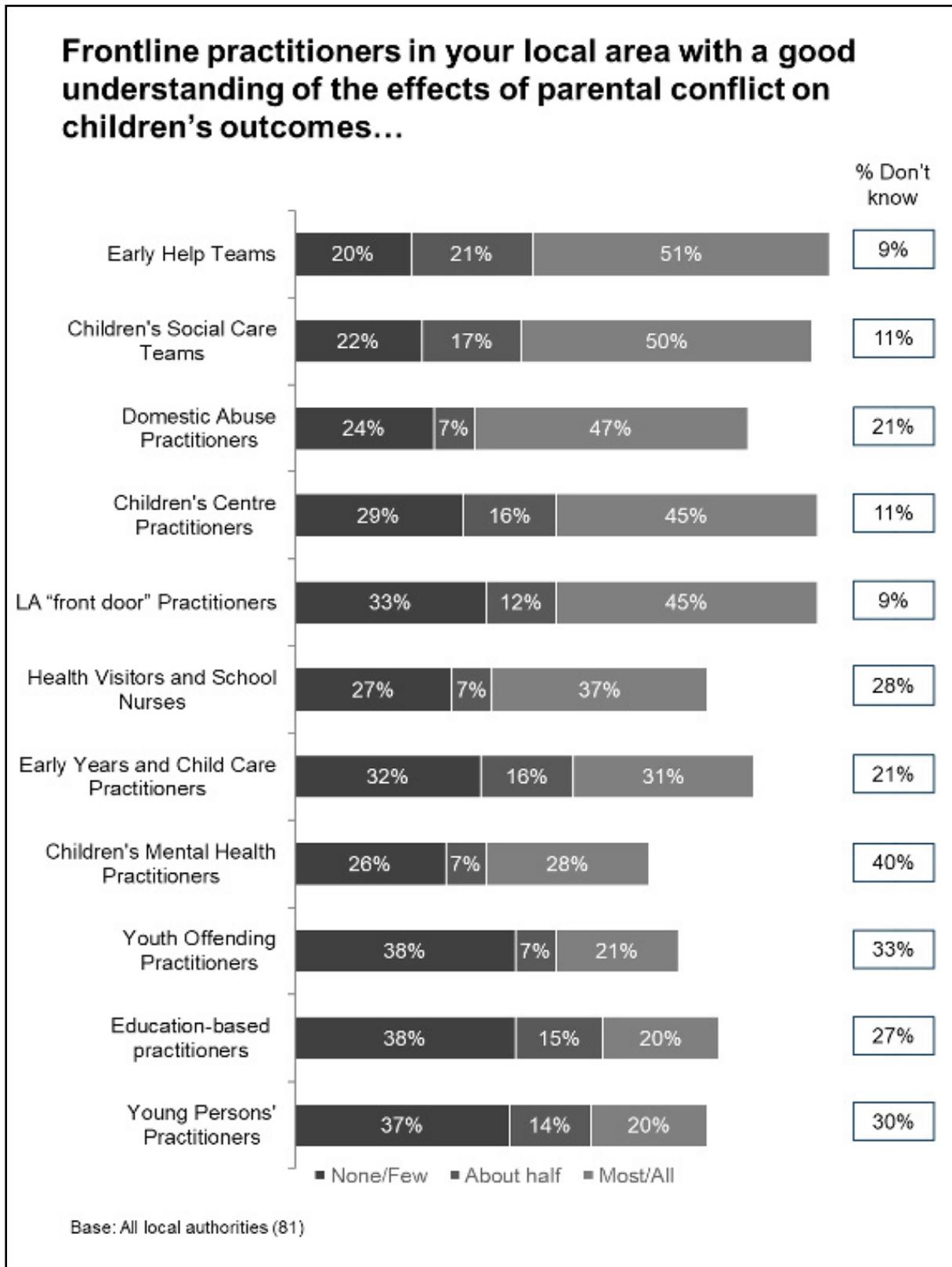
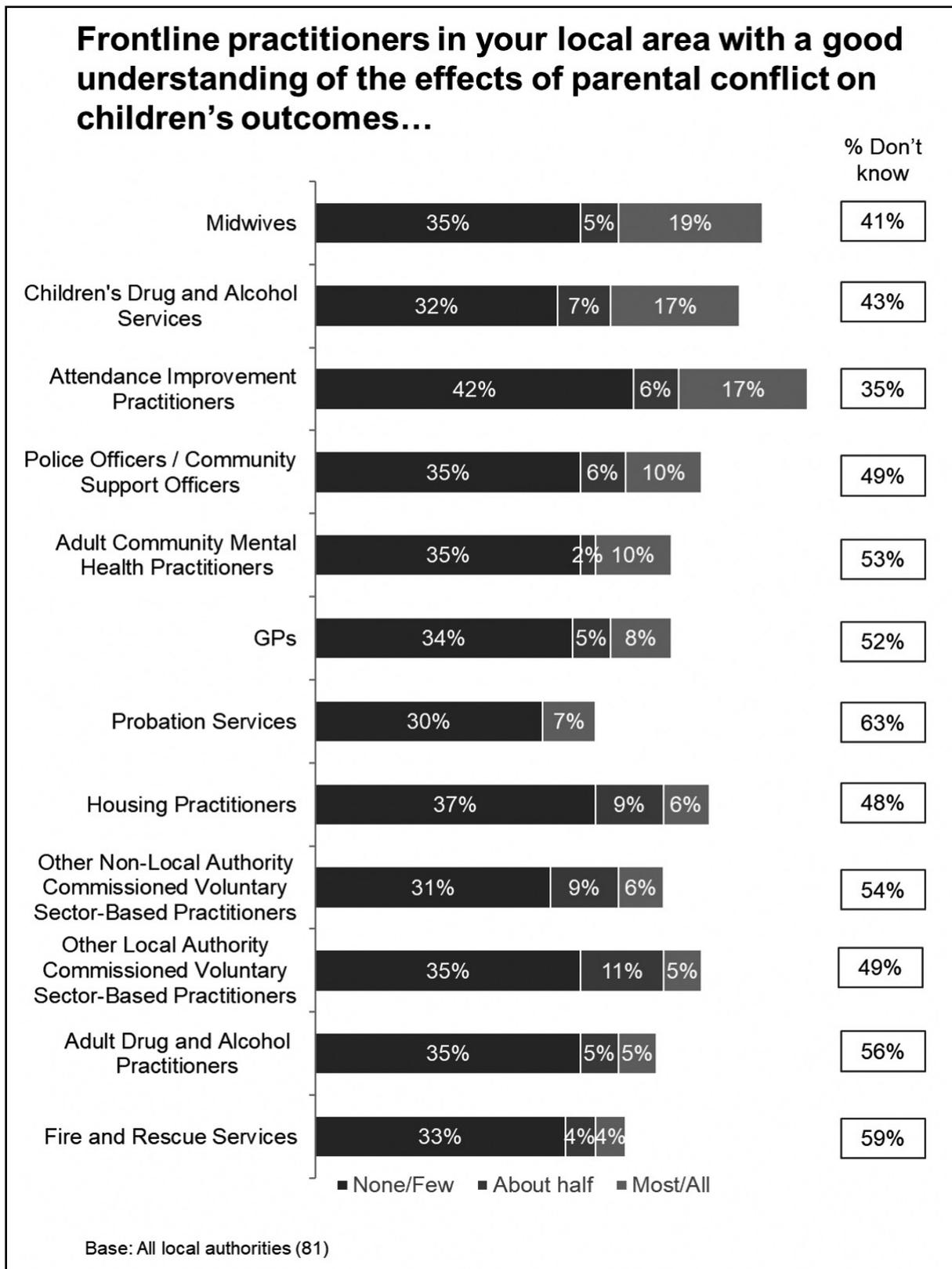


Figure 3.3: Perceptions of the level of understanding of parental conflict on child outcomes varied greatly between different types of practitioners with some very high don't know responses (continued)



Practitioners reported to have lower levels of understanding included Housing practitioners, Adult Drug and Alcohol practitioners and Fire and Rescue services (6%, 5% and 4% of local authorities respectively stated most/all of these practitioners had good understanding of the negative outcomes of parental conflict on children). However, it is important to note that around half of the local authority respondents did not know what level of understanding these types of practitioners had (48% did not know about Housing practitioners, 56% did not know about Adult Drug and Alcohol practitioners and 59% did not know about Fire and Rescue services).

Experiences of the training provided through the RPC programme

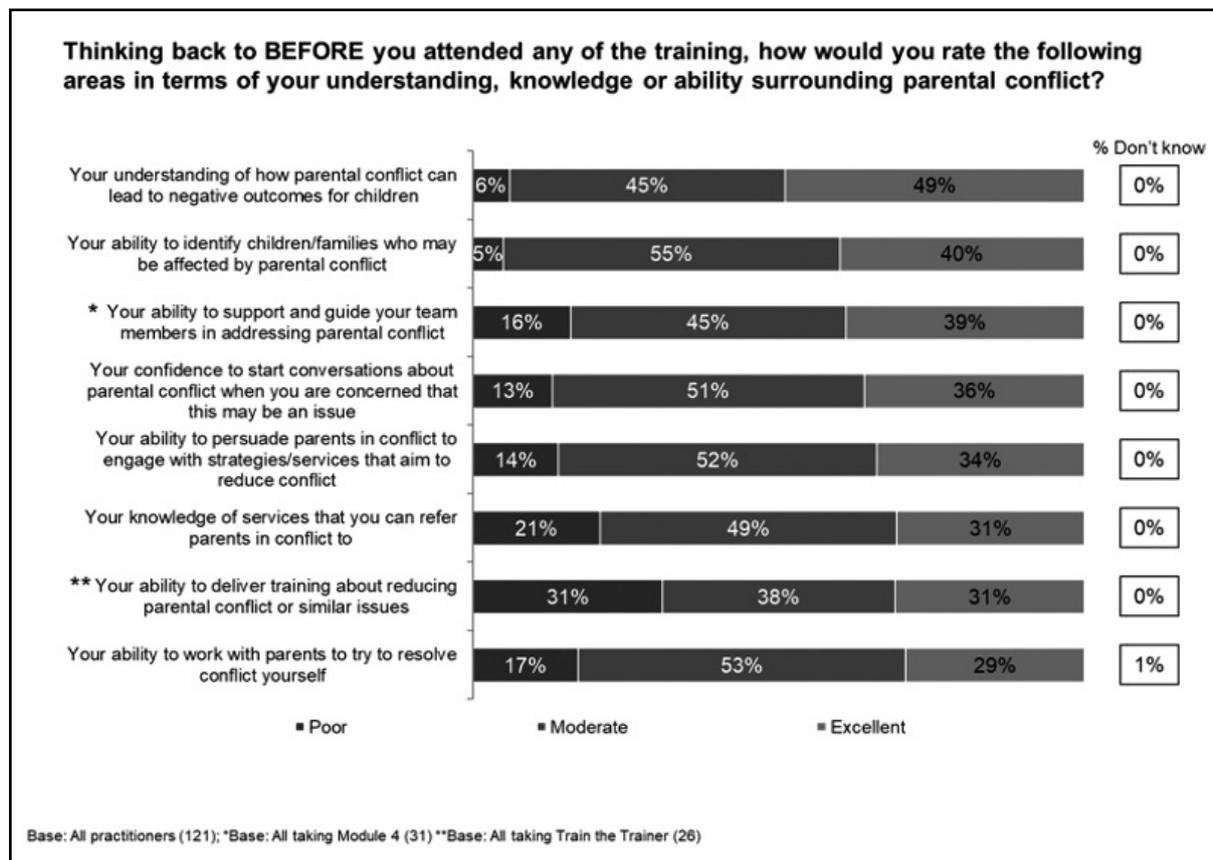
Parental conflict knowledge and understanding prior to training

This section details practitioner assessments of their own understanding, knowledge or ability across seven different elements of parental conflict. This information was gathered from those attending training as part of the RPC programme via a survey which asked them to think back to their situation prior to undertaking training.

Practitioners were most confident about their prior understanding of how parental conflict can lead to negative outcomes for children; just under half (49%) felt their understanding in this area was “excellent”. They were also reasonably confident in their prior ability to identify families who may be affected by parental conflict, with two-fifths (40%) stating their ability was “excellent”.

However, it seemed that there was more room for improvement in their ability to work with parents to try and resolve conflict, as just under three in 10 (29%) felt their ability was “excellent”.

Figure 3.4: Understanding of how parental conflict can lead to negative outcomes for children had the highest level of knowledge and ability before attending training



Only a minority of practitioners (30%) had attended some form of training on reducing parental conflict in the past: 10% said they had attended a course specifically about reducing parental conflict and 20% had attended a course that had touched on the subject, but that was primarily focused on a wider topic. Hence, for most attendees the training was covering new ground and not replicating previous training.

Unsurprisingly, those who had attended previous training were more confident in their baseline understanding, knowledge or abilities in each of the areas surrounding reducing parental conflict.¹⁸

Modules undertaken

The RPC programme training is split into 4 modules and a workshop:

- Module 1: Understanding parental conflict and its impact on child outcomes (conducted via online e-learning and/or face-to-face learning). This module explains the evidence base for parental conflict and then majors on the impacts on children.

¹⁸ Base sizes are too small here to report proportions (just 36 had received non-RPC programme training on parental conflict).

- Module 2: Recognising and supporting parents in parental conflict (conducted via online e-learning and/or face-to-face learning). This module focuses on the varied relationships of co-parenting couples and the behaviours associated with parental conflict enabling participants to identify, intervene or refer.
- Module 3: Working with parents in conflict (conducted via online e-learning and/or face-to-face learning). This module focuses on the knowledge, skills and behaviours of frontline practitioners in supporting families in distress through destructive parental conflict introducing tools and techniques for engaging in early intervention conversations.
- Module 4: Parental conflict: The role of supervisors and managers (conducted via online e-learning and/or face-to-face learning). This module is designed specifically for supervisors and managers to support front-line practitioners and to continue the application of the learning in their work including coaching and supporting.
- Train the Trainer: a 2-day workshop for individuals delivering the training in Modules 1-4.

Practitioners can take the modules in any combination, depending on their prior knowledge, experience and current role. Modules 1-3 are relevant to any frontline practitioner likely to encounter parental conflict, Module 4 is designed for those in supervisory or managerial roles while the Train the Trainer workshop is aimed at those who will be in a position to deliver reducing parental conflict training in the future.

Modules 1 (understanding parental conflict), 2 (recognising parental conflict) and 3 (working with parents in conflict) were those that practitioners had most commonly completed, with far fewer completing Module 4 (the role of supervisors) and Train the Trainer as would be expected given the target audiences for that training.

Most practitioners had completed Modules 1 (understanding parental conflict - 86%) and/or 2 (recognising parental conflict - 85%). Around three-quarters had completed Module 3 (working with parents in conflict - 76%) and one-quarter had completed Module 4 (the role of supervisors - 26%). A fifth (21%) had completed Train the Trainer.

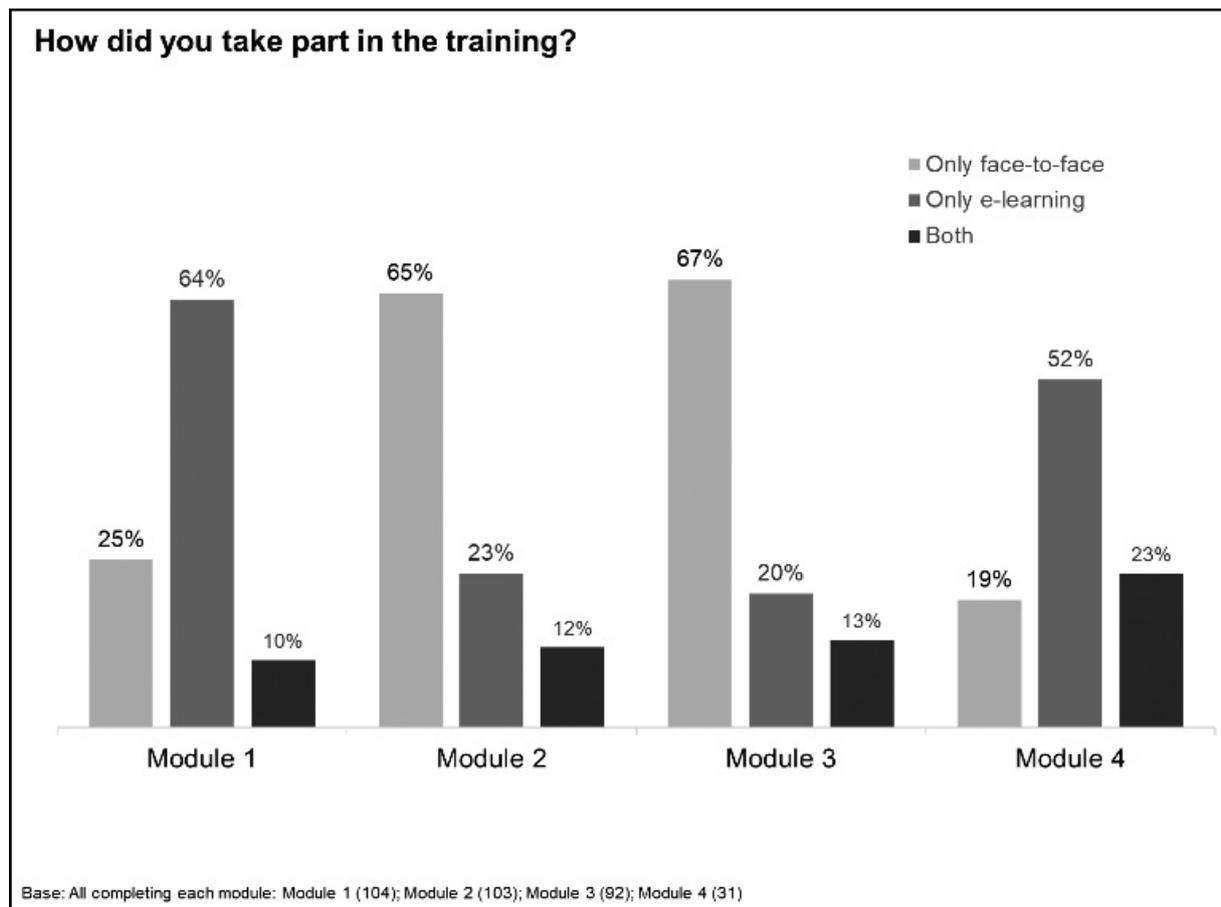
The majority of practitioners had completed multiple modules:

- 43% of practitioners had completed Modules 1, 2 and 3.
- 11% had completed Modules 1, 2, 3 and 4.
- 15% had completed all 4 modules and Train the Trainer.
- 9% had completed only Module 1.
- 2% had completed only Module 2.
- 6% had only completed the Train the Trainer workshop.

There were also a handful who had completed 2 modules: 7% had completed just Modules 1 and 2, and 7% had completed just Modules 2 and 3.

Modules 1 to 4 were available as online e-learning, face-to-face training, or a mixture of both. The majority of practitioners (84%) attended at least one face-to-face session, and two-thirds overall (65%) utilised the online e-learning. Figure 3.5 shows the mode of training used by individuals completing each module.

Figure 3.5: Practitioners typically completed only face-to-face training rather than e-learning, with the exception of Module 1 (understanding parental conflict), where the reverse was true



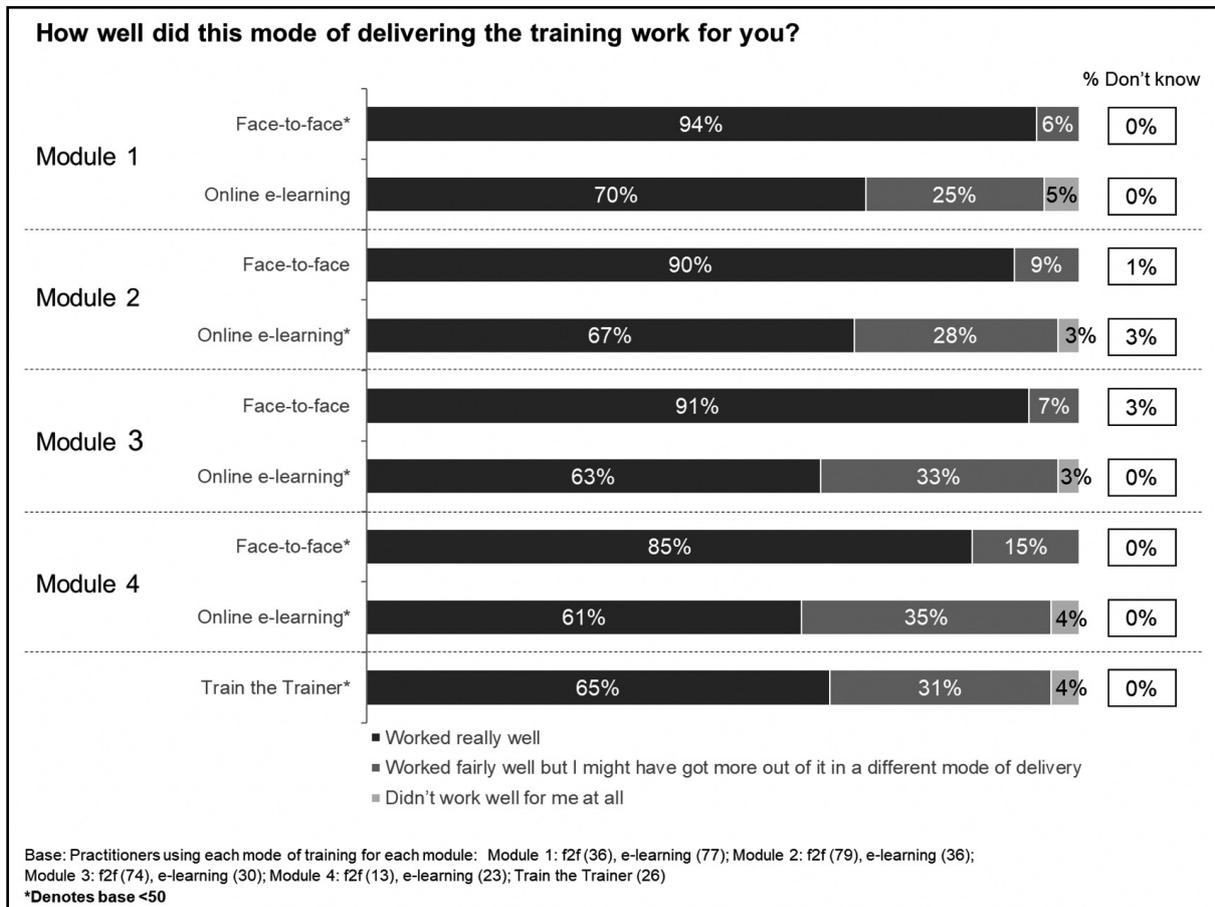
Of those who used both the online e-learning and face-to-face sessions to take part in the training, the vast majority accessed the online e-learning first, before the face-to-face session.

Three in ten practitioners (30%) were registered to complete further modules of the programme, most commonly modules 2 (recognising parental conflict) or 3 (working with parents in conflict) at the time of the survey.

Delivery experience

Both face-to-face and online methods of delivery were judged as effective by practitioners who had undertaken them for each module, however, face-to-face sessions were rated as being more effective than the online e-learning across all modules. Note that some base sizes are low so findings should be considered as indicative at this early stage in the evaluation.

Figure 3.6: Face-to-face was the most popular method of delivering training across all modules



Those who felt the mode of delivery did not work well or that they could have got more out of a different mode of delivery most commonly said they preferred face-to-face learning (11 of the 38 asked this question, 10 of which had been through both face-to-face and e-learning). A handful felt the online training was repetitive (5 people) and a few had technical issues with the online training (3 people). Three would have liked more focus on strategies to support parents in conflict. Other ideas mentioned by 2 people each were receiving an information pack before the session, including more visual learning, providing more tools to help them implement their learning or improving the structure of the training.

The majority of face-to-face training sessions were delivered to participants from a mix of agencies and/or professions – 82% of practitioners said the attendees at their session were from a variety of agencies/professions. This was viewed positively, with three-quarters saying it was preferable for training to be delivered to a group with a mix of agencies or professions; 9% would have preferred a group from the same agency or profession and 15% said it made no difference.

Feedback on content of training

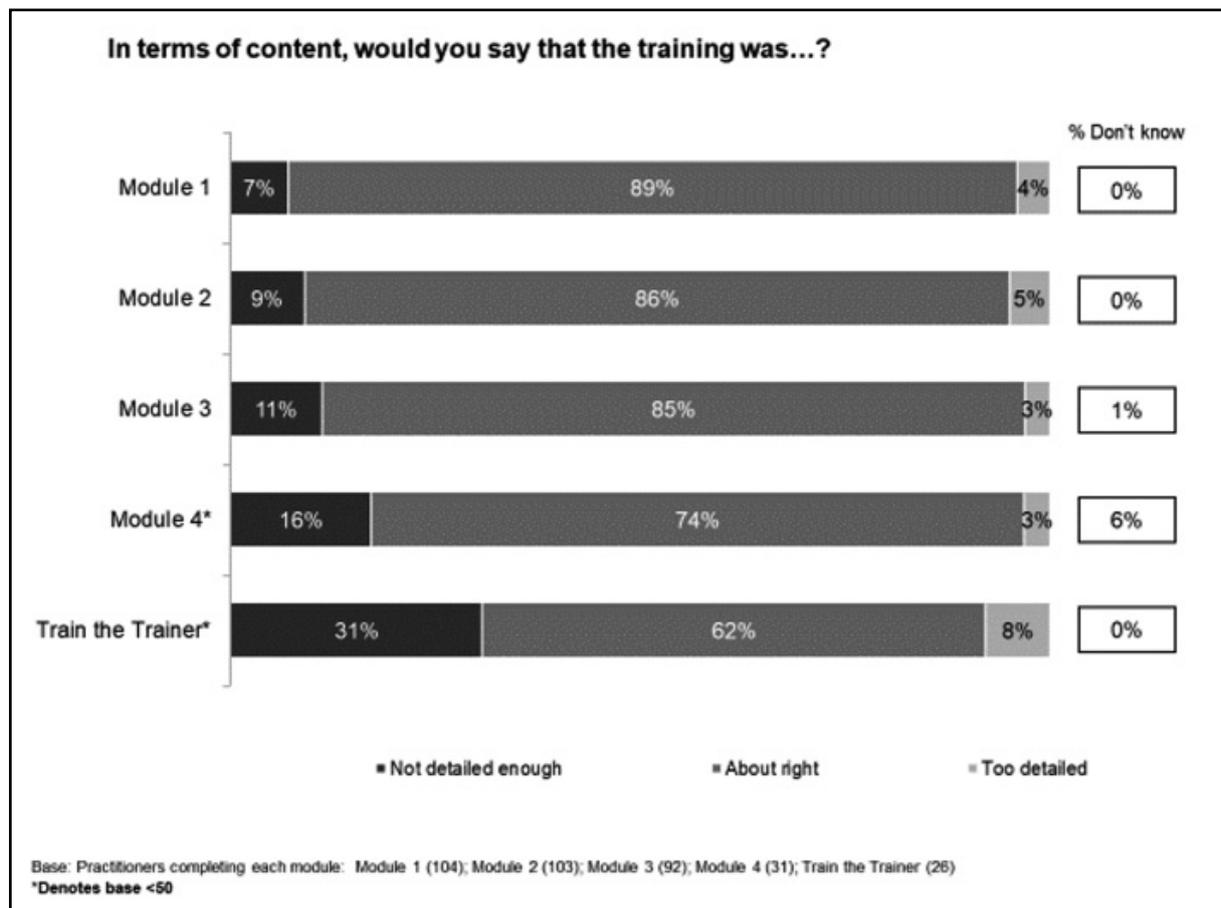
On the whole practitioners felt the level of detail of the training was “about right”. There was, however, some variation by module. The vast majority were happy with the level of detail given for modules 1 (understanding parental conflict), 2 (recognising parental conflict) and 3 (working with parents in conflict) with small

proportions (7%, 9% and 11% respectively) believing there should have been more detail provided and even smaller proportions (4%, 5%, 3% respectively) saying there was too much detail.

A larger minority (5 out of 31 who had taken Module 4) thought that the training for Module 4 (the role of supervisors) was not detailed enough. Almost a third, of those who undertook the Train the Trainer workshop also agreed that not enough detail had been provided (8 of 26).

It is worth noting that figures for Module 4 and Train the Trainer are from small base sizes - 31 and 26 respectively – and hence should be treated with caution.

Figure 3.7: A strong majority of practitioners felt that the content of each of the modules they had completed was about right



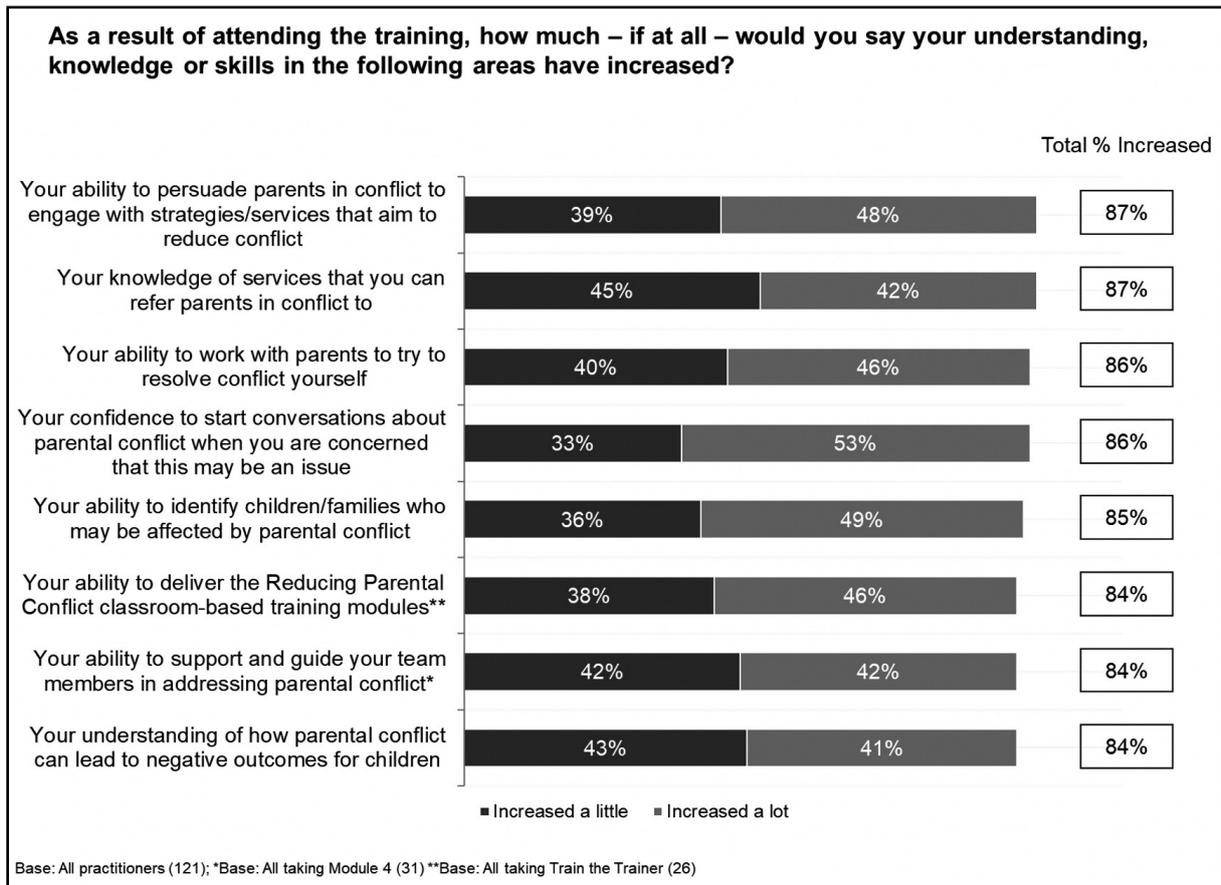
Views on the relevance of the training were very positive, with almost all (95%) saying the training was either “very” (74%) or “fairly” (21%) relevant to the parents that they work with and the situations they face at work.

Relative to their assessment of their position prior to attending the training, practitioners’ understanding, knowledge and skills in the areas of reducing parental conflict identified in the survey had increased in the vast majority of cases. Figure 3.8 shows the net increase for each skill/knowledge area; in all cases between 84% and 87% of practitioners said their skills had increased as a result of the training.

Practitioners were most likely to say their confidence to start conversations about parental conflict had increased “a lot” (53%). This was the area they felt least confident in before the training so had most scope for improvement. While

understanding of how parental conflict could lead to negative outcomes for children was the area that showed the lowest level of improvement, it should be noted that this was the area that practitioners were most likely to rate their levels of knowledge as “excellent” before receiving training, suggesting there was less scope (and need) for improvement in this area.

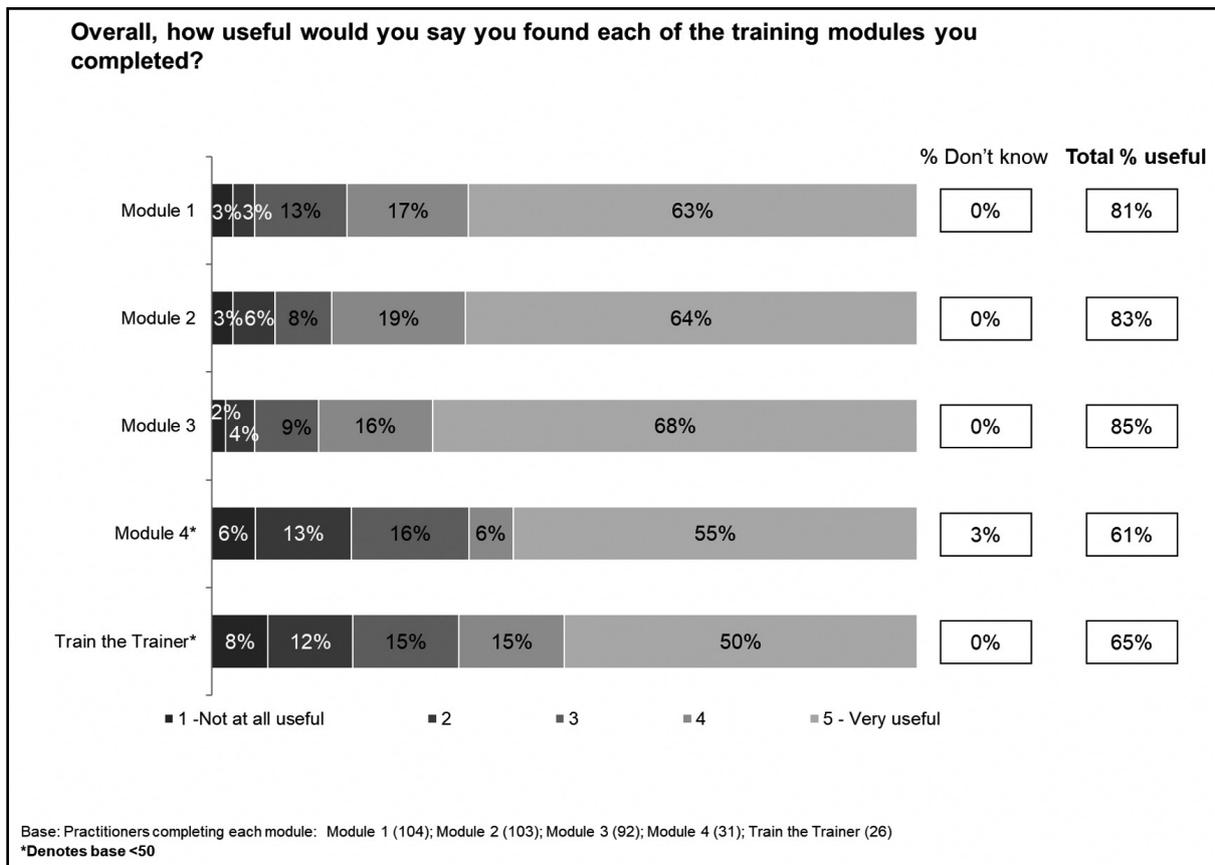
Figure 3.8: Practitioners’ confidence to start conversations about parental conflict was the area most likely to have increased a lot as a result of the training



Practitioners were most positive about modules 1 (understanding parental conflict), 2 (recognising parental conflict) and 3 (working with parents in conflict). They commonly felt the modules were useful, and on average gave them a score of 4.4 out of 5. Practitioners were slightly less positive about module 4 (the role of supervisors) and Train the Trainer; both of these were given an average score of 3.9 out of 5 by practitioners.

Those practitioners in team leader, supervisor or managerial roles were less likely to rate Module 4 (the role of supervisors) or the Train the Trainer module as “useful”.

Figure 3.9: Practitioners were more likely to find modules 1-3 useful than Module 4 or Train the Trainer



Half of practitioners who undertook Train the Trainer training and at least one other module (10 out of 19) said it was useful taking part in the reducing parental conflict modules before undertaking Train the Trainer; a fifth (4 out of 19) said it was not useful. All said they now felt equipped to at least some extent to be able to deliver the reducing parental conflict modules themselves, however only a third (9 out of 26) felt “fully equipped”; the remaining two-thirds (17 out of 26) only felt “equipped to some extent”.

In the case studies, local authorities were asked about their staff’s experiences of the practitioner training. Feedback was mixed, reflecting some early teething problems. For example, some of the local authorities whose staff attended the very first sessions were more negative, with delegates feeding back that the training was ‘dry’, ‘prescriptive’, ‘repetitive’ and ‘poor quality’. Where staff had not completed all of the training modules on offer, there were concerns that the remaining modules would be similarly poor quality. This resulted in a reluctance amongst these local authorities to offer the remaining modules to their staff. One local authority suggested that the training content could be more tailored to their local area, for example, by using familiar language:

“... that money would have gone a long way to appointing people within our own organisations to deliver that training ourselves. It would have been appropriate; we would have been talking the language that practitioners understand and [...] the quality would have been 100% better because this was not the sort of training that we would normally deliver.”

Some of the managers and commissioners also reported that those that had enrolled staff in the training earlier in the year had experienced some issues. This was mainly due to limited knowledge of the content of the different modules at the start of the process which meant some individuals had been placed on courses that were not pitched at their level of experience. As a result, some had to change their module choice, the mode of delivery, or the type of participants that they encouraged to attend particular modules.

“The first level training – Module 1 – the people who went on – we had some feedback about how basic it was. And some of the people who we put on all have found it a bit of a waste of time.”

Those accessing the training earlier on sometimes commented unfavourably about the module content and/or skills of the trainer. However, those that started later, or implemented a more staggered start, seemed to be in a better position; some reported that they had more information on the content and focus of the modules and therefore had been able to be more targeted in making sure the right people accessed the most appropriate modules. For example, one manager and commissioner explained that their local authority had signed up staff thought to be most likely to benefit from the training before offering the training more widely.

“So, the training is on our (...) e-learning website which means that people can book on to it. But what we did before we made that go live is, I identified a number of organisations and practitioner bases who I felt should get the first bite of the cherry because they are the people who are out there doing the face-to-face work with families. We’ve managed to book on I think 183 or 184 practitioners up-front who are identified practitioners who will utilise this in their work.”

Many of the managers and commissioners felt that they had been proactive in ensuring that they tailored invites to participate in the training to staff needs and experiences. Module 1 (understanding parental conflict) was often targeted at those with general exposure to children and families in their day-to-day work, while Modules 2 (recognising parental conflict) and 3 (working with parents in conflict) were usually aimed at practitioners working with families more likely to experience conflict. Module 4 (the role of supervisors) and the Train the Trainer workshop were aimed at supervisors and those with experience or the capacity to train others.

“We wanted different partners to be able to offer and access training at a level that was more relevant for them in terms of a brief overview, an introduction to it, and then more sort of knowledge and hands-on tools for the frontline workers that would deal with it probably on a day-to-day basis if they come across it.”

Some of the case study local authorities also had positive feedback to give on the training, feeling that it was relevant and gave practical tips that practitioners would be able to apply to real life situations. One local authority did refer to poor feedback they had heard anecdotally from others involved in the programme but they were pleasantly surprised with the quality of the training when they came to take it.

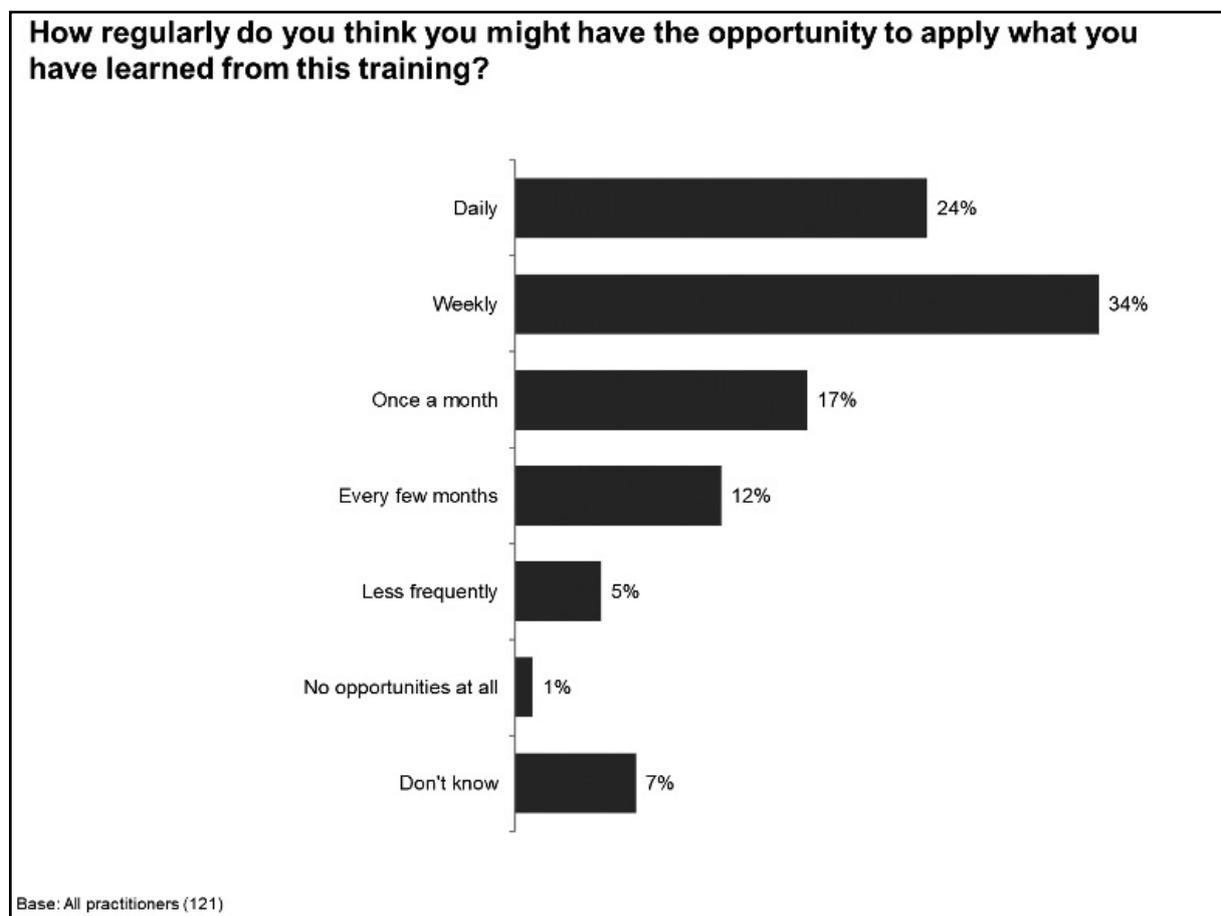
“The feedback we’d got from other authorities was that the training was absolutely dismal [...] we were all really worried [...] and because they wouldn’t release anything so we could see it before they delivered it [we couldn’t] send all these people to learn something that’s possibly not right. Luckily [the training] was fantastic.”

The positive views from the case studies around the relevance to roles and practical tips was supported by the survey data, with three-quarters of practitioners (76%) stating that the training had equipped them to apply what they had learned in their job; 52% “strongly” agreed and 24% “slightly” agreed. A minority (15%) said they did not feel equipped to apply what they had learned in their job. There were no significant differences by module or mode of training.

Practitioners expected to have regular opportunities to apply their learning to their jobs. Over half felt they would be able to apply it at least once a week (58%) and just under two fifths (17%) felt that would be able to apply it once a month. Only 1% said they didn’t expect to have any opportunities at all.

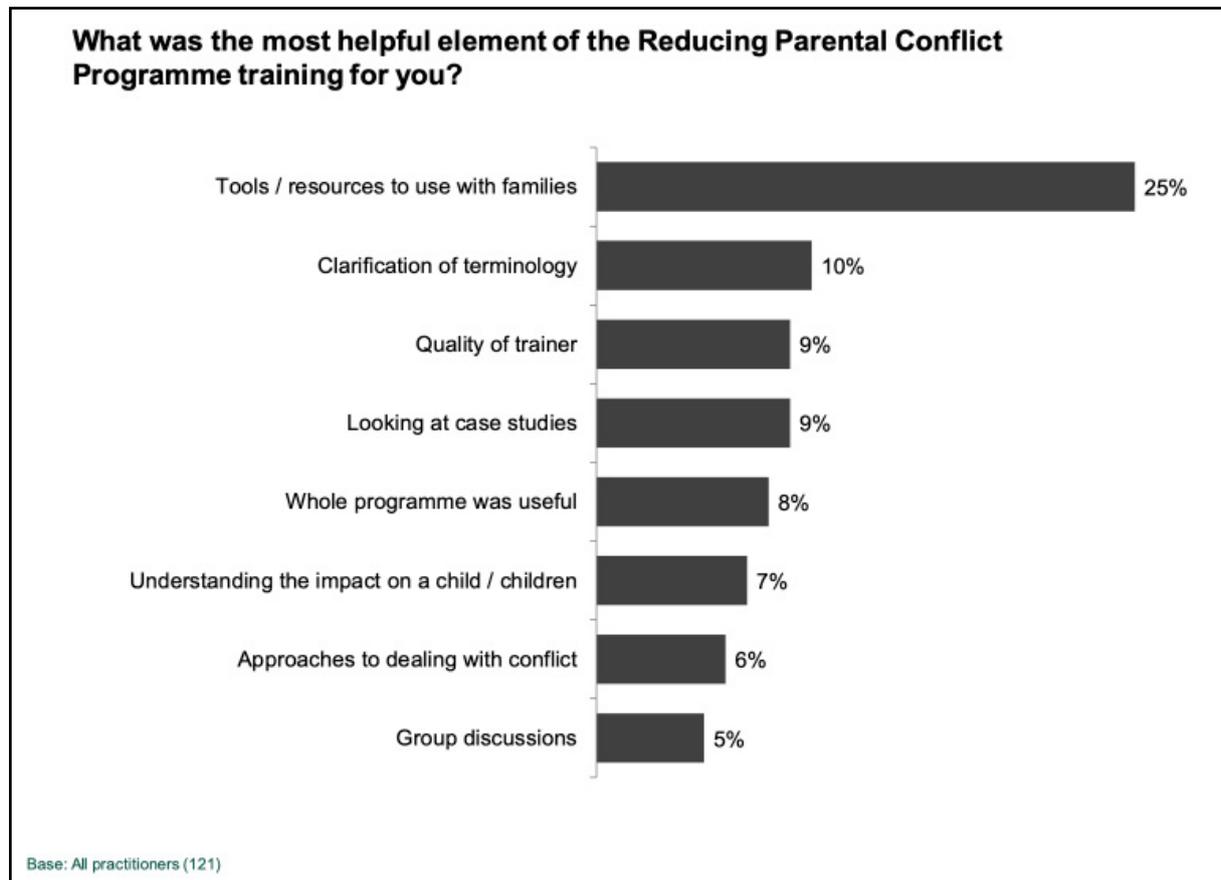
Those in a team leader, supervisor or managerial role were most likely to think they would have regular opportunities to apply what they had learnt from their training; 64% expected to apply it at least weekly, compared to 54% of those not in such a role. However, this is not a significant difference due to the low base size.

Figure 3.10: The majority of practitioners expect to have the opportunity to apply their learning from training at least once a week



Unprompted, practitioners most commonly said the most helpful element of the training was the tools and resources they now had to use with the families they work with (25%). One-in-ten (10%) found the clarification of terminology most helpful, and a similar number (9%) said the case studies or the quality of their trainer was most helpful. Figure 3.11 shows all elements mentioned by at least 5% of practitioners.

Figure 3.11: The tools/resources to use with families were seen as the most helpful element of the training, cited by one in four practitioners



The only suggestion for how the training could be improved mentioned by more than 5% of practitioners was to make it more relevant to specific job roles (7%). However, in practice it may be difficult to deliver the training in this way. Other suggestions included making it less repetitive (4%), offering more practical tools to use with families (3%), encouraging more discussions around visual materials during sessions (3%). A few (3%) said they had had technical issues with the online training that could be improved.

Anticipated impacts of the training longer term

Most managers and commissioners felt that it was too early for them to comment on the wider impact of the training so far but expected it to lead to significant changes in the future. They anticipated that it would improve recognition of parental conflict as a concept, increase early awareness and intervention and confidence among practitioners.

They believed enhanced recognition of parental conflict as a concept would be most notable across agencies connected with Early Help or those with direct engagement with children. These agencies or organisations may include Police, health services, schools, voluntary sector and other public facing services such as libraries and leisure facilities.

Managers and commissioners felt the training would help to build competence among practitioners who work with children and parents so that they can recognise the signs of parental conflict and intervene at the earliest opportunity. These benefits were expected to be seen primarily in those working with children and families where the threshold for statutory intervention had not been reached.

“Just really to get the right help in families and to get people to identify their behaviour and how it could be changed before it becomes incredibly entrenched.”

The final impact that was discussed by managers and commissioners was an increase in confidence among practitioners working with children and families in being able to start difficult conversations. The training was anticipated to be most impactful among practitioners who worked in agencies outside of Social Care, as respondents felt that Social Workers would already have the confidence to address these issues.

“At the end of the day, for us it’s quite important that our practitioners feel that they’ve got the skills and the knowledge but most of all the confidence to handle this situation and really be able to identify and make sure these families get support if they’ve got parental conflict.”

Managers and commissioners may have been nervous about overstating the impacts of the training. However, it is clear from the frontline practitioner survey findings that some of the impacts they felt would occur in the future have already started to come into effect. As shown in Figure 3.8 practitioners’ understanding, knowledge and skills in the areas of reducing parental conflict identified in the survey had increased for most practitioners. There was a net increase for each skill/knowledge area; in all cases between 84% and 87% of practitioners stated their skills had increased as a result of the training.

Chapter 4: Emerging Findings

This chapter gives an indication of some of the findings emerging from the evaluation to date. It is worth bearing in mind that this report has been written at an early stage in the evaluation when only a small number of the planned data collection exercises have been completed.

Findings

Local Integration

Prior awareness of the reducing parental conflict agenda within local authorities varied considerably. Before being approached by the RPC programme, it was common for local authorities not to have thought about tackling parental conflict below levels amounting to domestic abuse.

The RIL role has been valuable in persuading local authorities to engage with the programme. Their backgrounds working in local authority settings has enabled them to talk credibly about how the programme could fit in to other local authority activities and contribute towards tackling local priorities. This has been particularly important given difficulties in some local authorities in identifying where in the organisation an investment in reducing parental conflict might sit. It has also helped to combat initial confusion among local authorities about the involvement of DWP in this area. Almost two-thirds of local authorities agreed that their RIL had helped them to explore how to meet the needs and priorities of their local area and nearly all agreed that their RIL had helped them to understand the RPC programme.

The findings from the interviews with RILs, local authorities and managers and commissioners indicated that local authorities are positive about the potential of the programme to:

- **improve outcomes for children in their area;** and
- **potentially reduce the strain on more resource-intensive services** through early intervention in parental conflict.

The interview and survey data shows that SPOCs are at different levels within local authorities – some are very senior and some are less so. **It also shows that contact between RILs and local authorities appears to be quite regular** and this should be valuable in helping to sustain engagement with the programme.

The SLS and PT grants have been effective in encouraging initial engagement with the programme. With the support of the RILs, nearly all local authorities have received some funding and hence have committed to making some investment in the agenda. Plans for the SLS grant involve a range of activities which seem suitable to getting a new programme off the ground, from investment in a co-ordinator (sometimes shared across areas) to awareness-raising events or planning activities (such as needs assessments or workshops).

RILs were instrumental in helping local authorities to complete their applications for the SLS and PT grants through providing guidance on how to complete the forms, examples of what other local authorities had done and making suggestions for other local authorities to link with.

It is relatively early days in the delivery of the programme but as it progresses there would ideally be some movement in key areas where consideration of parental conflict is currently quite low. For example, just over a quarter (28%) of local authorities that responded to the survey currently have an explicit question about parents' relationships with each other in Early Help family assessments. Just under two thirds (60%) said that they were referring families to specialist parental conflict services (internal and external services). Most of those not currently active in these areas had plans to become more so. Two thirds (63%) of local authorities reported that reducing parental conflict was integrated as part of the mainstream services in their local area either 'to a very little extent' or 'not at all'.

Whilst the **SLS grant was seen as extremely flexible** by respondents, **some respondents found the PT grant too rigid** and wished that they had been able to choose their own trainers and/or use the grant to purchase venue space. Some managers and commissioners reported difficulties with the booking process for accessing the training. Delegate feedback is, however, generally positive.

Impacts of the SLS grant are yet to be fully seen but there was emerging evidence that the **grant-funded activities were helping to drive awareness of parental conflict** among practitioners and at a strategic level.

Nonetheless, some remained concerned about their ability to fully maximise the potential of the programme in the context of competing resource pressures.

Training

The results from the training survey are indicative, with many more frontline practitioners expected to complete this survey over the coming months. As such some of the data reported is from small sample sizes and findings should be treated with a measure of caution.

It is clear that the training is covering new ground for the majority of those attending. Less than a third (30%) of attendees had ever received any training on reducing parental conflict before and for most of these this was as part of a wider course that had only touched on the subject.

Across all modules, overall views on the content of the training are positive. Three quarters (74%) of attendees felt that the training was very relevant to the parents they work with and the situations they face at work.

Module 4 (the role of supervisors) and Train the Trainer appeared to have more scope for improvement as just under two-thirds of practitioners reported finding these modules useful, compared to over 80% for the other modules. It will be important to monitor this going forwards to see if this pattern holds as survey fieldwork continues.

Ratings for training delivered face-to-face were higher than for online delivery but the ratings for online training were still high.

While the training was universally welcomed, **there was some desire for the training content to be more grounded in the individual local authority's context**, in order to make the training more engaging and useful for practitioners as well as easier to integrate into existing training offers.

The majority (76%) of practitioners believe that they will be able to make use of what they have learnt through the training in their day-to-day roles. In many cases, they envisage that they will use the material very frequently. Just over half (58%) felt that they will have the opportunity to apply their learning at least weekly. Nearly all reported improvement in their understanding, knowledge and skills across a range of areas as a result of attending training.

Anticipated longer term impacts of the practitioner training were **improved recognition of parental conflict as a concept, early intervention** in cases of parental conflict and **increased confidence** among practitioners in addressing parental conflict.

Annex 1: Breakdown of interventions delivered in Face-to-Face element

Table A: Face-to-face interventions

Intervention Name	Target Group	Intensity	CPA
Triple P Enhanced	For both intact and separated couples	High	Westminster
Family Check Up	For both intact and separated couples	Moderate	Dorset Westminster Hertfordshire Gateshead
Triple P Family Transitions	For separated couples only	High	Dorset Westminster
The Incredible Years, including Advanced Programme	Intact Couples only with Children aged 4-14	High	Dorset Gateshead
Parents in Dispute: Mentalization Based Approach	For both intact and separated couples	High	Gateshead Hertfordshire
Parents Plus	For separated couples	Moderate	Gateshead Hertfordshire
Within my Reach	For separated couples only	Moderate	Dorset Westminster
“4Rs 2Ss” Family Strengthening Programme	For both intact and separated couples with Children aged 7-11	High	Hertfordshire

Annex 2: Breakdown of respondents to LA Survey

Table B: Breakdown of online survey respondent characteristics

Contract Package Area (CPAs)	Number achieved
Contract Package Area – those with face-to-face interventions	22
Non-Contract Package Area	59
Other elements of the RPC programme involved in	
Practitioner Training grant and Strategic Leadership Support grant funded activity	79
COADeP Innovation Fund (to jointly tackle parental conflict and alcohol misuse)	3
Challenge Fund	3
Local Family Offer Ambassador	4
Region	
North East	17
North West	11
Midlands	15
South East	14
South West	11
London	13

Annex 3: Characteristics of case study visits

Table C: Breakdown of case study visits

Contract Package Area (CPAs)	Number achieved
Contract Package Area – those with face-to-face interventions	3
Non-Contract Package Area	7
RPC activities undertaken	
Those who have undertaken a number of RPC activities/ started to build in strategies for tackling RPC	6
Those who have not undertaken many or any RPC activities	4
Region	
North East	4
North West	1
Midlands	2
South East	2
South West	0
London	1

Annex 4: Profile of Manager and Commissioner Interviews

Table D: Manager and commissioner respondent roles and work areas

LA / Non-LA	Work area	Role
Non-LA	Third sector organisation	Chief Executive Officer
	Commissioned Service	Family Support Manager
LA	Children and Families Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead Commissioner for Children’s Services • Head of Children and Families Prevention Service • Team Leader
	Children’s Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Commissioning Manager • Team Manager • Head of Service and Partnerships • Head of Service • Workforce Development Operations Manager • Commissioner • Families First Coordinator
	Community and Children’s Services	Workforce Development and Participation Lead
	Children’s Social Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Manager • Community Service Manager
	Children and Adult’s Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Training and Development
	Early Help / Early Intervention & Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Commissioner • Strategic Manager • Senior Manager • Head of Service • Assistant Service Manager • Senior Commissioning Manager • Troubled Families Coordinator • Parenting Lead • Early Help Coordinator • Area Manager • Joint Commissioner • Head of Integrated Early Help and Prevention • Strategic Lead for Partnership and Prevention • Partnership Manager • Children’s Early Help and Prevention Partnerships Manager

The table below provides some further details on the participants.

Table E: Breakdown of manager and commissioner characteristics

Contract Package Area (CPAs)	Number achieved
Contract Package Area – those with face-to-face interventions	6
Non-Contract Package Area	24
Involvement in the COADeP Innovation Fund¹⁹	
Had received COADeP Innovation Fund	4
Had not received COADeP Innovation Fund	26
Region	
North East and Yorkshire and the Humber	4
North West	2
East and West Midlands	5
South East (inc. East of England)	7
South West	7
London	5

¹⁹ The government announced this fund to support children living with alcohol dependent parents in April 2018. The fund is also tackling parental conflict among alcohol dependent parents and is co-funded by the Reducing Parental Conflict programme (RPC).

Annex 5: Profile of responses to Frontline Practitioner Survey

The training consists of 4 modules:

- Module 1: Understanding Parental Conflict & Its Impact on Child Outcomes
- Module 2: Recognising and Supporting Parents in Parental Conflict
- Module 3: Working with Parents in Conflict
- Module 4: Parental Conflict: The Role of Supervisors and Managers
- Train the Trainer

Table F: Breakdown by module(s) undertaken and region

Modules taken	Number of respondents
Module 1 only	11
Module 1 and 2	9
Module 2 only	2
Module 1, 2 and 3	52
Module 2 and 3	8
Module 1, 2, 3 and 4	13
Module 1, 2, 3 and Train the Trainer	1
Module 1, 2, 3, 4 and Train the Trainer	18
Train the Trainer only	7
Region	
North East	27
North West	18
Midlands	19
South East	29
South West	16
London	2
Not stated	10