

4

Children do best if their parents co-operate with each other and discuss arrangements for the present and plan for the future with them.

Talking things over with your children

- Take your children's feelings into account when making any decisions: check that their needs and feelings are not overlooked or misunderstood.
- Talk to your children about who they will live with and where, how and when they will see the other parent, grandparents and other family members.
- If you can't agree on arrangements for your children, you can seek help from your local Mediation Service. Some Mediation Services also offer help and support for children who are particularly upset or troubled by parents' separation.
- Allow children as many opportunities as they need to talk through what has happened and how things might change.
- Sometimes it helps if all the family talk together and for your children to talk to someone else in the family or outside it or to other children in the same situation.
- Try to remember the good times in your relationship and share these memories with your children.
- Try not to upset a child's routine too much or too abruptly. Stability is important in helping them to adjust.
- Explain the legal procedures to them in simple terms, if they are old enough.
- Allow time for your children and you to adjust to the changes.
- As children grow older they may want to discuss changes in contact arrangements.

Most families manage better if they have some help from each other, the rest of the family, their local community and the professional and self help groups available.

Useful books, helplines and organisations

Useful books for parents and children

Parenting threads, Caring for children when couples part. Parentline Plus.
 It's not your fault. What to do when your parents divorce. Rosemary Stories. Piccadilly.
 Talking points: Divorce. Anne Charlich. Wayland.
 Children don't divorce. R.Stones. Harper Collins.
 'The Suitcase Kid' Jacqueline Wilson. Yearling Books.
 It's not the end of the world. Judy Blume. Pan Piper.
 Keeping in touch. How to help your child after separation & divorce. Dr Tufnell & P.M.Harris. Young Minds.
 Madam Doubtfire. Anne Fine. Penguin Books.
 The Amber Brown Books. Paula Danzinger.
 Parents problems! Children's views on life when parents split up. Bren Neale & Amanda Wade.

Contact Centres

Offer a neutral venue for children to enjoy visits with relatives if there is nowhere else suitable for them to go. They also provide help and support during the visit if this is needed.

Your local Citizens Advice Bureau or library can help you find your nearest centre.

National Association of Child Contact Centres
 Tel: 0115 948 4557

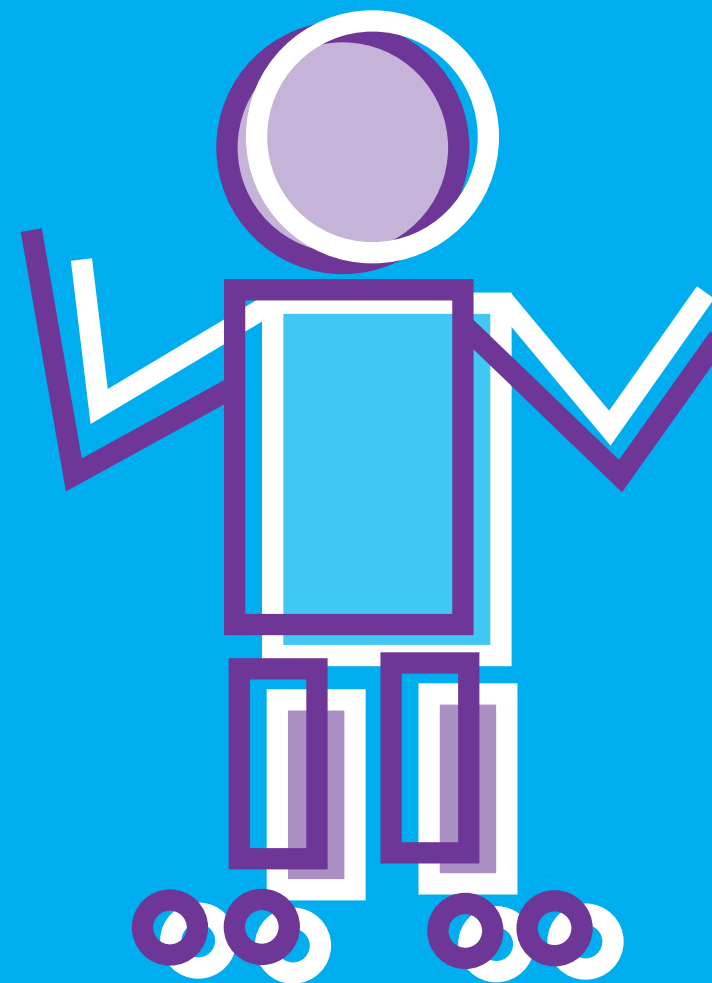
Useful contacts

Association for Shared Parenting	01789 750891
ChildLine	0800 1111
Children's Legal Centre	01206 873820
Families Need Fathers	020 7613 5060
Gingerbread Helpline	020 7488 9300
Parentline Plus Helpline	0808 800 2222
Parentline text phone	0800 783 6783
Grandparents' Federation	01279 444964
National Youth Advocacy Service	0151 649 8700
Advice Line	
www.parentlineplus.org.uk	Legal and other support services
www.justask.org.uk	

Thank you to the parents who helped to develop this leaflet.

Developed by childcare and family support practitioners and researchers for the Lord Chancellor's Department.
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 This leaflet is also available on our website www.lcd.gov.uk
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Parents and Children



Dealing with separation and divorce

1

Most children are upset when their parents separate. But for most this is a phase that will pass. You don't have to live together to be effective parents.

Relationship breakdown and your children

- There is no right way to be separated parents. Every family is different.
- Most children want to have good relationships with both parents and other close family members such as grandparents.
- Your relationship may be at an end but your children still need you to play a full and active role in their upbringing. Your role as parents is for life.
- Your children need to know why you are separating and how things are likely to change for them.
- Parents may not see things in the same way at the same time. Listen to your partner's point of view and explain your own.
- Children will also see the situation differently, depending upon their age, position in the family and their relationship with each parent.
- Remember each child's needs are different. Arrangements for one child may not suit their brother or sister.

You and your children need to work together to sort out arrangements for their future. Encouraging them to express their feelings and be involved in the plans will help them adapt to their new lives.

2

The children who usually cope best are those who have a chance to talk to someone about how they are feeling. Talk to your children about what is happening. Listen to what they have to say.

Children's feelings and reactions

- Children are very likely to be upset so try to understand their feelings and behaviour.
- Children may grieve for a parent who leaves.
- Children can find change hard to deal with so try to avoid too many changes all at once.
- When parents are hurt, in conflict, or harm each other it affects their children.
- Children can feel torn between both parents. Your children may try to please both of you, so avoid things that will make them feel they have to take sides.
- Continuing anger or bitterness towards their other parent is hurtful to children.
- Children need to have an honest and realistic explanation of what is happening in their family, they will need your help to understand and cope with change.



Separation is stressful for parents and it can be easy to overlook and misunderstand children's needs and feelings at this time. How you handle this change in family life will be important for your children.

3

Every family has its own way of making arrangements after a separation or divorce. Each parent and child is different and may respond in different ways.

Helping your children adjust

- Try to tell your children, wherever possible, with the other parent, what is happening and why.
- Show them that it is all right to tell you about their feelings - good or bad.
- Show that you understand that they are sad or angry and that it is alright to miss the other parent.
- Reassure them that the separation is not their fault and that change can be positive.
- Show your children that you still love them and that you are there for them.
- Try to encourage them to share their feelings about what is happening with a trusted friend or relative.
- Try not to criticise the other parent or have angry scenes in front of your children.
- Tell your child's school of any changes.
- Contact with the other parent is often stressful, especially at the beginning and end of any visit. Talk and listen to your child and try and understand why, and how you can help.
- It can be hard to be a parent on your own. You may also want to talk to someone.

Separation causes disruption and distress but serious conflict between parents may damage children more.