

Parental Agreement



A Parental Agreement or a Shared Parenting Plan, is a plan drawn up by both parents and sometimes grandparents, or a guardian, and sets out the day to day parenting of the children.

A Shared Parenting Agreement plan is based around what is in the best interests of the children. Divorce can be particularly painful for children, regardless of age. A parenting plan can help both parents and other family members focus on what is in the child's best interests. It also demonstrates a mutual commitment by both parents that they are willing to put the needs of the children before their personal views of each other.

A Shared Parenting Agreement plan also helps parents clarify with each other what is expected of them, including:

- ✓ **Children's living arrangements** – who the children will spend time with, to include other family members such as grandparents, how often and when.
- ✓ **Money** – who is to be financially responsible for the children's day to day needs and other needs such as housing, education, holidays etc.
- ✓ **Religion** – particularly if the parents are from different religious backgrounds and have different expectations in terms of religious education for their children.
- ✓ **Education** – this is not limited to what school the children go to, but could also include the type of school the children are to attend i.e. private/state. A shared parenting plan would also discuss who is to be responsible for associated educational costs.
- ✓ **Health care** – this may be impacted by a parent's religious beliefs and may need clarifying between the parents upon divorce. It may also consider if the children are to receive private health care dependent upon the parents' circumstances.
- ✓ **Emotional wellbeing** – to ensure that the children are receiving the love and support that is required from both parents and other family members. To also ensure that the children are not exposed to ongoing family disputes, as a direct result of the divorce, or perhaps by extended family members; and how this is to be avoided/corrected.

If parents feel that they need some further assistance or guidance to draw up the plan, we can help to organise mediation or they can attend a Planning Together For Children programme.

These programmes are designed to provide information and guidance on co-parenting. In England & Wales organisations that can help can include the National Family Mediation and there are lots of voluntary organisations that will assist parents to develop a shared parenting plan.

For parents with older children it is important to listen to their wishes and feelings and what they feel they need now that their parents have divorced. Listening to children provides them with reassurance that they have not been forgotten or overlooked throughout the divorce process. This will also help to reduce any feelings of anxiety or stress that they may be experiencing.

If Family Mediation is being considered by the parents and the children are older, then perhaps encourage them to take part in the mediation process. This can often help parents in really hearing what their children are saying.

Sometimes during divorce, the parents are unable to listen effectively as they are too emotionally involved in the divorce and are experiencing feelings of anger, sadness and frustration. All of this can become a barrier to effectively listening to the children.

Once the Shared Parenting Agreement plan is complete both parents sign it and keep a copy. This can be used at a later date for reference or if circumstances change.

If you think that you would benefit from a parenting agreement please complete the form on the following pages with your ex-partner and return it to us...

Parental Agreement

Think about the needs of each of your children. No child or family is the same so your plan will be unique to you and your family's circumstances. You can make the plan as detailed as you like, the more detailed it is the clearer it will be but you may need to review it more often.

Children's Names and Dates of Birth:

Name:		Date of Birth:	
Name:		Date of Birth:	
Name:		Date of Birth:	
Name:		Date of Birth:	
Name:		Date of Birth:	
Name:		Date of Birth:	

Communication

What parenting decisions do we need to consult each other on?	
What parenting decisions don't we need to consult each other about?	

How are we going to behave towards each other in front of the children? We want them to know we are getting along and have them in mind.	
How are we going to share important information with each other, (for example, school reports, health issues)?	
Do we need regular meetings to discuss parenting issues?	
How do we find out what the children want to happen, and make sure that they have a say in what we decide?	
At what times is it OK to call the other parent and when isn't it OK?	
How will we settle disputes?	
Should we discuss how we talk to the children about the other parent?	



How will we talk to the children about the arrangements we have made?	
What do we do about emergencies, (for example, medical, dental, or accidents)?	
How will we make sure our children stay in contact with supportive friends or relatives from the other side of the family?	
How will we introduce new partners to our children's lives?	
Are there any important rules that we consider essential for the children, e.g, bedtimes, when homework is done, staying out late? Do we agree that these rules are followed?	
How do we work together to make the big decisions, (for example, school, course selection and careers advice)?	
Any other issues?	

Living and Childcare Arrangements

Will there be a main place where the children will live and if so, where will it be?	
If neither of us can look after the children, who will be the alternative carers? What about school holidays?	
Are there times when it is not convenient to ring our children?	
What sort of communication will we have with the children – phone, text, email – and about how often and when can they expect it?	
How much time can each child spend with each parent?	
What days can they be with each of us?	
How do we make sure that the children can share special days – birthdays and religious festivals – with both of us?	

What different ideas are there for maintaining close and meaningful contact, even when children and parents are separated for long periods of time?	
How will we manage the arrangement when one parent works long hours?	
What clothes and other belongings will be taken and returned at changeover?	
How will we arrange pick-up and drop-offs?	
Who will take them to regular sporting engagements on weekends? After school?	
When and how are we making sure the children are seeing their grandparents?	
Will anyone else look after the children (for example, childminders, babysitters, relatives, new partners, friends and neighbours)? If so, when?	



What are the arrangements for the children during the school holidays? (Consider bank holidays and teacher training days as well as school holidays).	
How do we make sure that we both have holidays with the children, and plan for taking the children abroad if we agree?	
Any other issues?	

Decisions about Money

How will we share day-to-day for costs for clothes, school trips and larger items like computers and musical instruments?	
How will pocket money be handled?	
What will we do if our financial positions change?	
How will financial arrangements change as the children grow up (for example, making provision for college or university)?	



Any other issues?	

Education

How will we deal with the school and get them to send notices, reports and other material related to our children's progress to both of us?	
How can we get involved separately, as parents, in the school?	
How should we make contact with school counsellors so that they know about our separation and how it might affect the children?	
How will we decide on which school the children should attend?	
Any other issues?	

Other Issues to Consider

Who organises routine health issues?	
Are there long term health issues that we need to consider?	
What do we agree about religious practice and upbringing?	
Are there any other cultural issues that we need to make sure are respected?	
Are there any sporting or artistic commitments that we need to account for?	
Are there arrangements needed for the family pets?	
Will the plan have a review date?	<div>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></div> <div>No <input type="checkbox"/></div>
If yes, when and how often?	

Parent Name 1	
Signed	
Date	

Parent Name 1	
Signed	
Date	