



# Legal rights and responsibilities

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 April 2010. 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:

- some of the things you may need to think about if you are separating from your child's other parent
- your responsibilities and your legal rights if you are separating
- how being married or living together without being married affects your rights
- the options available for arranging child maintenance
- practical steps you can take and useful organisations that can help you.

# 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](http://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.

# What are my legal rights and responsibilities?

When you separate or live apart from the other parent, there will be many arrangements you need to make for the future. These can include dividing your shared assets (belongings and money), coming to an agreement about where your child or children will live, and deciding how they will be supported financially.

Understanding your legal rights and responsibilities will help you make decisions about these arrangements, especially decisions about your child's wellbeing.

## What are my responsibilities as a parent?

'Parental responsibility' is the legal name for the duties that a parent has to their child. It covers things like providing a home for the child and protecting them, as well as providing for the child's education and being responsible for the child's property.

Anyone with parental responsibility also has certain rights about their child. These include things like choosing what religion they are brought up in and the right to contact with their child, if they are not living with them.

All parents (including adoptive parents) have a legal duty to support their child financially, whether they have parental responsibility or not.

## Who has parental responsibility?

A mother automatically has parental responsibility for her child. A father also has automatic parental responsibility if he was married to the mother when the child was born (or in Scotland, when the child was conceived).

An unmarried 'biological' father does not automatically get parental responsibility, even if he has lived with the mother for a long time. There are four ways an unmarried biological father can get parental responsibility:

- marrying the child's mother
- registering the child's birth with the father's name on the birth certificate. If the child's birth certificate has already been registered, then the father must

re-register. The mother must agree and no other father may already have been named on the certificate (this would have made a Parental Responsibility Agreement between that person and the mother). In Scotland, this is known as a Parental Responsibilities and Parental Rights Agreement

- getting a court order. A court order is an official ruling made by a court. A court order can, in principle, grant a father parental responsibility even if the mother does not want this.

A father can get parental responsibility without ever having lived with the mother.

If you become a step-parent by marrying someone with parental responsibility for a child, you don't automatically share that responsibility.

Getting divorced or separating doesn't end your parental responsibility. You continue having the same rights and responsibilities for your child whether or not you live with them.

### Making plans for your child

It's worth trying to make decisions with the other parent about your child's future. There are three main things you need to agree:

- where the child will live (known as 'residence')
- how you will arrange to see them (known as 'contact')
- how the child will be financially supported (known as 'child maintenance').

If you can do this between you, there's no need for a court order.

You may also want to agree about many day-to-day things like:

- health
- religion or culture
- education
- holidays.

### Child maintenance

Most parents want what's best for their children even if they live apart from them. Making a child maintenance arrangement can help your children get the best possible start in life

Child maintenance is regular, reliable financial support that helps towards the child's everyday living costs. The parent who does not have the main day-to-day care of the child pays the parent who does have the main day-to-day care.

Child maintenance can make a real difference to children as it can help pay for things like clothing, food and other essentials. It could also help keep both parents involved with their children's lives. Many parents choose to sort out child maintenance between themselves. You could do this without involving anyone else, or with the help of family, friends, or a professional mediator.

This kind of child maintenance is called a family-based arrangement (or 'family arrangement'). It is simply an arrangement between parents about who will provide what for a

child. It can include both money and other kinds of support, for example, providing school uniforms.

There are lots of benefits in having a family arrangement:

- It's quick and easy to set up, so you can get payments flowing straight away.
- No one else needs to be involved.
- People tend to respect their own promises. When both parents agree things together, payments are more likely to be made.
- It can help to keep things friendly between you and the other parent.
- You can make an arrangement even if the other parent lives or moves abroad.
- There are no set rules so you can be more flexible.
- There's little paperwork to do
- It can include things other than money.

If parents can't make a family arrangement, they may want to use the Child Support Agency (CSA).

The CSA will work out the amount of maintenance using a set of rules and collect it for the parent with the main day-to-day care.

The CSA can also try to track down parents. If a parent refuses to pay the maintenance worked out under a CSA arrangement, the CSA can and will take enforcement action against them.

### Making a family arrangement

A family arrangement is when you agree with the other parent how much child maintenance should be paid and how often.

You don't have to involve the CSA or any other organisation in setting up a family arrangement. But you may want to speak to us at Child Maintenance Options for free, impartial information and support. You can call us on freephone **0800 988 0988** for help with making your own arrangement. You can also visit our website

**[www.cmoptions.org](http://www.cmoptions.org)**

Once you have made a family arrangement, you only need to discuss it again if things change, such as your family or financial circumstances.

### Using the courts

The third way to arrange child maintenance is through a court order. To do this, you must first agree how much child maintenance is going to be paid and how often. You can then get the courts to turn this agreement into a 'consent order', which is an official ruling made by a court.

Both parents usually have to work with solicitors to agree on an amount before applying to the court for a consent order. Getting a consent order costs money, for things like solicitors, and court fees. Legal aid will not cover these costs if you are only going to court to get a consent order for child maintenance. That's why parents generally use a court

order for child maintenance only if they are already going to court for other reasons, such as divorce or dividing their property or assets.

You cannot ask the CSA to make a child maintenance arrangement for you during the first 12 months of a consent order.

### Using the courts in Scotland

Things are slightly different if you live in Scotland. Both parents can work out and agree an arrangement for child maintenance between themselves (usually with help from solicitors). The arrangement can be made into a legally binding agreement. In certain circumstances, this agreement can then be registered officially. This means it can then be enforced like a court order – so if a parent does not pay the right amount of child maintenance on time, court officers can collect payments from them.

You cannot ask the CSA to make a child maintenance arrangement for you during the first 12 months after you have registered an agreement like this officially.

### Making or changing your will to benefit your child

A will sets out who will get your money, property and belongings after your death. It lets you decide how these things are shared and to make sure your child is provided for in case you die.

If you don't have a will, your money, property and belongings will be dealt with according to the law. This may not be what you want to happen. If you have separated from the other parent, you may want to make a will, or update the one you have.

You may also want to think about appointing a guardian for your child in the will. This is someone who will take responsibility for your child after you die, if there is no one else with parental responsibility. This is particularly important if you are the only person with parental responsibility for your child.

Phone us at Child Maintenance Options on **0800 9880 988** if you'd like us to help you think through your options or visit our website **[www.cmoptions.org](http://www.cmoptions.org)**

# I'm married but we are separating

If you were married or in a civil partnership, you can be legally separated as soon as you live apart. You don't need to be divorced or get a formal legal document, although it's often helpful to write down any agreement you make about your separation. A solicitor can help you turn this into a legally binding document.

Once you're no longer living together, you're classed as separated for tax and benefit purposes. In fact, you can be legally separated but still live in the same home – provided you don't sleep or eat together, and don't do any domestic chores for each other, like doing your partner's ironing.

## I want to get divorced. What do I need to do?

To get divorced, you need to show that the marriage has broken down 'irretrievably'. This means that one or both of you feel that you can't stay married to each other. You also need to show that you have 'grounds for divorce', (see the next section).

You must apply to the courts to get a judge to agree that your marriage is at an end. But even in

a very straightforward case, it can take several months before the judge finally grants a divorce. One of the main reasons is that it takes a lot of time to decide how your assets should be divided up.

## What are the grounds for divorce?

There are 5 legal reasons for divorce in England and Wales (4 in Scotland):

- 1 Your partner has committed adultery and you feel you can no longer live with them (this reason does not apply to civil partners).
- 2 Your partner has behaved in such a way that you cannot reasonably be expected to live with them.
- 3 Your partner has deserted (left) you for more than 2 years (England and Wales only).

- 4 You have lived separately for more than 2 years (one year in Scotland) and your partner agrees to the divorce.
- 5 You have lived separately for 5 years (2 years in Scotland). No agreement is needed.

### Can civil partners divorce?

No, civil partners cannot get divorced. Instead they can get a 'dissolution order'. This is a legal order to say that the partnership has ended. There are 4 legal reasons for dissolution in England and Wales, and 3 in Scotland. The reasons are the same as for divorce, except adultery (which does not apply to civil partnerships).

### Do I need a solicitor to get divorced?

If you are thinking about divorcing and there are money matters to consider, you may find it helpful to get some specialist advice from a solicitor. They can tell you your options – and the likely cost of each one. In the end, you may decide that you would be better off sorting things out yourself, but at least you will understand your legal position.

To help you find a solicitor who can advise you if you are separating, phone the Community Legal Advice helpline on **0845 345 4345**, or contact a Citizens Advice Bureau through [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

### What the courts in England and Wales consider when dividing assets

Courts in England and Wales take several things into account when deciding who gets what. They include:

- the welfare of the child or children, and the costs of looking after them in the future
- both your incomes, how much you can earn and any property or assets you own now or may own in the future
- the financial needs and responsibilities that each person has, or is likely to have in the future
- the standard of living the family had before the break-up
- the age of each person and how long the marriage or civil partnership lasted
- any physical or mental disability that either person has
- the contributions each person has made, or is likely to make in the future, to the family's welfare. This includes financial and non-financial contributions, such as looking after the home or caring for the family
- the value to each person of any benefit (for example, a pension) they would lose because of the end of the marriage or civil partnership
- whether one parent has behaved badly towards the other. The court only considers this if it would be unfair not to.

It may be helpful to talk to a solicitor. They can advise you on what a court is likely to decide

in your case, so that you can then start to negotiate with your ex-partner.

### What the courts in Scotland consider when dividing assets

In Scotland, the things that courts take into account when deciding who gets what are different from those in England and Wales. The courts in Scotland try to work out a reasonable way to divide assets. They look at how much money or property each of you owns, how much debt each of you has and how much you are able to earn. In particular, courts in Scotland look at:

- the value of any property (after taking off debts) built up during the marriage or partnership. In general, this should be shared equally, unless there are special circumstances, such as if one of you bought the property before you were married
- whether one of you benefited financially from the other's contributions – for example, if you were able to have a lifestyle you could not have afforded on your own
- whether one of you has suffered financially - for example, by giving up a career to look after the family
- the costs involved in caring for children after divorce or dissolution. These should be shared fairly between you. So the courts will look at things such as where the children will live, and whether the person caring for the children has

to give up the opportunity of working to look after the children

- whether one of you relied financially on the other and now needs support to help adjust to the new financial circumstances
- whether one of you is likely to suffer serious financial hardship because of the divorce or dissolution.

Not everything mentioned above will be relevant in every case.

It may be helpful to talk to a solicitor. They can advise you on what a court is likely to decide in your case, so that you can then start to negotiate with your ex-partner.

### Do we need to sell our home?

Not necessarily. You have several options. For example, you can:

- change the share you each have in the home
- agree to delay selling the home until a certain time in the future
- decide between you how the money from selling it can be divided
- decide between you who will pay the mortgage.

If you can't agree on any of these things, a judge will make a court order for you.

It is important to decide where the child will live before deciding whether or not to sell your home.

### What can a court do?

The court has many powers to make orders about a couple's money when they are divorcing or dissolving a civil partnership. It may be a good idea to get legal advice from a solicitor about your situation. The court can make orders for:

- regular payments to or from your ex-partner. These can be for a fixed period, or until one of you dies, or until the ex-partner getting the payments remarries
- regular payments of child maintenance to the parent who the child normally lives with
- a lump sum to or from your ex-partner (and for your child if necessary)
- the sale of property or land
- the transfer of property or assets to one partner
- assets to be frozen (so they can't be sold) or, if they have already been sold, the sale to be reversed
- you or your ex-partner getting a share of the other's pension fund. This could involve having a share of the fund now so that you get a pension fund of your own, or getting a payment from it.

### Can I avoid going to court?

Not entirely. You will need to use the courts if you want to get a divorce or dissolution of a civil partnership. But even if you do this, you don't always need to go to a court hearing. If you both agree to the divorce or dissolution,

there's no need for either of you to go to court. The case can all be dealt with on paper.

### Using mediation to come to an agreement

If you are thinking about divorce or dissolution, you and the other parent must come to an agreement about your child (or children) and money.

One way of doing this is using a solicitor. If you can't reach an agreement this way, you may have to go to court and a judge will decide for you.

Another way is mediation, which can be much less stressful. With mediation, you and the other parent get together with one or more trained mediators and see if you can reach an agreement. You'll normally have to pay for mediation. However, it may be cheaper than each of you paying a solicitor to represent you and going through a court hearing. Another advantage is that mediation may help you and your partner work together better. This could be important for when you make arrangements for your child.

The Family Mediation Helpline can tell you more about how mediation works and how to find a mediator in your area. Go to **[www.familymediationhelpline.co.uk](http://www.familymediationhelpline.co.uk)** or call **0845 60 26 627**

# We are living together but we are not married

People who live together don't fit easily into the legal system. In some areas of the law you are treated as if you are married and in others you are treated differently.

In England and Wales, living together doesn't give you any legal rights, duties or responsibilities to each other. However, you do still have financial responsibility to your child – even if you don't have parental responsibility.

'Common-law marriage' is an old expression for people living together who are not married. You don't need to take any legal steps to end this type of relationship. In England and Wales, common-law marriage has no legal status at all.

If you split up and you can agree your own arrangements, you don't need to go to court to get an order about money or children.

You can't claim financial support for yourself from the other parent, but you can claim maintenance for your child. Also, if one of you dies, the other has no automatic right to inherit their property. In Scotland, you have some rights to claim for 'economic advantage' or 'disadvantage'. This applies if one parent has benefited from the financial contributions made by the other while they were living together.

## Sorting out the home

Sorting out your rights in the family home can be difficult. Courts have limited powers about what each person owns and gets. This means you usually have to base your shares in the home on what you have agreed together and what contributions you have both made to the home. It's often difficult to prove what you have each said or done in the past.

Our 'Housing rights and options' leaflet can give you more information on your housing situation. You can download it from our website **[www.cmoptions.org](http://www.cmoptions.org)** or call us on freephone **0800 988 0988** to ask for a free copy.

## How do we sort out who owns what?

If you and the other parent lived together, here are the general principles courts use to decide who owns things when you are not married:

- If you paid for something, you own it, unless you gave it to the other person as a gift.
- If you bought something together and split the cost equally, then you own it equally.
- If you bought something out of joint funds and it's not clear who contributed what to those funds, then you own it equally.
- If you contributed more towards something you bought together, that's how much of it you will own.
- If you have both pooled (combined) your money in a bank account which you have set up for dealing with joint household expenses (or similar things), you own half each, unless you have made an agreement about having unequal shares.

There may be some cases when these rules don't apply, so get legal advice before making a decision on items you own. It's worth trying to reach an agreement between you because the cost of legally sorting out who owns what is often higher than the value of the goods. You can't get legal aid to help you with this type of claim.

# Help with legal costs

'Legal aid' is help with the costs of legal advice for people who can't afford it. It means you can get advice from a solicitor for free or, in some cases, for a lower fee. Whether or not you qualify for legal aid will depend on your income and the type of legal problem you have.

## Legal aid in England and Wales

In England and Wales, you will be able to get legal aid to help with legal costs connected with separation if you get:

- Income Support
- the Guarantee Credit part of Pension Credit
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, or
- income-based Employment and Support Allowance.

You **may** also get legal aid if: you have savings or assets worth less than £8,000, and

- your monthly income (before tax) is less than £2,657, and
- your monthly disposable income (what's left after taking off National Insurance, tax, rent or mortgage payments and

other expenses) is less than £733, or

- you are suffering domestic violence or abuse.

**Getting legal aid does not necessarily mean you will not have to pay for a solicitor at all. In some cases, it just means that you won't have to pay the full amount.**

To help you find out if you can get legal aid, use the legal aid calculator on the Community Legal Advice website, [www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk](http://www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk) or call the helpline on **0845 3454345**.

The amounts above were correct in August 2009.

*This information is accurate to the best of our knowledge. However, the rules can change and you should contact the organisation listed for up-to-date details of the legal help you may qualify for.*

## Legal aid in Scotland

The rules on who can get legal aid are different in Scotland. There are two different types of legal help for parents who are separating:

- Advice and Assistance – this is for things that can be decided without going to court, such as mediation or general advice from a solicitor. It only covers advice costing up to £180.
- Civil Legal Aid – this is for having a solicitor to represent you in court.

## Getting Advice and Assistance

You will automatically get Advice and Assistance if you get:

- Income Support
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, or
- income-based Employment and Support Allowance.

Other people can sometimes get Advice and Assistance. You cannot get Advice and Assistance if you have weekly disposable income (what's left after taking off National Insurance, tax, rent or mortgage payments and other expenses) of more than £234, and disposable capital, of £1,639 or more.

## Getting Civil Legal Aid

You will usually get Civil Legal Aid if you get:

- Income Support
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, or
- income-based Employment and Support Allowance.

You may also get Civil Legal Aid if:

- you have savings or assets worth less than £12,439, and
- your monthly disposable income is less than £2,084.

**Getting legal aid does not necessarily mean you will not have to pay for a solicitor at all. In some cases, it just means that you won't have to pay the full amount.**

To help you find out if you can get legal aid, use the legal aid calculator on the Scottish Legal Aid Board website, [www.slab.org.uk](http://www.slab.org.uk), or call the helpline on **0845 122 8686**.

The amounts above were correct in August 2009.

# 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](http://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](http://www.refuge.org.uk)** and **[www.womensaid.org.uk](http://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](http://www.scottishwomensaid.org.uk)**

### 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.

**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](http://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](http://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](http://www.children1st.org.uk)**

### 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](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Governmentcitizensandrights.org.uk)**

For Community legal advice  
**[www.legalservices.gov.uk/public/community\\_legal\\_advice.asp](http://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](http://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](http://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.

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