



Reducing Parental Conflict - Challenge Fund

Guidance - Support for Disadvantaged Families

Annex B Ineligible Costs has been updated (6 February 2019)

This guidance is intended for organisations considering whether to apply to the Support for the Disadvantaged Families strand of the Reducing Parental Conflict Challenge Fund.

The Challenge Fund is an important component of the overall Reducing Parental Conflict Programme.

Section one: Reducing Parental Conflict Programme overview

'*Improving Lives: Helping Workless Families*' (April 2017)¹ announced the government's intention to launch a new programme to reduce parental conflict.

The Reducing Parental Conflict Programme runs to 2021 and will address parental conflict by:

- Supporting local areas to embed parental conflict support in wider services for children;
- Creating new markets for effective support, by testing eight face-to-face interventions in four areas in England focusing largely on workless families;
- Funding work to reduce parental conflict where alcohol misuse is an issue in the conflict; and
- Explore digital support for parents and the support needs of particularly disadvantaged parents – this is the focus of the Challenge Fund.

The evidence review '*What works to enhance inter-parental relationships and improve outcomes for children*' (March 2016)² demonstrated that children who are exposed to frequent, intense and poorly resolved parental conflict are at significant risk of experiencing poorer long term outcomes.

Poor outcomes for children are damaging and costly, not only for individuals (children and parents) but also for the state, as extra support is needed through health care, education,

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-lives-helping-workless-families>.

² <http://www.eif.org.uk/publication/what-works-to-enhance-inter-parental-relationships-and-improveoutcomes-for-children-3/>

social and employment services to mitigate these problems. Therefore, early intervention to improve the quality of the inter-parental relationship (whether parents are together or separated) has the potential to reduce cumulative costs across childhood, adolescence, and adulthood.

In 2015-16, 11% of children whose parents were living together were exposed to potentially damaging levels of parental conflict; with children in workless families three times as likely to experience this, compared to families where both parents were in work. In the same period, around half of children in separated families did not see their non-resident parent frequently (at least once a fortnight), which is indicative of a poor quality relationship between their parents.

Section two: the Challenge Fund

Aims and objectives

The key objective of the Challenge Fund is to build a broader evidence base of what works in reducing parental conflict. Evidence will inform future policy and practice and help local areas support a greater number of disadvantaged families at risk of parental conflict.

Building on activity undertaken so far by the Reducing Parental Conflict Programme, the Challenge Fund will gather learning where:

- there are currently no firm answers;
- parents are living in the same household or living separately; and
- conflict is below the threshold of domestic abuse.

Funding available

£2.7 million is available for initiatives that will generate evidence in the following two strands:

- Digital Support for Families (Digital Support) - £1.6 million
- Support for families with existing disadvantages which place them at greater risk of parental conflict (Support for Disadvantaged Families) - £1.1 million

Funding will be available for organisations to deliver their initiatives from April 2019 until March 2020. Initiatives must be able to meet these timescales.

Organisations can apply to each of the two Challenge Fund strands. Initiatives must be distinct and applicants should complete a separate application to each strand of the Fund.

Organisations may be involved in more than one initiative as a partner, but can only lead on one application per strand.

Section three: Support for Disadvantaged Families

Scope

Support for Disadvantaged Families initiatives will test and learn from new or emerging approaches to supporting disadvantaged families with an increased risk of parental conflict. Children in disadvantaged families can be particularly at risk of exposure to parental conflict.

There are certain life events and disadvantages which are known to increase the risk of parental conflict, such as the transition to parenthood, work pressures, financial problems, health and wellbeing issues, and alcohol or substance misuse.

Data also shows that over a quarter of children in families who report relationship distress lived in families where both parents had a longstanding limiting illness and/or disability. This is compared to 10% of children in families reporting relationship distress where neither parent had a longstanding illness or disability.

Analysis suggests that children growing up with parents reporting symptoms of anxiety and/or depression are over twice as likely to be exposed to parental relationship distress. Family dysfunction and acute family stress are part of the primary needs assessment for 'Children in Need'.

The above examples are there to give context and are illustrative. The Challenge Fund seeks learning on what works to support disadvantaged families by funding innovation where there is little current evidence. For example, this might include innovation to promote better integration or join-up of local services, or targeted interventions for families.

Annex A provides evidence sources of research in this field.

We are also interested in activity or interventions for separating or separated couples that reduce their need to use state funded systems such as the family court system or the child maintenance system.

As a key aim of this fund is to encourage innovation, we will not fund activity which is already taking place unless there is a strong case for doing so.

The Fund will not pay for research conducted in isolation of delivery. To receive funding you will need to clearly articulate and evidence why your initiative is targeted at a particular group of people, and why the activity is appropriate. You must be able to demonstrate the evidence that underpins your application and how your initiative will broaden the evidence base on what works to reduce parental conflict. You must also show an understanding of how the proposal, if successful in reducing parental conflict, could be deployed elsewhere by practitioners and embedded into local family practice.

We are interested in initiatives that either:

- are well-developed but have yet to be tested;
- have been tested somewhat and require further testing on a larger scale or;
- have been tested somewhat and require testing for further learning.

Given the time available to launch and deliver initiatives, we don't expect to fund initiatives with little or no development already.

We are looking to fund initiatives that have the potential to be sustained if they are successful. This means we are unlikely to fund an initiative that offers extremely poor value for money, or would only succeed in very limited circumstances.

We are unlikely to fund more than one initiative in any town or city. We would strongly encourage interested organisations to consult with their local stakeholders before they apply for funding.

Section four: Learning and evidence

The initiatives that receive funding will undertake a period of testing for one year and record the learning and evidence they gather. We expect this will be done through monitoring processes capturing outputs and outcomes, as well as a formalised evaluation process.

Applicants are encouraged to allocate 10 to 15% of their budget to evaluation of their projects. This can be spent on appointing an external evaluator (following appropriate procurement processes) or on a structured, internal evaluation.

Where evaluations are to be conducted internally, applicants will need to demonstrate that staff with relevant expertise are available to conduct the research.

Applicants will need to demonstrate that their approach to learning and evidence gathering is well considered and appropriate for their initiative. We are not prescribing what form this evidence will take; it could be qualitative and/or quantitative. Evidence must be of a good quality; we are looking for evidence that can inform future policy and practice, and help us determine where future investment should be made. We are also interested in the identification and sharing of learning from what doesn't work, as well as what does.

Grant participants will be encouraged to use the set of parental conflict measures that have been developed as part of the wider Reducing Parental Conflict Programme. These will be provided to successful grant applicants.

Where appropriate to the initiative, grant participants will be encouraged to use the existing Department for Education measures on children's outcomes:

- school attendance
- academic progress
- behaviour, wellbeing or mental health measure
- social care involvement – duration, change in status of case, re-referral.

Dependent on the initiative being delivered, we are also interested in learning:

- How effective is your initiative at reducing parental conflict? What will you use to measure change?
- What works to effectively engage disadvantaged parents into support to reduce parental conflict?
- What works to effectively engage practitioners and enable them to address parental conflict amongst their service users?
- What barriers were encountered, and how were these overcome?
- What were the needs of your chosen target group and how your initiative addressed these needs?
- What resources are needed to deliver the initiative and what are the costs?
- Whether an innovation could be deployed locally by practitioners and embedded into local family practice.

We are also interested in learning from:

- Activity or interventions for separating or separated couples that reduce their need to use state funded systems such as the family court system or the child maintenance system.
- How the innovation might gather learning on what works for disadvantaged groups who may experience barriers to accessing support to reduce parental conflict.

Initiatives will not be required to share personal or sensitive data with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) or Ecorys UK.

Section five: Applying to the Challenge Fund

Grant amount

Applicants can apply for between £100,000 and £250,000.

Please consider your budget carefully and only apply for what you need to deliver your initiative, bearing in mind that all activity must be completed and costs incurred by 31 March 2020. Value for money will be considered as part of the assessment process.

All initiatives must begin activity in April 2019 and finish by 31 March 2020 and all funds must be spent within this timeframe.

Funding from other sources

There is no requirement for your budget to include funding from other sources. If your budget includes match or additional funding from another source this must be secured. We are very unlikely to fund any initiative where funding from other sources is included in the budget but is not secured.

You must be clear where any funding from other sources will come from, and the level of funding must be reasonable and proportionate to the value of the fund. As a guideline we would not expect this to exceed 20% of the total initiative cost. Each initiative will be assessed individually on its merits.

Overhead costs

You may include reasonable overhead costs in your budget. As a guideline we would not expect these to exceed 10% of the cost of your initiative.

Overheads are the costs incurred by your organisation to run its operations and not the direct cost of initiative activities or evaluation. Overhead costs might typically include a proportion of office rent, telephone expenses, accounting fees, salaries of your management or administration staff, etc.

VAT

You may only include VAT in your budget if you can't recover it from HM Revenue and Customs.

Ineligible costs

A full list of ineligible costs is included in Annex B. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review this list carefully before submitting their application.

Who can apply

Support for Disadvantaged Families applicants must be based in, and delivery must take place in, England.

Applicants will need to demonstrate expertise and/or a strong track record of reducing parental conflict within disadvantaged families.

Applicants are encouraged to work in partnership to bring in the necessary skills and experience. Applications from partnerships must have a clearly identified constituted lead organisation with whom we will sign a grant agreement and be accountable for delivery of the initiative.

Applicants can be from the private, public (including local authorities) and third sector, including organisations such as voluntary organisations, charities and social enterprises. Private sector organisations cannot make a profit from their involvement in a Challenge Fund initiative.

Smaller organisations have an important role to play in reducing parental conflict; however, organisations will need to have a certain level of capacity to deliver effectively to the Challenge Fund budgets and timescales. If you want to apply for funding equivalent to a large proportion of your annual income it may be better to partner with a larger organisation, and for them to act as the lead applicant.

Applications from England's 152 upper tier local authorities

Through the wider Reducing Parental Conflict programme the DWP is making a significant investment in some local authorities for both face-to-face services to reduce parental conflict and to local authorities who have made successful bids under the Children of Alcohol Dependent Parents Innovation Fund. These local authorities are listed in Annex C. The DWP will only be able to fund projects under the Supporting Disadvantaged Families strand of the Challenge Fund in areas where we are not already funding interventions aimed at reducing parental conflict.

All local authorities are able to apply to the Digital Support strand of the Challenge Fund; however, the local authorities who are listed in Annex C will need to demonstrate that any activity will not undermine either take-up or evaluation of the aforementioned interventions.

Any other eligible organisation may apply to work in the affected areas, however as part of the assessment process, we will assess whether the proposed activity is likely to have a significant impact on the take-up or evaluation of the wider Reducing Parental Conflict Programme. A key aim of the Challenge Fund is to encourage innovation and as such we will not fund activity which is already taking place unless there is a strong case for doing so.

This decision has been taken to ensure that the programme's chances are maximised to secure good take up by families of these services, which will help ensure that we can

robustly evaluate these interventions. Giving other local authorities the opportunity to bid for funding through the Challenge Fund will also help to spread experience of working on parental conflict to as many local areas as possible.

A full list of the local authorities that this applies to is included in Annex C.

Programme timescales

Stage	Date
Guidance and criteria is published	3 January 2019
Applicants can complete an eligibility check, which we will review before we invite you to submit an application	11 January to 8 February 2019
Eligible organisations can complete their application online	21 January to 15 February 2019
We aim to notify applicants of the outcome of their application	by 31 March 2019
Successful applicants begin delivering initiatives	April 2019
Ongoing delivery and learning reports submitted	April 2019 to March 2020
Activities and costs funded by the Challenge Fund must finish	by 31 March 2020
Evaluation and final reporting due	by 10 April 2020

Given the time available to learn from delivery, we don't expect to fund initiatives where little or no development has taken place unless there is a strong case for doing so. We will expect you to set out clearly what work you have already done to be able to begin your initiative promptly in April 2019 (including any start-up activity needed) and for the activity to have gathered robust learning by March 2020.

Before you apply to the Fund we will expect you to have already identified which other organisation(s) you will work with to deliver your initiative and for you to have agreed roles and responsibilities.

We will also expect you to have planned for how you will gather evidence and learning from your initiative.

Application process

The application process consists of three stages.

1. Self-assessment:

Please read this guidance carefully and complete the online checklist before deciding if you wish to submit your initiative idea for an eligibility check. This will enable you to identify quickly whether your application is likely to meet the Challenge Fund criteria.

2. Eligibility check:

We will provide an online template for you to provide some basic information about your initiative. Initiative ideas that clearly do not meet the Fund criteria will not be allowed to proceed past this stage. If we need further information, we may contact you about your idea.

3. Complete your application:

Organisations that have completed an eligibility check and have been invited to apply to the Fund will be able to access the online application portal between 21 January and 15 February. Applications submitted after 15 February will not be considered.

We will share separately the questions that applicants will need to answer when completing their application and include guidance on what we are looking for.

Contact us

We encourage you to check the frequently asked questions and to read this guidance before contacting us. The frequently asked questions will be regularly updated.

You can contact us through the 'contact us' portal on the Challenge Fund website:

www.reducingparentalconflictfund.co.uk

Section six: What to expect if you are awarded funding

Grant agreement

You will be asked to sign a grant agreement with the Department for Work and Pensions if you are awarded funding. A draft version of this grant agreement will be made available before the deadline for submitting applications. The grant agreement terms and conditions are not negotiable.

Support

If you are awarded funding you will be allocated a named grants manager who will act as a single point of contact for all queries and will provide support and guidance.

Your grants manager will also clearly explain the monitoring, payment, learning, evidence, reporting, evaluation and audit requirements of the Fund to you. This will be supplemented by comprehensive written guidance.

Performance and learning reports

Initiatives will be required to submit a monitoring and learning report at the end of each quarter of initiative delivery and then one final report when Challenge Fund delivery has finished. We will broadly expect these reports to include:

- Update on activities and milestones completed against agreed deliverables and financial profile as in your grant agreement
- Key issues and challenges, and how these have been addressed
- Effectiveness of the funded activities
- Proposed adjustments or modifications to project activities
- Key learning in line with the learning and monitoring framework agreed with Ecorys UK at the start of your initiative

We will provide a template for you to use if you are awarded funding.

Payment terms

Your grant agreement will include initiative milestones which we will pay against. We will use the information provided in your application to agree these milestones with you.

We will ask you to provide evidence that a milestone has been met with each payment claim.

Payments will be made in arrears, subject to acceptable reporting and evidence being provided. We are unable to provide start-up funding.

You must have a UK bank account in the name of your organisation and the bank account must have at least two unrelated signatories.

Audit requirements

You should keep a record of what you have spent your grant on and evidence of expenditure (such as receipts) for seven years. We may audit a number of initiatives and may select your initiative for an audit.

If you do not provide this information when asked for it then you may have to pay back your grant.

Role of Ecorys UK and Family Lives

Ecorys UK in partnership with Family Lives has been contracted by the Department for Work and Pensions to administer the Challenge Fund on its behalf.

Annex A

Evidence sources for this guidance

Burton, R., et al. (2016) *The Public Health Burden of Alcohol and the Effectiveness and Cost-Effectiveness of Alcohol Control Policies: an evidence review*, London: Public Health England

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/733108/alcohol_public_health_burden_evidence_review_update_2018.pdf

DWP (2018) Parental conflict indicator 2011/12 to 2015/16

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/parental-conflict-indicator-201112-to-201516>

DWP (2017) *Improving Lives Analysis and Research Pack*. Parental Conflict Chapter pp50-70

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/696368/improving-lives-helping-workless-families-web-version.pdf

DWP (2017) *Improving Lives evidence resource on multiple disadvantage in families and its impact on children*

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/605988/evidence-resource-improving-lives-helping-workless-families-web-version.pdf

Glenn, F (2007). *Growing together drifting apart? Children with disabilities and their parents' relationships*. London: OnePlusOne

<http://www.oneplusone.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2007/12/Growing-Together-or-Drifting-Apart.pdf>

Harold, G. et al (2016) *What Works to Enhance Inter-parental relationships and improve outcomes for children*

<https://www.eif.org.uk/files/pdf/what-works-to-enhance-interparental-relationships-and-improve-outcomes-for-children.pdf>

Ramm, J., et al (2010) *Relationship difficulties and help-seeking behaviour: Secondary analysis of an existing data-set*. London: DCSF

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/182673/DfE-RR018.pdf

Templeton (2012) *An evaluation of the Moving Parents and Children Together (M-PACT) Programme*

<http://alcoholresearchuk.org/alcohol-insights/an-evaluation-of-the-moving-parents-and-children-together-m-pact/>

Walker, J. et al. (2010) *Relationships Matter: Understanding the Needs of Adults, Particularly Parents, Regarding Relationship Support*, London

<https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/820/1/DCSF-RR233.pdf>

Annex B

Ineligible Costs

1. Paid for lobbying, which means using grant funds to fund lobbying (via an external firm or in-house staff) in order to undertake activities intended to influence or attempt to influence Parliament, Government or political activity; or attempting to influence legislative or regulatory action.
2. Using the grant to directly enable one part of government to challenge another on topics unrelated to the agreed purpose of the grant.
3. Using the grant to petition for additional funding.
4. Expenses such as for entertaining, specifically aimed at exerting undue influence to change government policy.
5. Input VAT reclaimable by the grant recipient from HM Revenue and Customs.
6. Payments for activities of a political or exclusively religious nature.
7. Contributions in kind (i.e. a contribution in goods or services, as opposed to money).
8. Interest payments (including service charge payments for finance leases).
9. Statutory fines, criminal fines or penalties.
10. Payments for work or activities which the grant recipient, or any member of their Partnership has a statutory duty to undertake, or that they are fully funded by other resources.
11. Bad debts to related parties.
12. Payments for unfair dismissal or other compensation.
13. Depreciation, amortisation or impairment of fixed assets owned by the grant recipient.
14. The acquisition or improvement of fixed assets by the grant recipient.
15. Liabilities incurred before the issue of this funding agreement unless agreed in writing by the funder.

Annex C

Applications from England's 152 upper tier local authorities

Through the wider Reducing Parental Conflict programme DWP is making a significant investment in some local authorities for both face-to-face services to reduce parental conflict and to local authorities who have made successful bids under the Children of Alcohol Dependent Parents Innovation Fund.

The local authorities below may not apply for funding from the Supporting Disadvantaged Families strand of the Challenge Fund.

Local authorities funded to deliver face-to-face interventions:

East of England

Hertfordshire County Council (lead authority)
Cambridgeshire County Council
Essex County Council
Peterborough City Council
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

London

Westminster City Council (lead authority)
Brent London Borough Council
Camden London Borough Council
Croydon London Borough Council
Hammersmith and Fulham London Borough Council
Kensington and Chelsea London Borough Council
Lambeth London Borough Council

North East

Gateshead Council (lead authority)
Borough of Hartlepool
Borough of South Tyneside
Durham County Council
Middlesbrough Council
Newcastle City Council
Northumberland County Council
Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Sunderland City Council

South East England

Buckinghamshire County Council

South West England

Dorset County Council (lead authority)
Bournemouth Borough Council
Devon County Council
Plymouth City Council
Poole Borough Council
Somerset County Council
Torbay Council
Wiltshire Council

**Local Authorities funded through the Children of Alcohol Dependent Parents
Innovation Fund:**

Brighton and Hove City Council
Haringey London Borough Council
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
North Tyneside Council
Portsmouth City Council
St Helens Council
Swindon Borough Council
West Sussex County Council

Rochdale Borough Council will lead work with four other Greater Manchester local
authorities (Bury Council, Salford City Council, Trafford Council and Bolton Council)