P A R E N T I N G A F T E R S E P A R A T I O N

Child Arrangements Plan

A practical agreement to support your children after separation

A note from Jasmin Newman

This plan is not a legal document, but it is a powerful one. In my experience, the families who navigate separation most successfully are those who agree the details in writing, early, before conflict makes it harder. Use this plan to record your arrangements, reduce misunderstanding, and keep the focus where it belongs: on your children.

- Jasmin Newman, Accredited FDR Practitioner and Certified Parenting Coordinator

Prepared for families in England and Wales
parentingafterseparation.co.uk

About This Plan

This Child Arrangements Plan sets out agreed arrangements for the care of your children following separation. It covers where your children will live, how they will spend time with each parent, how you will communicate, and how key decisions will be made.

This plan is not a Child Arrangements Order and is not legally binding. If you need a court order, you should seek legal advice or contact a family mediator. However, a written plan agreed between parents carries significant weight and can be referred to if disputes arise.

> **Legal note**
> *If you cannot agree on arrangements, a Mediation Information and Assessment Meeting (MIAM) is normally required before applying to the Family Court. Contact a MIAM-qualified mediator for more information.*

How to use this plan

Work through each section together, or separately, and then share your responses. Where you agree, record the arrangement. Where you do not agree, leave that section blank and seek support from a mediator or family consultant.

Review this plan at least once a year, or whenever there is a significant change in circumstances. Both parents should keep a signed copy.

Section 1: About the Family

The Children

Complete a row for each child covered by this plan.

Child's full name	Date of birth	School / nursery

Parent 1

Full name	
Address	
Phone number	
Email address	

Parent 2

Full name	
Address	
Phone number	
Email address	

Section 2: Living Arrangements

Under the Children Act 1989, 'Child Arrangements' refers to where a child lives (formerly 'residence') and when they spend time with each parent (formerly 'contact'). You do not need a court order to agree these arrangements between yourselves.

Primary living arrangement

Describe where the children will primarily live. Many families use a shared or equal arrangement - you can describe this below.

e.g. The children will live primarily with Parent 1 at [address], spending time with Parent 2 as set out below. / The children will live equally with both parents on a week-about basis.

Regular weekly or fortnightly routine

Describe the regular pattern of time. Be specific about days and times.

e.g. The children spend Monday evening to Friday morning with Parent 1, and Friday after school to Monday morning with Parent 2, on a fortnightly rotation.

Handover arrangements

Where will handovers take place? Who will collect and drop off? What time?

Handover location
e.g. School drop-off and collection / neutral location / parent addresses
Handover time
e.g. 8:30am school drop-off on Monday and Friday
Who collects/drops off
e.g. Parent 1 drops off on Friday. Parent 2 collects on Monday morning.

Section 3: School Holidays and Special Occasions

England and Wales school holidays vary by local authority. This section helps you agree arrangements in advance - ideally at the start of each year.

School holiday arrangements

Easter school holidays

e.g. Alternate each year. Parent 1 in odd years, Parent 2 in even years.

May half-term

Summer holidays (6 weeks)

e.g. Split equally - three weeks each, with dates agreed by 1 April each year.

October half-term

Christmas holidays

e.g. Christmas Eve and Christmas Day with Parent 1 in odd years, Parent 2 in even years. Boxing Day arrangements alternate accordingly.

February half-term

Special occasions

Children's birthdays

e.g. The birthday child spends the day with the parent with whom it falls. Both parents attend the party where possible.

Mother's Day / Father's Day

e.g. Children spend Mother's Day with Parent 1 and Father's Day with Parent 2, regardless of regular routine.

Parents' birthdays

Other significant dates (e.g. religious holidays)

Section 4: Communication Between Parents

How and when you communicate with each other as parents has a direct impact on your children. This section sets out the agreed ground rules.

Preferred communication method

e.g. Email only / parenting app (e.g. OurFamilyWizard) / text message for urgent matters

Response time expectation

e.g. Non-urgent messages will be responded to within 24-48 hours.

Communication about the children's day

e.g. A brief text or message at handover to share anything the other parent needs to know.

Escalation - what to do if agreement cannot be reached

e.g. Contact our agreed mediator / refer to our co-parenting plan / seek family dispute resolution.

Children's contact with the other parent

Agree how your children can contact the parent they are not currently with.

Phone or video calls

e.g. Children may call the other parent at any reasonable time. We agree to facilitate calls without interference.

Agreed call times (if preferred)

e.g. 7:00pm on school nights. Flexible at weekends.

Section 5: Parental Responsibility and Decision-Making

What is Parental Responsibility?

Parental Responsibility (PR) is a legal term under the Children Act 1989. It refers to the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority a parent has in relation to their child. Both parents usually share PR and major decisions should be made jointly, even if the child lives primarily with one parent.

Major decisions (requiring joint agreement)

The following areas require both parents to consult each other and agree, in line with the principle of shared Parental Responsibility:

Education

e.g. Both parents agree on school choice, tutoring arrangements, and attendance at key school events.

Medical and health

e.g. Both parents will be informed of all medical appointments. Routine treatment does not require consultation. Significant treatment requires joint agreement.

Religion

e.g. We agree the children will be raised [describe]. / We agree not to impose religious practice.

International travel

e.g. Each parent may take the children on holiday abroad with written consent of the other parent, minimum 4 weeks' notice.

Change of name or address

e.g. Neither parent will change the children's surname without mutual agreement.

Day-to-day decisions

Each parent may make day-to-day decisions about the children's routine, diet, activities and care during the time the children are in their care, without needing to consult the other parent.

Section 6: Other Arrangements

New partners

e.g. We agree to notify each other before introducing a new partner to the children, and to do so gradually and sensitively.

Extended family

e.g. Both parents support the children having a relationship with grandparents and extended family on both sides.

Financial arrangements

Child maintenance arrangements are not legally binding in a parenting plan. For formal child maintenance, contact the Child Maintenance Service (CMS) or seek legal advice.

Notes on any agreed financial arrangements (e.g. cost-sharing for activities, school trips, clothing):

Review and dispute resolution

When will this plan be reviewed?

e.g. Every 12 months, or when there is a significant change in circumstances.

If we cannot agree, we will:

e.g. Attend mediation / contact our family dispute resolution practitioner before taking any court action.

Domestic abuse and safeguarding

If there are concerns about domestic abuse, coercive control, or child safety, this plan may not be appropriate without professional support. Please contact your solicitor, Cafcass, or a specialist domestic abuse service for advice before completing this document.

Section 7: Signing This Plan

By signing below, both parents confirm that:

- They have read and understood this plan.
- The arrangements recorded reflect their genuine agreement.
- They are committed to acting in the best interests of their children.
- They will notify the other parent promptly if they wish to review any part of this plan.

Parent 1	**Parent 2**
Signature	Signature
Full name	Full name
Date	Date

This plan was completed with support from Parenting After Separation
parentingafterseparation.co.uk