



Emotional wellbeing

For parents living apart

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This leaflet is only a guide and does not cover every circumstance. It should not be taken as giving legal advice. We have done our best to make sure the leaflet is correct as of May 2009. However, it is not comprehensive and it may become inaccurate over time, for example because of changes to the law. Your position may depend on your particular circumstances and you should seek independent specialist advice before making financial decisions based on the leaflet. A list of specialist organisations that may be able to offer detailed advice is given at the end.

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About this leaflet

This leaflet gives you impartial information about your options and rights as a parent.

Who the leaflet is for

The leaflet is for you if you are the parent of a child and you are separated or thinking of separating from the other parent. It will help you if:

- you are responsible for the main day-to-day care of your child, or
- you are living apart from your child and you are not the main day-to-day carer.

If you are a guardian, relative or anyone concerned about a family living apart, you may also find the leaflet useful.

How the leaflet can help you

The leaflet tells you about:

- the emotions you and your child may go through
- how to deal with feelings you may have when raising a child apart from the other parent
- how you can support your child and arrange child maintenance
- practical steps you can take and where to get specialist advice.

How the Child Maintenance Options service can help you

At Child Maintenance Options, we're here to help with questions like:

- What is child maintenance and how can I arrange it?
- How do I know what's best for me and my child?
- How can I set up a family-based arrangement?
- Where can I go for help?

We can give you free, impartial and confidential support through our helpline, website and face-to-face service.

We can explain exactly what child maintenance is and why it's important.

We can then help you to set up an arrangement (and make it work).

If you already have an arrangement and it's not working, we can help you to look at ways to get it working again.

A little extra help

Parents who live apart often need to deal with difficult practical things like money, childcare while they are at work, and feelings of stress and anger.

We might not be experts in these areas, but we can put you in touch with specialist organisations that can help.

You can find out how to contact us on the next page.

Our service is run by the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission.

Get in touch

You can contact our freephone* helpline on **0800 988 0988** and talk to someone today. We are open 8am to 8pm. Monday to Friday and 9am to 4pm Saturday.

Our people are specially trained to give unbiased information and support on child maintenance. Our service is available to any parent in England, Wales or Scotland.

You can also visit our website **www.cmoptions.org**

If you are a guardian, relative or friend, or if you have a professional interest in finding out more about child maintenance, we may also be able to help you.

* Calls to 0800 numbers are free from BT landlines but you may have to pay if you use another phone company or a mobile phone, or if you are calling from abroad.



Emotions you may feel when separating

Separating from a partner is not the same for everyone. Separation is about change and getting used to new situations. It may take a while to deal with all the emotions and stresses of separation, but things often get better over time. Understanding some of the feelings can make separation easier to deal with.

How you may feel at different stages, and why

Most people will go through similar emotional stages after their relationship has ended, or the family separates. The stages are:

- shock and surprise
- denial (not accepting that it has happened)
- fear, frustration and anger
- depression
- acceptance.

The time it takes to move through each stage and how you feel as it happens will vary. Sometimes you may feel that you have taken a step

backward and you are feeling worse as time goes on. This is normal and it will change.

If you know what stage you have reached, you will understand why you are feeling the way you do. This can help you find the best ways of coping. It's also important to remain as calm and stable as possible for the sake of your child.

Dealing with stress

Both you and the other parent may be suffering from the stress of separating or having to act as parents apart. Each of you may feel different emotions at different times.

What are the signs of emotional stress?

You may feel that you are starting to find it difficult to cope with normal everyday life. You may also suffer from:

- a loss of concentration
- disturbed sleep
- sudden floods of tears or bursts of anger
- a loss of appetite.



I was a mess. It was awful. I just started crying out of nowhere. My doctor was really good though, and suggested I tried going for a walk every day. I thought it was a daft idea but it has made a difference. I feel much more in control now.

Vicky, mother



Stress and child maintenance

If you are suffering from emotional stress, you may find it difficult to think clearly about child maintenance because it makes you anxious or angry.

The stress you feel can prevent your sorting out child maintenance with the other parent and doing what is best for your child. It can lead to you refusing to co-operate with the other parent.

Get help and support to deal with your feelings. Throughout this leaflet, we tell you about other organisations that may be able to help.

Working with the other parent

It can be difficult to keep a parenting relationship going with someone you don't live with. You must try to work together by focusing on what's best for your child, and create a new relationship as separated parents.

Remember 3 key points:

- 1 Keep communicating.
- 2 Treat your relationship with the other parent and the arrangements for your child as two separate issues.
- 3 Your child still loves the other parent, even if you don't.

The health risks of stress

Stress from a recent separation or parenting apart can affect your mental health. People can often come to rely more on alcohol, cigarettes or other drugs.

Try not to get into the habit of using alcohol or drugs to deal with unpleasant feelings.

Remember to value and look after yourself – get help if you need it. There are many positive ways to deal with stress.

How can I deal with this stress?

- Regular exercise will help relieve stress.
- Talk to your friends or family. Let them know how you feel.
- Try to get as much rest and sleep as you can.
- Get professional help if you think you need it.

For help dealing with stress or concerns about your health, phone NHS Direct on **0845 4647** (24 hours).

What your child may feel when you separate

The better you understand how your child is feeling, the easier it will be for you to make your relationship with them positive and secure.



I was really hurt and angry when Aasia decided our marriage was over and took the children with her to live at her mother's house. I was too upset to see Sonika at first. Aasia and I realised our separation was affecting Sonika and this made it easier to put our own feelings to one side. Now, Sonika spends every Sunday and Wednesday evening with me. It works for us. Dealing with that meant we could also sort out maintenance: Sonika will not suffer because of what has happened to us.

Rajan, father



When parents live apart or the family separates, this can be a very difficult time for children.

They can feel:

- confused
- frightened
- sad
- hurt
- rejected
- betrayed
- angry
- guilty.

Try to understand what your child is thinking and feeling. This will allow you to help them adjust better and make sure their needs are not forgotten.

How will I know if my child is stressed or anxious?

It can be quite hard to spot signs of emotional distress in children.

The signs will vary depending on the age of the child.

Here are some of the ways your separation may affect your child.

If you are concerned about your child's health phone NHS Direct on **0845 4647** (24 hours) or speak to your local GP.

Babies

- Parents can pass on their anger or depression to babies at a vital time in their growth.
- Try to give your baby plenty of cuddles, smiles and good eye contact.

Aged 2 to 5

- Your child may be more angry, tearful or sad.
- Boys may become restless, withdrawn or disruptive; girls may try to become 'little adults' and try to take care of either parent.
- Look out for behaviour that had stopped some time ago, such as bedwetting.

Aged 6 to 8

- Feeling rejected and unloved. You may notice a drop in school performance or hear that they have become disruptive in class.
- Boys will very often miss their fathers a lot more than girls will.

Aged 9 to 11

- Often become angry, especially towards the parent they blame for the separation.
- They often feel frightened and just want you to get back together again.
- You may notice an increase in headaches, sickness or nightmares.

Older children

- May become more independent and focus their energies outside the family while the parents are dealing with their own feelings and problems.
- They may drift away from the family and look for approval from their friends.

Staying involved in your child's life

Both parents are very important in a child's life. The child's world can feel very different if suddenly one parent is not part of their life any more. So it is very important that, if it is safe to do so, you both stay involved.

The problems

Staying involved may be difficult because:

- you may have strong negative emotions about each other or as a result of parenting apart
- there may be practical problems, for example, the parent without day-to-day care of the child may live a long way off or in accommodation unsuitable for a child.

The answers

- Find someone you can talk to about how you feel. A friend, a counsellor or your GP may be able to help.
- If you live apart from the other parent and have nowhere suitable to see your child, arrange to see them at a relative or friend's house, or visit the local park or library.

- If the other parent is stopping you seeing your child, phone the Community Legal Advice helpline on **0845 345 4345**.
- If it is taking time to reach agreement with the other parent, keep in touch with your child by letter, email or SMS text.

How can I support my child emotionally?

You must do everything you can to help your child deal with the emotions they may be feeling because their mum or dad is not living with them any more. You need to help them feel safe and secure in the short and longer term.

Here are some of the ways you can support your child emotionally:

- Tell your child they are not responsible for the separation or the fact that their mum or dad does not live with them.
- Listen to what your child has to say about how they feel, even if it makes **you** unhappy.
- If your child is too young to express their feelings in words, ask them to draw a picture about how they feel.
- Let your child know that you accept their negative feelings rather than ignoring them or making them seem unimportant.
- Give them enough time to deal with their thoughts and feelings.
- Make sure your child is not trying to look after your emotional needs.

Making your child feel more secure

Avoid conflict

The most upsetting thing for children is to see or hear conflict between their mum and dad. Protect them by dealing with the issues causing this conflict when they are not around.

Establish good routines

Change as few of your child's familiar routines as possible. It's good if, for example, you keep them at the same school and keep up visits to grandparents.

Be consistent and reliable

Do what you say you are going to do, when you say you are going to do it, and be in a fit state to do it well.

Accept that your child has another parent

Whatever you think of your child's other parent, your child just sees mum or dad. Try to:

- allow your child to talk about the other parent
- speak respectfully to them and about them when your child is present
- accept their role in your child's life
- make sure you exchange important information about your child with them.

Show them that you are OK

Even at your lowest point, do what you can to stay strong and be there for your child. If you need to cry, do it when they are not there or have gone to bed. If you need to talk, find a friend or counsellor. If you are angry, don't show it when your child is present, and get professional help if you need it.

What are my parenting options?

It's important that, as long as it is safe to do so, your child spends time with both of you after separation.

Every situation is different and it can take time to find the best solution. Remember that it is the quality, not the quantity, of parenting time that matters to children.

To do this, you need to agree parenting arrangements with the other parent. These usually follow one of two patterns:

1 Parenting time

You may agree that your child will spend most of their time living with one of you and spend regular time with the other parent.

This type of parenting arrangement is flexible and, in your child's mind, it's close to what they've experienced before or have in their mind.

However, with this type of arrangement:

- the parent who just has regular contact may feel they are not seeing enough of the child
- the parent with the main day-to-day care may find it difficult to cope with having to care for the child on their own.

If you agree to this arrangement, you have 3 options:

'Staying contact'

A child stays overnight with the parent who is not the main day-to-day carer. It could be one night a week, one weekend in 2 or simply a few days in every school holiday.

'Visiting contact'

Sometimes one parent does not have suitable accommodation or there is some other reason why an overnight stay may not be practical. Visiting contact lets your child stay in touch until circumstances change.

'Supervised contact'

Supervised contact can be ordered by a court where there are particular problems. This usually takes place at a supervised contact centre.

2 Shared residence

Shared residence is when a child lives with both parents by sharing their time fairly equally between them.

Your child may, for example, spend 3 days a week with you and 4 days with the other parent. Or they might spend 1 week with you then 1 with the other parent.

This type of arrangement can mean you both spend equal amounts of time with your child, and it can help to keep up a routine.

What if we can't agree?

If you can't agree an arrangement with the other parent, there are several options open to you.

Mediation

Mediation is where a trained professional will talk to you and the other parent, separately or together, to help you both agree an arrangement.

Contact National Family Mediation on **01392 271610** www.nfm.org.uk or, if you live in Scotland, Relationships Scotland www.relationships-scotland.org.uk to find out more.

Court order

If mediation is unsuitable, or does not work, then you can apply for a court order. Most cases involving children are settled by agreement early on. This can save a lot of the legal costs of getting a court order. You may be entitled to financial help through legal aid.

Contact the Community Legal Advice Helpline on **0845 345 4345** or, if you live in Scotland, the Law Society of Scotland on **0131 226 7411**.

Contact centres

Contact centres are places away from the family home where parents can restart and keep up contact with their children during and after family break-up.

The contact centres mainly belong to the National Association of Child Contact Centres (NACCC), a national charity. There are 270 centres in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and parents can use them as a place to collect and drop off their child without meeting the other parent.

Contact NACCC on **0845 4500 280** to find out more.

Practical next steps

- Take time to think about how you are feeling.
- Decide if you need help from family or friends, or professional support.
- Find ways of coping with stress that don't involve alcohol or drugs.
- Focus on your child's needs.
- Make child maintenance arrangements to financially support your child.

What if I keep having disagreements with the other parent?

When a child's parents disagree, life can be much harder for everyone – and especially for the child. Try to be clear on what you are disagreeing about and find ways of changing things for the better.



We used to get into terrible fights until I found Lewis crying in his room over an argument I'd had with his dad. We worked out that we were mostly fighting about seeing the children and Alan not paying anything towards looking after them. We still squabble but now we've sorted out the money and Alan's seeing the children regularly, I think the children are much happier.

Trisha, mother



Disagreement between parents who have recently separated or are living apart is very common. The 3 main causes of disagreement are:

- 1 Why the parents separated.
- 2 The pain and distress caused by the separation.
- 3 Arrangements when parenting apart.

To keep your child emotionally safe and secure, you need to deal with the causes of any disagreement as soon as possible, away from the child.

Time with your child

Most parents want to spend as much time as possible with their child, and you and the other parent probably feel like this too. Your child also has a right to spend time with both parents, if it is safe to do so.

When parents have disagreements they sometimes try to use 'time with the child' as a bargaining tool. They might threaten to stop the other parent seeing the child if their demands are not met. This is emotionally harmful to the child. Your child has a right to spend time with both parents, if it is safe to do so. You must sort out your differences and then make flexible arrangements that put your child first.

Money and child maintenance

This can be another cause of disagreement between separated parents. As parents, you must financially support your child's everyday living costs. But it can be difficult to agree on child maintenance arrangements if you are arguing about something else. You will need to make arrangements for child maintenance - the amount and when it is paid.

Child maintenance must be kept separate from any emotional issues you and the other parent may have. If other disagreements are stopping you making good child maintenance arrangements, it's important to realise this and then deal with these issues separately.

Parenting styles and decision-making

One parent's ideas about what is appropriate and important for their child may be very different from the other parent's, and this can lead to disagreements.

Unless you have serious concerns about how your child is being brought up, try to avoid conflict by agreeing some basic standards and discussing things that concern you with the other parent.

What help can we get?

Here are some ways to help you deal with disagreements:

- Talk to a counsellor. Ask your GP to put you in touch with one in your area.
- Mediation can help you agree practical issues such as where your children will live, how much time they will spend with each of you, or about money or property. Use a mediation session to talk openly and honestly about disagreements. Then reach a joint decision about the things that affect you and your child.

What to do next

- Decide what is causing the disagreement. If it comes from emotional hurt, deal with that first, perhaps by talking to a counsellor.
- If the conflict comes from disagreements about practical issues, take positive steps to sort them out – a mediation service may be able to help.
- Agree with the other parent that your child will not see or hear any arguments between you.

Dealing with depression and isolation

It is common for people to feel unhappy during difficult times in their lives. Relationship troubles often cause negative feelings, but a few small positive steps could help you feel better and more in control again.

“

Maybe 3 or 4 months after the split, I suddenly just crashed – it was like falling down a deep hole. I got so desperate that I called the Samaritans. My GP was really helpful and diagnosed depression and prescribed anti-depressants. They've really made a difference. I can believe things are going to get better, and the children and I have a much better time when we're together, and that's a real plus.

Paul, father

”

It's not unusual to feel depressed and isolated after separation when you are living apart from the other parent.

What is depression?

Depression is a feeling of continued sadness and powerlessness, and can be mild, moderate or extreme. It is a medical condition and can affect everything, from your appetite to your sleep.

It can also affect the way you feel about yourself and the world around you. In extreme cases, it can lead to a person wanting to harm themselves.

What causes depression?

Big life changes are often linked to depression. The end of a relationship with the other parent, missing your child or coping with them alone, and parenting apart could all trigger depression.

Am I suffering from depression?

Do you:

- feel worthless, hopeless or guilty?
- constantly feel sad, irritable or anxious?
- have no interest or pleasure in your usual activities and hobbies?
- notice changes in your appetite with significant weight gain or loss?
- notice changes to your sleeping pattern, such as difficulty sleeping, waking early or sleeping too much?
- have difficulty concentrating?
- ever have thoughts of death or suicide?

What is isolation?

Isolation is feeling alone and cut off from your family, friends and workmates. You may become isolated after a separation simply because you find it hard to be around people, or because it's difficult to see friends you both had in common.

If you have had to stop work because of separation, or you are living apart from the other parent, you may find your main link with the outside world has disappeared.

Isolation can also make your emotions seem much worse and it is often linked with depression. You may find that you keep thinking about the end of your relationship, without ever accepting that it has ended.

What help can I get?

If you think you may be depressed, get help. There are plenty of ways of dealing with depression, including talking about it, and conventional medicines. See your GP as soon as possible or contact a specialist organisation like Mind. Mind offers confidential help on a range of mental-health issues.

Phone the Mind information line on **0845 766 0163**.

If you are feeling suicidal, contact the Samaritans.

Phone Samaritans on **08457 909090**.

If you are feeling isolated, try to talk to a friend or relative about how you are feeling. Find local support groups or contact one of the national charities that support people living with family separation.

Dealing with drug and alcohol abuse

It can be easy to use alcohol and drugs for comfort, or to block out emotional pain. You may, for example, find that your occasional drink 'to help you sleep' becomes something you rely on to cope with everyday life. Drugs and alcohol can quickly start to have damaging effects on your life if you start to rely on them to help you cope.

“

I've always enjoyed a drink and a laugh and when Steve left, I felt awful. The girls would come round to cheer me up and it was a relief to have a few drinks and a bit of a laugh. My drinking just crept up on me; I'd have a little drink just to relieve the boredom. I was embarrassed when a friend saw the empty bottles one day. I did have a problem and it affected how I was with Daisy. I've been in touch with a local support group and they've given me help and encouragement. I'm back on track and dealing with some of the things I was avoiding.

Danielle, mother

”

Do I have a problem?

If you recognise any of these symptoms, you may have a problem with drugs or alcohol.

Do you:

- think you have a problem?
- use drugs or alcohol nearly all the time?
- use them more often than you used to?
- have to take more to get the same effect?
- fail when you try to take less or stop using them?
- take more drugs or alcohol than you intend to?
- ever use drugs or drink alcohol on your own?
- lie to people about how much you take?
- have problems at work due to your drug or alcohol use?
- have money problems because of how much you take?

What are the dangers to me?

Drug or alcohol abuse can have serious negative effects on your life. It will never make things better – it only ever makes things worse.

You risk:

- behaving in a way that may harm yourself, your family and friends
- damaging your physical and mental health
- serious injury through accident, overdose or violence
- breaking the law, with a risk of a fine or prison, and a criminal record.

What are the dangers to my child?

Drug or alcohol abuse can greatly affect your child. You may become unable to care for them properly, and you may not be able to keep to the parenting and maintenance arrangements. This could put your child at risk emotionally and financially. In the end, you could be prevented from seeing your child.

What help can I get?

As well as local support from your GP, local agencies and support services, there are several national helplines and websites available.

Organisations
 Frank www.talktofrank.com
0800 77 66 00
 Addaction www.addaction.org.uk **020 7251 5860**
 Drinkline **0800 917 8282.**

Dealing with domestic violence

This section is for anyone who has been through, or is suffering, domestic violence. Although we are not experts in this, we know that domestic violence can be a reason behind parents separating. And it may affect the emotions that you and your child have. Here is some key information about help you can get.

What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is whenever a person behaves in a threatening, violent or abusive way towards a family member, partner or ex-partner. The abuse may be psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional.

You are not alone

If you are suffering from domestic violence, you are not alone. Domestic violence accounts for nearly a quarter of all recorded violent crime in England and Wales.

But many people have escaped abusive partners and have gone on to live free from fear.

Who can I turn to?

You can contact the specialist organisations listed here:

- National Domestic Violence 24-hour Helpline, **0808 2000**
- Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline, **0808 8010 800**
- Scotland Domestic Abuse Helpline, **0800 027 1234**
- Respect (help for male victims) **0845 122 8609**.

There are other kinds of help too:

- Your GP could refer you and your child to a local organisation for emotional or psychological support.
- There is a Community Safety Unit at every local police station.
- Your local council may have a duty to provide you with emergency accommodation.
- Social services have a duty to help any child in need of emergency accommodation.
- A court can make a court order to keep your abuser away.

Useful organisations to contact

Child maintenance

Child Support Agency
Phone **08457 133 133** (8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday and 9am to 5pm Saturday)
Textphone **08457 138 924**
www.csa.gov.uk

Domestic violence and abuse

National Domestic Violence Helpline
Freephone helpline giving information, help with safety planning, translation services and access to emergency refuge accommodation.
Phone **0808 2000 247** (freephone 24 hours, 7 days a week)
www.refuge.org.uk and **www.womensaid.org.uk**

Scottish Domestic Violence Helpline
Freephone helpline giving information, help with safety planning, translation services and access to emergency refuge accommodation.
Phone **0800 027 1234** (freephone 24 hours, 7 days a week)
www.scottishwomensaid.org.uk

Employment and financial support available

Jobcentre Plus

Phone **0800 055 6688** (8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday)

Textphone **0800 023 4888**

www.jobseekers.direct.gov.uk

Jobseeker Direct

Search and apply for jobs by phone.

Phone **0845 606 0234** (8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday and 9am to 1pm Saturday)

Textphone **0845 605 5255**

www.jobseekers.direct.gov.uk

Connexions Direct

An information service for people aged 13 to 19 (or people aged 25 and under with learning difficulties or disabilities) who are living in England and looking for work.

Phone **0808 001 3219**

www.direct.gov.uk

Careers in Scotland

Careers advice for people leaving school, leaving a job, returning to work after a break, wanting to change direction, or keen to do more with their present job.

Phone **0845 850 2502**

www.careers-scotland.org.uk

HM Revenue & Customs

Information about tax credits and who can get them.

Phone **0845 300 3900** (8am to 4pm, 7 days a week)

Textphone **0845 300 3909**

www.hmrc.gov.uk/taxcredits/

National Debtline

Specialist advisers offering free confidential advice and support on dealing with personal debt.

Phone **0808 808 4000**

(Monday to Friday, 9am to 9pm, Saturday 9.30am to 1pm; or 24-hour voicemail)

www.nationaldebtline.co.uk

General information

www.direct.gov.uk

Government website with information on topics such as parenting, money, benefits and work entitlements.

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

Free information and advice on topics such as law, housing and debt.

To find your local CAB, look in the phone book or click on 'Find your local CAB' on the website.

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

NHS Direct
(England and Wales)
Information and advice about health, illness and health services.
Phone **0845 4647** (24 hours, 7 days a week)
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

NHS 24 (Scotland)
Health information and self-care advice.
Phone **08454 242424**
(24 hours, 7 days a week)
www.nhs24.com

Housing

Shelter
Free advice and information for anyone with a housing problem.
Phone **0808 800 4444** (8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm Saturday and Sunday)
www.shelter.org.uk

National Housing Federation
National Housing Federation supports and promotes the work of housing associations, and campaigns for better housing and neighbourhoods.
Phone **020 7067 1010**
www.housing.org.uk

Information for parents who live apart

Centre for Separated Families
Advice and support to parents and other people affected by family separation.
Phone **0845 4786 360**
www.separatedfamilies.info

Families Need Fathers
Provides information for parents and also runs local open support meetings.
Phone **0300 0300 363**
(Monday to Friday, 6pm to 10pm)
www.fnf.org.uk

Gingerbread
Information for lone parents on such things as: maintenance, tax credits, benefits, work, education, legal rights, childcare and holidays.
Phone **0808 802 0925**
(Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, free from landlines; mobile rates vary)
www.gingerbread.org.uk

One Parent Families Scotland
A national voluntary organisation, registered as a charity. Members include lone parents, the organisations who work with them and others who want to help.
Phone **0808 8010 323**
(Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 4.30pm) **www.opfs.org.uk**

Parenting across Scotland

Provides advice for parents and the 'Ok to Ask' service, giving parents the chance to ask questions of expert advisers and other parents. Phone **0808 800 2222**

www.parentingacrossscotland.org

Family Lives

Advice and support for anyone in a parenting role, including step-parents and grandparents.

Phone **0808 8002 222**
(free and confidential 24 hours, 7 days a week)

www.familylives.org.uk

Parentline Scotland

Free and confidential advice and support for anyone in a parenting role, including step-parents and grandparents. The service is run by Children 1st, one of Scotland's leading child welfare charities.

Phone **0800 028 2223**
(Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9am to 5pm, Tuesday and Thursday 9am to 9pm)

www.children1st.org.uk

Legal advice

Community Legal Advice

A Government-funded service offering free and confidential legal advice in England and Wales. It can also help you find out if you will be able to get legal aid.

Phone **0845 345 4345**
(Monday to Friday, 9am to 6.30pm. Calls from 4p a minute)

For legal aid advice
www.direct.gov.uk/en/Governmentcitizensandrights.org.uk

For Community legal advice
www.legalservices.gov.uk/public/community_legal_advice.asp

Scottish Legal Aid Board

Explains more about legal aid in Scotland. Also helps you find a legal aid solicitor.

Phone **0845 122 8686**
(7am to 11pm, 7 days a week)

www.slab.org.uk

Scottish Legal Aid Board

Explains more about legal aid in Scotland. Also helps you find a legal aid solicitor.

Telephone **0845 122 8686**
(7am to 11pm, 7 days a week)

www.slab.org.uk

Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass)

Cafcass works with families referred by the courts in England and Wales. It helps families reach agreement over arrangements for their children. The website has useful information, case studies, advice and contact links. Phone **0844 353 3350**
www.cafcass.gov.uk

Resolution

Family lawyers helping with the constructive resolution of family disputes. Phone **01689 820272** (9am to 5.30pm, Monday to Friday)
Email **info@resolution.org.uk**
www.resolution.org.uk

Mediation

National Family Mediation

A network of local not-for-profit family mediation services in England and Wales. These offer help to couples, married or unmarried, who are going through separation or divorce. Phone **0300 4000 636** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)
www.nfm.org.uk

Family Mediation Helpline

Provides information on family mediation and how it works, as well as advice on whether your case may be suitable for mediation. Also gives contact details for mediation services in your local area. Phone **0845 60 26 627**
www.familymediationhelpline.co.uk

Family Mediation Scotland

Helps parents who are separating or divorcing, to make their own arrangements and plans for the future. Phone **0845 119 2020**
www.familymediation-scotland.org.uk

Relationships Scotland

Helps parents who are separating or divorcing to make their own arrangements and plans for the future. Phone **0845 119 2020**
www.relationships-scotland.org.uk

Relate

Offers advice, relationship counselling, mediation and support – face to face, by phone and through the website. There may be charges for this service. Phone **0300 100 1234**
www.relate.org.uk



Providing impartial information
and support for both parents
to make choices about child
maintenance

How to order our other leaflets

You can order our free leaflets by phoning **0800 958 0988**. Under each leaflet there is a short description of what to ask for when you call. They can also be downloaded from our website **www.cmoptions.org**

Help with making choices about child maintenance:



Child Maintenance - Getting started



Family-based arrangement form

About the Child Maintenance Options service:



How to complain about us



How we handle your information

Practical information on the issues that you may face when parenting apart:



Your legal rights and responsibilities



Your and your child's wellbeing



Housing rights and options



Money and finances



Employment rights and opportunities

Providing impartial information and support for both parents to make choices about child maintenance

Contact us

Freephone* **0800 988 0988**

8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday

9am to 4pm Saturday

www.cmoptions.org

This leaflet is also available in other languages, in large print, in Braille and on audio cassette.

You can get these formats by calling us on freephone*

0800 988 0988

Our TextBox and textphone number is **0800 988 9 888**

* Calls to 0800 numbers are free from BT landlines but you may have to pay if you use another phone company, a mobile phone, or if you are calling from abroad.

Calls to 0845 numbers from BT landlines should cost no more than 4p a minute with a 6p call set-up charge. You may have to pay more if you use another phone company or a mobile phone, or if you are calling from abroad.

Calls to 0870 numbers from BT landlines should cost no more than 8p a minute with a 6p call set-up charge. You may have to pay more if you use another phone company or a mobile phone, or if you are calling from abroad.

Calls from mobile phones can cost up to 40p a minute, so check the cost of calls with your service provider.

This leaflet was developed in partnership with the Centre for Separated Families

the centre for
Separated families
— Reg Charity No. 1055173 —

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