**Distinguishing domestic abuse and harmful conflict – Screening aid**

Domestic abuse and harmful conflict are distinct from one another and require different assessment/ intervention techniques. This tool is designed to be used early in proceedings to assist Family Court Advisers (FCAs) in deciding which will be of most assistance in their assessment: the **purple domestic abuse practice aids and guidance** or the **orange harmful conflict practice aids and guidance**. It is not designed to be diagnostic in and of itself and does not replace professional judgement.

Where there are characteristics of both abuse and conflict in a child’s proceedings, it is strongly advised to proceed with an assessment using the **domestic abuse practice aids and guidance** first as this will ensure you are able to explore the pattern of behaviours in the safest context.

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| **Indicators of domestic abuse**  If domestic abuse, including coercive control, is a potential factor, refer to the **purple folder** which includes the **Domestic Abuse Pathway** and accompanying practice aids. This includes where the  **following indicators are alleged, present or suspected – either now or in the past, including, but not limited to:** |
| Information relating to a primary perpetrator |
| Physical violence |
| Sexual violence |
| Coercive, controlling behaviours (towards a child or an adult) |
| Stalking behaviours and ‘jealous surveillance’ |
| Power imbalance |
| Threats to kill:any known or alleged threats must be taken seriously until sufficiently assessed  to reduce potential risk and safeguard the child and others at risk |
| One or both parents report or present as being afraid |
| One or both parents were in a previous relationship that was abusive |
| Children imitate violent behaviour |
| Presence of degrading or humiliating behaviours |
| Features of ‘honour’ based violence and / or features of forced marriage. |
| Situational couple violence (SCV). Use the SCV guidance in the Domestic Abuse Pathway  to help distinguish and identify when this is present. |

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| **Indicators of harmful conflict**  If harmful conflict is a potential factor, refer to the **orange folder** which includes the **harmful conflict guide** and accompanying tools. This includes where the **following indicators including, but not limited to:** |
| A high degree of anger and mistrust |
| Incidents of verbal conflict |
| Ongoing difficulties in communication and cooperation |
| Loss of focus on the child |
| ‘Digging in of position’ and no ability to compromise, such as micro managing contact and communication |
| The child, dependent on age, may be drawn into managing the parent’s communication and behaviours |
| Lengthy proceedings or repeat litigation |
| Can escalate into incidents of violence or physical aggression. In these circumstances please refer to the **domestic abuse purple folder** paying particular attention to the material about situational couple violence. |
| Can result in the child ‘taking sides’ or opting out. In these circumstances please refer to the **green folder on child resistance and refusal**. |

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| **Practice aids and guidance to be used:** |
| **Emerging hypothesis or other notes/ comments:** |

***Important****: This practice aid has been developed from existing evidence base and research, however is not a validated tool. It should be used to inform the assessment and analysis and is not a replacement for the professional judgement of the practitioner.*