



# Helping someone you know

➤ a child maintenance decisions guide

- Help parents make **decisions about child maintenance arrangements**

- Understand the role **you can play**

- Know about the **help available for parents**



# Sorting out separation

Web  
app

**Get help** with issues around your break-up with an easy-to-use web app **tailored to your needs** including:

- children and parenting
- relationships and conflict
- health
- housing
- work and benefits
- money
- legal

Over 50  
organisations  
who can help

Expert help at  
the click of a  
button

Find us on many websites  
including [cmoptions.org](http://cmoptions.org)



Brought to you by  
**Help and Support  
for Separated Families**

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# Child Maintenance Options

is a free and impartial service that provides information, tools and support to help you make informed choices about child maintenance arrangements. We can:

- help parents set up a child maintenance arrangement between themselves (a 'family-based' arrangement) and give them the support to keep it going
- give you information about, and help with, other types of child maintenance arrangement
- offer practical information on a range of subjects linked to separation, such as housing, work and money, and put you in touch with organisations who can give you more specialist help and advice.

**Get in touch with Child Maintenance Options on 0800 988 0988\* or online at [cmoptions.org](https://cmoptions.org)**

\*See inside back cover for information about call charges

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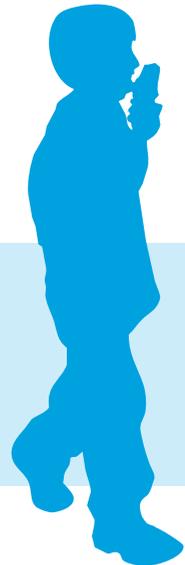


## Supporting separating and separated families

Most children, in most circumstances, benefit from having both parents involved in their lives in a positive way, whether they live with them or not. Child maintenance is one way of making this happen, but it's only part of the story. There are other ways to help parents build relationships and work together, to make sure their children receive as much support as possible - financial and otherwise.

The information in this leaflet is only a guide and does not cover every circumstance. We recommend that parents also get independent professional advice which applies to their circumstances. You can see a list of specialist organisations that may be able to help at the back of this guide. Although we have taken every care in preparing this guide, we cannot guarantee that information is accurate, up-to-date or complete, because it can change over time.

Child Maintenance Options does not endorse the content of any external websites.



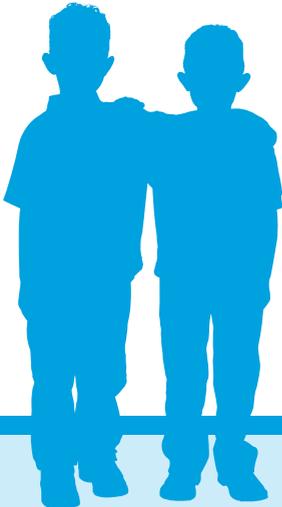
# About this guide

**When we go through difficult times we often turn to trusted friends and family members for advice. When parents separate this can be one of those times.**

Most parents want what's best for their children. This usually means both parents being involved in their children's lives, without coming into conflict with each other. It means both parents providing for their children's physical, emotional and financial wellbeing. But getting to that situation isn't always easy.

## **This guide can help you to:**

- work out how you can best lend a hand
- avoid saying or doing things which might make the situation worse
- keep everyone focused on what's best for the children
- support the parents while they are making child maintenance arrangements.



# How to use this guide

As the friend or relative of someone who's separating or separated you might be concerned about saying and doing the right thing. This guide can help you decide when and how to get involved and give support.

You may decide to read all this guide in one go. Or, if you want, you can read one section at a time, and have a break in between. It's completely up to you. If you'd rather read one section at a time, then take a look below to help you decide the best place to start.

- **Trying to get someone the information they need?**

There are some reliable sources of information, starting on page 15

- **Are the parents struggling to put their differences aside and focus on the children?**

Turn to page 12 for some practical ways you can help

- **Wanting to help the parents sort out child maintenance arrangements?**

Start with the information on page 18.

In most cases children benefit most when both parents stay involved in their lives and can make positive arrangements between themselves – although getting to this point isn't always easy. But if there is a risk of violence or abuse it may not be possible for parents to work together. If these issues affect someone you know, you might want to talk to someone who can give you specialist advice. Child Maintenance Options can help you get in touch with organisations that can do this.

# Child Maintenance Options offers a parents deal with common separation

## How to order our other leaflets

You can order our free leaflets by calling **0800 988 0988\***. They can also be downloaded from our website: **[cmoptions.org](http://cmoptions.org)**



**Information for parents with the day-to-day care of their child**

- a child maintenance decisions guide

- Understand your child maintenance choices
- Tools to help you set up a child maintenance arrangement



**Information for parents living apart from their child**

- a child maintenance decisions guide

- Understand your child maintenance choices
- Tools to help you set up a child maintenance arrangement



**Talking about money**

- a child maintenance decisions guide

- Take control of your finances
- Think about the types of financial support your child might need
- Tips for talking about money with your child's other parent



**Family-based arrangement form**

- a child maintenance decisions guide



**Child maintenance and staying safe**

- a child maintenance decisions guide



**Dealing with your emotions after separation**

- a supporting separated families guide

- Understand where you are on your emotional journey
- Tools and tips to help you move on
- Help children deal with their feelings
- When and how to get professional help



# range of practical guides to help on issues.

## Practical support for separating parents

• a supporting separated families guide



- Help with making arrangements with your children's other parent
- Information about your housing and employment rights
- Where to find more help and support

Child Maintenance options

## Parenting together after separation

• a supporting separated families guide



- Building a working parenting relationship with your ex
- Practical tools to help you parent together successfully

Child Maintenance options

## Getting in contact with your child's other parent

• a supporting separated families guide



- Understand common fears and concerns
- Tips to help you find someone and get in touch
- When and how the statutory child maintenance services can help

Child Maintenance options

## Managing conflict with your child's other parent

• a supporting separated families guide



- Learning how to deal with conflict
- Practical tools to help you avoid arguments or have fewer arguments

Child Maintenance options



## How to complain about Child Maintenance Options

Child Maintenance options



## How Child Maintenance Options uses your personal information

Child Maintenance options

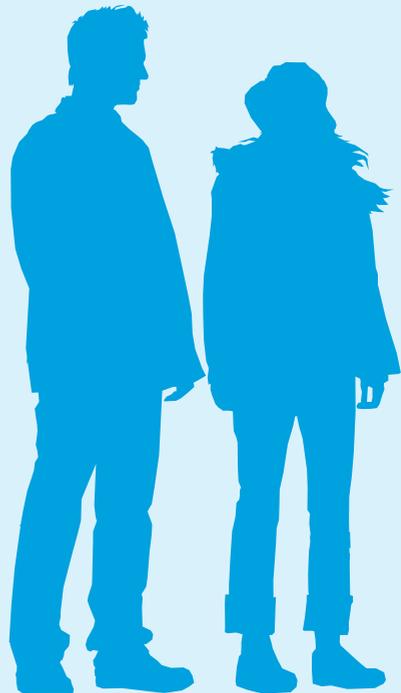
# Helping parents living apart

Separation is a difficult time for most couples, and it can be even harder when it involves children. It's very common in modern families – millions of children in the UK now grow up with one parent living apart from them – but that doesn't make it any less difficult for everyone.

The impact of separation can reach across many parts of the family and beyond, and can affect different people in different ways. Sadly, it's often children – the people who are least able to deal with this – who suffer the most.

## What sort of help do parents need?

Friends and family can be so valuable to parents coping with separation. You could be in a position to offer comfort, emotional support or practical help. You may also be able to help them take a balanced look at the situation and find the best solutions for their needs.



## How can you help?

Understandably, parents often turn to their friends and family for support when they are dealing with difficult events, such as a separation. They might just need someone to listen or they might be looking for information, advice, or even a neutral third party to help sort things out.

It's important to provide the right kind of support, and be clear about what's best for your friend or relative and, perhaps more importantly, their child. Be prepared for lots of ups and downs – separation can be a long and difficult road for everyone involved.

## Roles you could play

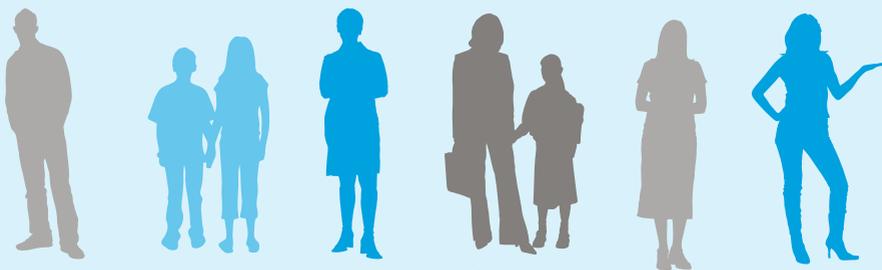
From offering to baby sit to encouraging parents to discuss things calmly, or helping around the home, there are lots of things you can do to support parents.

But people sometimes worry that they might do or say the wrong thing, and make things worse. Here are some things you might want to watch out for.

What you can do	What you might say	How it helps	Watch out for...
Offer a shoulder to cry on	“Don’t worry – it’s okay to be upset”	Providing emotional support in times of crisis is one of the most valuable roles friends and family can play	It’s normal for you to be affected when you see a friend or relative upset, so be prepared to get upset yourself. But try not to encourage them to focus on negative ideas – it won’t help their children in the long run
Listen	Nothing...	People often find a solution to their problems just by talking about them – they just need to get it all out	Listening can often turn into giving advice, so try to keep in mind the difference and be clear on what role you’re playing

What you can do	What you might say	How it helps	Watch out for...
Look after the children for a while	“Go on – you deserve some time to yourself”	Helping out with childcare can give a parent some time to relax, get on with other tasks, go out to work or to meetings with a counsellor or housing officer, and so on	If it seems like they’re taking on too much, you might want to encourage them to write down a list of things and then prioritise what needs to be done
Give or lend money	“Pay me back whenever”	During separation both parents are likely to see their financial situation change. Helping ease someone’s cash-flow worries can often stop a bad situation getting worse	People generally feel better when they have some certainties about the future, so encourage them to find long-term solutions as well
Act as a prompter	“Have you spoken to Child Maintenance Options yet?”	You may be able to keep things on track when your friend or relative’s mind is elsewhere	If it all seems too difficult, they may not be ready to deal with things yet. Can you get all the information together they might need, so it’s there when they’re ready?
Be a source of information	“Read this leaflet – I think it’ll help”	You won’t have all the answers – nobody does. But you can help your friend or relative get them, from experts and people who have been through similar situations	Make sure your information is as accurate and realistic as possible. There are lots of organisations listed at the back of this guide who you can contact for reliable information

What you can do	What you might say	How it helps	Watch out for...
Keep things reasonable	“Have you thought about it this way...?”	When people are struggling to deal with their emotions, it might help to have someone reminding and encouraging them to look at things from the point of view of the child – or even that of the other parent	It can be tempting for conversations to focus on blame or fault-finding. But try to remember that this often turns into outright conflict – which is not good for children. Try to keep the focus on positive solutions
Help them negotiate	“Can I help you find a compromise?”	If your friend or relative is unable to discuss things like child maintenance with the other parent, it might be something that you can support them with	This is unlikely to work unless both parents trust you and see you as unbiased – otherwise it could even make things worse. So make sure you think it through, and are able to stay very calm and neutral



# Help for the helper

If you've just read our 'how you can help' list on the previous page you'll be forgiven for thinking "I can't do that!"

Perhaps you're not sure where to start, or don't even think of yourself as a great listener. But right now you could be the best person to help your friend or relative, and with a bit of help you could be exactly what they need.

If you want to feel more confident about what you say and how you say it, or you want to point your friend or relative in the right direction, you may find the following sources useful.

## Negotiation, communication and mediation skills

These aren't just specialist areas for professionals – they're things we all do every day without thinking. We might just as easily call them things like:

- talking and listening
- finding a compromise
- being neutral.

It's always worth developing these skills, and a good bookshop or library will have books that can help you.

Some of the guides Child Maintenance Options produce to help parents work together and talk about money could help you develop skills and understanding in these areas too.



**Managing conflict with your child's other parent** looks at some of the ways parents act after separation that can be harmful to children, and what to do about it.



**Talking about money** has lots of ideas for planning and talking about separated family finances and working out a child maintenance arrangement.

## Legal support

It's usually better if parents can sort things out without needing to go to court. But if things are complicated, or there's no other way to reach agreement, this is one area where they really do need to consult a professional.



Resolution is a national organisation of family lawyers that takes a non-confrontational approach to divorce, separation and other family problems. You can find their contact details at the back of this guide.

## Managing finances

As with legal matters, there's no substitute for professional help when it comes to dealing with money. But if you're looking to get a basic understanding of the money issues people deal with in their everyday lives, then the Money Advice Service website is a good place to start.



The website includes a Divorce and Separation money guide, with impartial information about all the things parents may need to consider. You can find this at: [www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk](http://www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk)

## Housing and homelessness



Shelter can give information and advice about housing and homelessness issues, including your friend or relative's legal rights. You can find their contact details in the back of this guide. For information about council housing, [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) is a good place to start.



**Child Maintenance Options** can give you more information about dealing with issues that often affect separated couples. This includes getting legal advice, sorting out finances and dealing with housing issues.

## Next steps

- If you want to talk with your friend or relative about any of the topics we've covered so far, you may find it helpful to read more about the subject, or just refresh your knowledge. Turn to page 28 to find an organisation or website that can help.
- If you want to give your friend or relative more information about sorting out child maintenance, there are another eight leaflets in this series that can help. Call Child Maintenance Options on: **0800 988 0988\*** to find out more.

# Helping parents deal with conflict

When emotions are running high it can be very difficult for parents to talk to each other, or even be fair about the other parent. But it's really important that they try to keep arguments away from their child, and sort problems out in as positive a way as possible.

It is widely accepted that it's not separation or divorce itself that causes the greatest amount of harm to children; it's the level of conflict that they witness between parents during this difficult time, especially if this can't be managed or solved.

Conflict usually has a much bigger effect on a child's sense of security and wellbeing than their family set-up does. It's also linked to problems in the future, such as how well children do at school or in their personal relationships.

It's usually possible for parents to work through their problems so that they can both be the parents a child needs. However, if there is a risk of violence or abuse this may not be possible. If these issues affect your friend or relative, they might want to talk to someone who can give them specialist advice. Child Maintenance Options can help you get in touch with organisations that can do this.

## Watching your words

It is a good idea to choose your words carefully if you're asked for advice, to avoid making a situation or conflict worse.

It can be tempting to say what you think someone wants to hear, but this may not be best for them or their child in the long run. Here are some things you might want to watch out for.

You say...	They hear...	The alternative
“You can’t believe a word he says!”	He won’t stick to the arrangements you both make in the best interests of your children	Be specific with accusations – if someone has lied, agree that it’s a bad thing, but don’t let it lead to sweeping judgements
“I always knew she was no good”	I haven’t always been honest with you in the past... although I’m asking you to trust me now	This isn’t a time for point scoring. Focus on what’s best for your friend or relative and their child, not how good you are or how bad their ex-partner is
“Take him to the cleaners!”	Your best course of action is to get your revenge and do as much damage as you can	Whatever’s happened in their relationship, it’s really important parents try to put their hurt to one side and make their goal the long-term emotional and financial wellbeing of their children
“I told you this would happen”	This is your fault. You should have listened to me because I always know better than you	Your friend or relative needs their confidence building, not knocking down. You can help them get through this tough period – but it’s important for them to feel in control of their own actions
“She doesn’t deserve to see the kids”	The children can be used as a weapon to get what you want	Using children in this way is one of the worst things parents can do. It can make them feel fearful, angry and worried that if they don’t take sides they will lose the love and affection of a parent

## Tips for sorting out conflicts

Here are some tips for parents about avoiding and managing conflict so it doesn't get out of hand. It works best if both parents are able to keep these things in mind, but even if it's just one person really trying it can make a big difference.

- **Sweeping statements often make a situation worse.** It's better to avoid using words like 'never', 'always' and 'you' – don't say things like "you always make promises you can't keep"
- **It helps when people are really aware of their own actions and reactions.** This means working out when they are – and aren't – able to stay in control, and when it would be better to stop a discussion until things have calmed down
- **Bringing discussions back to the children can keep things on track.** A conversation can go in a very different direction if parents show they are focusing on the needs of the children rather than themselves. Think of the difference, for example, between someone saying "the kids need to see both of us regularly" and saying "I want the kids every other week". The second one sounds much more demanding, and could lead to arguments
- **Role-play can be an eye-opening way of working out what to say** and how to react to a difficult situation. In other words, you can help your friend or relative 'act out' the conversation they are going to have with the other parent
- **Making arrangements in the short term,** or agreeing little things first, can clear the way for looking at longer-term arrangements or bigger issues.



Our guide ***Managing conflict with your child's other parent*** can give you some more ideas about dealing with conflict.

## How parenting plans can help

Lots of parents living apart find it useful to make a ‘parenting plan’ or ‘parenting agreement’. This isn’t a legal document, but it sets out the ‘who does what and when’ details of raising a child together. It can help parents work out compromises and put an end to arguments about arrangements to do with their child.

Even if they decide not to make a parenting plan, parents could still use an example of one to think through all the information they need to share and the decisions they need to make together.



To download a step-by-step guide, visit the National Family Mediation website: [www.nfm.org.uk](http://www.nfm.org.uk)



## How mediation can help

Mediation gives separated or separating couples the chance to meet with someone who's been trained to help them make practical decisions together – about money, child maintenance, contact, property or all these issues.

In England and Wales it's sometimes possible to get legal aid to help with the cost of mediation. In Scotland it's sometimes possible to get free or subsidised mediation through certain organisations.

Even if parents have to pay for mediation themselves it can still be cheaper, less stressful and create less conflict than going to court.

For more information about how mediation works and how much it costs, see our guide [Managing conflict with your child's other parent](#). You can also find a discussion guide on the [Child Maintenance Options website](#) that helps parents work through a process similar to mediation for themselves.

## Next steps

Getting involved in a conflict is a risky business and you should think very carefully before stepping in. Every situation will be different, and there are no set rules for what you should do. Thinking about these points may help:

- If your friend or relative is involved in domestic abuse or violence you should get professional advice before doing anything else. Call one of the organisations listed on page 34 to explain the situation confidentially and in more detail to a trained advisor, before deciding what to do next
- If your friend or relative doesn't already have one, give them a copy of our guide [Managing conflict with your child's other parent](#) and make sure you're there to talk things through with them.

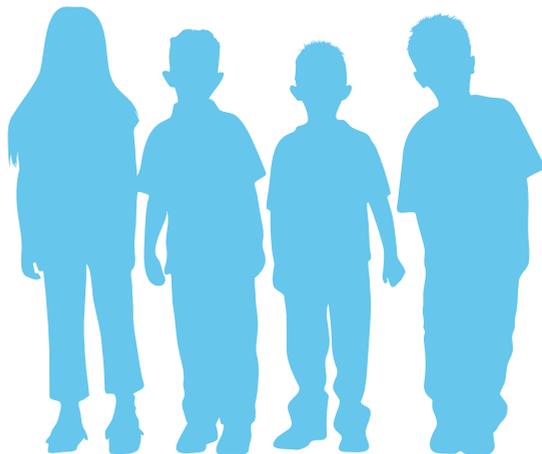
# How child maintenance works

Child maintenance is regular, reliable support that helps towards a child's everyday living costs when a parent doesn't live in their household with them all the time. It's not the only way parents can make sure they both still contribute, but it's a very important one.

More than half a million children in Great Britain benefit from child maintenance arrangements that parents have made between themselves. Many parents think this type of family-based arrangement is a better option for children, if it can be made to work.

There are a number of advantages to family-based arrangements, not least that they are private and flexible. They can also be quicker and easier to sort out, as parents don't have to deal with lots of paperwork or fixed rules.

The most important thing about family-based arrangements though, is that they allow parents to decide between themselves when and how they will both support their child in future. Many parents recognise that this means fewer arguments about money, and may find it can also help them work together in other ways, which is usually in a child's best interests.





For more information about family-based arrangements and other child maintenance options, such as using the government's statutory child maintenance services or the courts, contact **Child Maintenance Options**.

## Helping parents discuss maintenance

Talking about money can be very challenging for separating and separated parents, especially if their relationship is already quite strained. But, in the long run, a reasonable conversation about money could help them find ways to work together as parents no matter what's happened in the past.

If you're supporting someone with this, it's worth considering how they feel about things at the moment, and how best you can help them out.

### 1 When everything is going wrong

If parents are really arguing, but are prepared to work towards a solution, then it might be a good time to remind them of the long-term goal – doing what's best for their child. Most parents want exactly that, but it can sometimes get forgotten when emotions are high and relationships are strained.



Our guide ***Managing conflict with your child's other parent*** can help you understand, and explain to others, why making a real effort to deal with conflict is in the best interests of the children.

## 2 When things are generally rubbish but...

If there is a lot of conflict but some hope of agreement, you might be able to help your friend or relative work out what the big issues are and plan how to deal with them. Often, the things parents end up arguing about the most actually cover up deeper issues. You could also suggest they think about the things they do agree on – this can make it easier to sort out things in other areas.



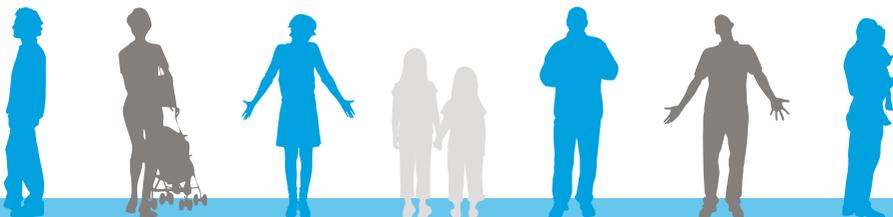
This can be very difficult if parents feel angry, guilty or afraid of the future. If you think your friend or relative is struggling to deal with their emotions, they might find our guide ***Dealing with your emotions after separation*** helpful.

## 3 When things are a bit better...

If parents have a reasonable relationship, they should be able to find ways to work together after they separate. That doesn't mean it'll be easy, as arrangements about child maintenance usually mean people have to compromise. Meeting each other halfway on every issue isn't the only option for compromise. Sometimes parents find it easier to agree one thing that will suit one person, and another to suit the other person, and so on. This can feel better because it means both parents make compromises but also get some decisions they want.



Parents can find tips for planning and talking about child maintenance in our guide ***Talking about money***.



## **4 When everything's going great**

If your friend or relative has a good working relationship with their child's other parent, then the chances are they have a good foundation for the future. Things can go wrong though – for example if parents stop talking, or something happens to change the relationship in the future. If you can spot the signs you might be able to help parents get back on track before disagreements turn into serious conflict.

### **Maintaining an arrangement**

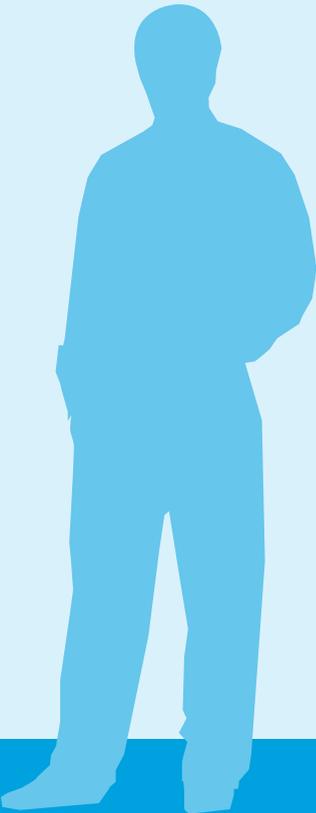
Change is something all families go through. People's relationships and changes to their financial situation might affect child maintenance arrangements in the future. For this reason it's important for separated families to review their child maintenance agreements regularly to make sure they're still fit to do the job they were intended for.



Parents can get help reviewing their child maintenance arrangements from **Child Maintenance Options**.

## Next steps

You can't arrange child maintenance for your friend or relative but you can support them and make sure they are as informed as possible about their choices. You may want to arrange some time with them – perhaps with some of the other guides in this series – so you can talk things through.



# Useful contacts

## Parenting and parenting apart

### Centre for Separated Families

[www.separatedfamilies.info](http://www.separatedfamilies.info)  
[advice@separatedfamilies.org.uk](mailto:advice@separatedfamilies.org.uk)

Provides advice and support to parents and other people experiencing family separation.

## Family Lives (England and Wales)

[www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk)

**Family Lives helpline:**

**0808 800 2222**

**Monday to Sunday**

**24 hours a day**

Help for parents, families and step families dealing with stressful situations. Runs a helpline, live chat and other services.



## **Families need Fathers**

**[www.fnf.org.uk](http://www.fnf.org.uk)**

**(England and Wales)**

**[www.fnfscotland.org.uk](http://www.fnfscotland.org.uk)**

**(Scotland)**

**Helpline: 0300 0300 363**

**Every day 7am to midnight**

**(England and Wales),**

**Monday to Friday**

**6pm to 10pm (Scotland)**

Help with issues caused by relationship breakdown and parenting apart. Help to involve both parents in a child's life after separation. Services include a national helpline and local branch meetings across the UK.

## **Gingerbread**

**(England and Wales)**

**[www.gingerbread.org.uk](http://www.gingerbread.org.uk)**

**Lone Parent Helpline:**

**0808 802 0925**

**Monday 10am to 6pm,**

**Tuesday, Thursday and Friday**

**10am to 4pm,**

**Wednesdays 10am to 1pm**

**and 5pm to 7pm**

Information for single parents about a wide range of legal, financial and parenting matters.

## **ParentLine Scotland**

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

**0800 028 2233**

**Monday to Friday**

**9am to 10pm**

**Saturday and Sunday**

**12noon to 8pm**

Free confidential support for parents and carers in Scotland who need help with family or relationship issues.

## **The Parent Connection from One Plus One**

**[www.theparentconnection.org.uk](http://www.theparentconnection.org.uk)**

A website for parents who are separating or are separated. It provides a wide range of tools and information adapted from face-to-face mediation techniques that parents can use for themselves.

## Money and work

### Child Maintenance Options

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

**0800 988 0988**

**Text 'OPTIONS' to 66644**

**Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm,**

**Saturday 9am to 4pm**

Free, impartial information and guidance to help separated parents make informed decisions about supporting their children.

### MATCH

[www.matchmothers.org](http://www.matchmothers.org)

Non-judgemental support and information for mothers apart from their children in a wide variety of circumstances.

### HM Revenue & Customs

[www.hmrc.gov.uk](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk)

**Tax Credit helpline:**

**0345 300 3900**

**Textphone: 0345 300 3909**

**Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm,**

**Saturday 8am to 4pm**

**Child Benefit helpline:**

**0845 302 1444\***

**Textphone: 0345 300 3909**

**Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm,**

**Saturday 8am to 4pm**

Information about Child Benefit and Tax Credits.

### Jobcentre Plus

[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

**Benefits helpline:**

**0800 055 6688**

**Monday to Friday**

**8am to 6pm**

Government service that gives jobseekers information and services including benefit claims, loans and grants and help with finding a job.

### Money Advice Service

[www.moneyadvice.org.uk](http://www.moneyadvice.org.uk)

**Money Advice Line:**

**0300 500 5000**

**Textphone: 18001 0300 500 5000**

**Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm**

**Saturday 9am to 1pm,**

**excluding Bank Holidays**

Information and advice on all types of financial matters, including about parenting, separation and divorce.

Can arrange face-to-face sessions to help parents put budgets together.

## National Debtline

[www.nationaldebtline.co.uk](http://www.nationaldebtline.co.uk)

0808 808 4000

Monday to Friday 9am to 9pm,

Saturday 9.30am to 1pm

24 Hour Voicemail

Free and confidential helpline for advice about dealing with debt.

## General advice and support

### Citizens Advice (England and Wales)

[www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk)

Advice line England:

0844 411 1444

Advice line Wales:

0844 477 2020

A popular source of free, independent and confidential advice about legal, money and other problems. Can put you in touch with a local Citizens Advice Bureau.

## Scottish Citizens

### Advice Bureau

[www.cas.org.uk](http://www.cas.org.uk)

Citizens Advice Direct:

Call 0808 800 9060

Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm,

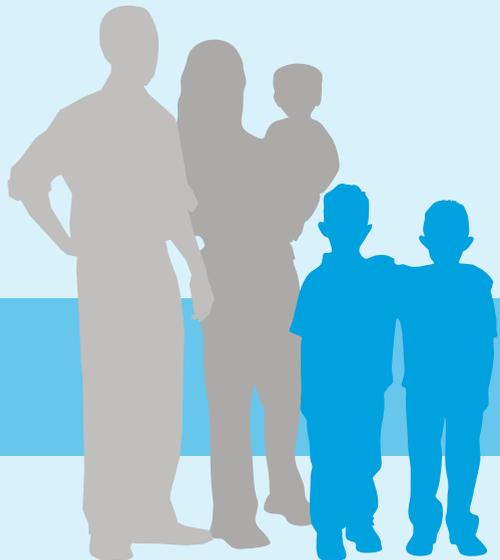
Saturday 10am to 2pm

Free, independent and confidential advice through its network of bureaux in Scotland.

## Gov.UK

[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

Government website providing information about parenting, money, benefits and work, and access to online government services.



## Legal advice and mediation

### Community Legal Advice (England and Wales)

[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

**Helpline: 0845 345 4 345**

**Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm,**

**Saturday 9am to 12.30pm**

A free, confidential and independent legal advice service.

### Family Law Association (Scotland)

[www.familylawassociation.org](http://www.familylawassociation.org)

An online information and advice centre explaining family law in Scotland.

### National Family Mediation (England and Wales)

[www.nfm.org.uk](http://www.nfm.org.uk)

**0300 4000 636**

**Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm**

A network of family mediation services that helps couples who are going through separation or divorce, or living apart, to sort out issues affecting both of them.



You can also download **Parenting Plans** from [nfm.org.uk](http://nfm.org.uk) It's a free guide that can be a useful source of information for parents dealing with divorce or separation.

### Relate (England and Wales)

[www.relate.org.uk](http://www.relate.org.uk)

**0300 100 1234**

Relationship counselling for individuals and couples, and counselling for children and young people.



Relate has a sister website that provides online advice and support for parents and families:  
**[www.relateforparents.org.uk](http://www.relateforparents.org.uk)**

## Relationships Scotland

[www.relationshipsscotland.org.uk](http://www.relationshipsscotland.org.uk)

Relationship and family support across Scotland, including mediation services and child contact centres.

## Resolution

(England and Wales)

[www.resolution.org.uk](http://www.resolution.org.uk)

**01689 820 272**

**9am to 5.30pm**

National organisation of family lawyers that helps families reach solutions to problems in a non-confrontational way. Can provide information about all aspects of family law.

## Scottish Legal Aid Board

[www.slabb.org.uk](http://www.slabb.org.uk)

**Legal aid helpline:**

**0845 122 8686**

**Open 7 days a week**

**7am to 11pm**

The organisation responsible for managing legal aid in Scotland, providing funding for people who qualify for it.

## Housing and homelessness

### Local Authority housing

[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

Your local council can help you find your local housing office.

Visit [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) or see your local phone book for their contact details.

### Shelter

[www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk)

**Housing helpline:**

**0808 800 4444**

**(8am to 8pm Monday to Friday,  
8am to 5pm Saturday  
and Sunday)**

A housing and homelessness charity with a freephone helpline for giving advice on issues like eviction, arrears, homelessness and emergency accommodation.

## Dealing with domestic violence

### Mankind

[www.mankind.org.uk](http://www.mankind.org.uk)

**Helpline: 01823 334 244**

**Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm  
and 7pm to 9pm**

Support for male victims of domestic abuse and violence.

Provides information, support and access to local police, counselling, housing and other services.

### National Domestic Violence Helpline

[www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk)

**Helpline: 0808 2000 247**

**Open 7 days a week,  
24 hours a day**

Free helpline available around the clock to give emotional support and practical advice to victims of domestic violence and abuse.

## Emotional wellbeing

### NHS Choices

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) (England)

[www.nhs24.com](http://www.nhs24.com) (Scotland)

[www.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.wales.nhs.uk) (Wales)

Information from the National Health Service on conditions, treatments, local services and healthy living.

### Samaritans

[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

**Helpline: 08457 909 090**

**Open 7 days a week,  
24 hours a day,**

Free, confidential emotional support for people experiencing stress, anxiety, despair or similar feelings.

### Young Minds Parents Helpline

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

**0808 802 5544**

**Monday to Friday  
9.30am to 4pm**

[parents@youngminds.org.uk](mailto:parents@youngminds.org.uk)

Confidential support for anyone worried about the emotional problems or behaviour of a child or young person.

**The statistics quoted in this guide are based on the Office of National Statistics 2009 Labour Force Survey.**



**\*Call charges**

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

Calls to 0845 numbers from BT land lines should cost no more than 4p a minute with a 15p 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.

**The main sources of research used to write this guide are:**

- Andrews, S., Armstrong, D., McLernon, L., Megaw, S. and Skinner, C. (2011) Promotion of child maintenance: Research on instigating behaviour change. Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission Research Report
- Wikeley, N., Ireland, E., Bryson, C. and Smith, R. (2008) Relationship separation and child support study. DWP Research Report 503
- Rodgers, B. and Pryor, J. (1998) Divorce and Separation – the Outcomes for Children. Joseph Rowntree Foundation Research Report.



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