

Parenting Plans

Parenting Plans can help clarify important details of life after separation and can also help parents establish their new relationships.

Although a Parenting Plan isn't yet legally binding, talking and working through parenting arrangements and having it written out in a plan will usually lead to those arrangements being followed through in practice. If arrangements do subsequently break down a court may also be less likely to interfere with those arrangements, with the plan itself providing good evidence of what the couple intended.

The types of matters that parents may want to include in a parenting plan can include the following:

- How and when to talk to the child (ren) about separating and, if applicable, divorce.
- How much time the children will spend with each parent, dealing with handovers and moving clothes/toys etcetera between the two homes.
- Education – such things as choice of school, location, getting home work done and costs.
- Social events – what extra – curricular activities do the children already do, or how to deal with arranging new ones.

Setting up a Parenting Plan itself can provide a platform for parents to really think through what is important for their family and what may or may not work for them. It can help create a mindset of co parenting and communicating with each other about the children.

There is often a careful balance to be struck between having sufficient details in the plan so that there is predictability and routine for the family, but not going so far that actually it becomes restrictive and impractical. Parenting Plans can allow flexibility, and they can also be reviewed from time to time as the family evolves and in particular the children getting older.

The Resolution *Parenting Through Separation* booklet can be a useful starting point to open up discussions and to start thinking about what could go in a plan (www.resolution.org.uk).

For advice about family law matters please contact Heather Weavill at Alison Fielden & Co Solicitors on 01285 653261 or by email at hweavill@alisonfielden.co.uk