

## Distinguishing domestic abuse and harmful conflict – A screening tool

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 the life of a case to assist Family Court Advisers (FCAs) in deciding which will be of most assistance in their assessment: the **purple domestic abuse tools and guidance** or the **orange harmful conflict tools and guidance**. It is not designed to be a diagnostic tool in and of itself and does not replace professional judgement.

Where cases contain characteristics of both, it is strongly advised to proceed with an assessment using the **domestic abuse tools and guidance** first as this will ensure you are able to explore the pattern of behaviours in the safest context.

### 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 tools. 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 tool in the Domestic Abuse Pathway to help distinguish and identify when this is present.

### 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 abuse

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**.

### Tools and guidance to be used:

### Emerging hypothesis or other notes/ comments:

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