

## Parenting Plan

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### WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN COURT



This booklet is produced by:

Jersey Family Court Advisory Service  
1 Lempriere Street  
St Helier  
JE2 3XB

## PARENTING PLAN

Planning for your children's future



**What needs to be done?**

**Family And Friends**

**Home and School**

**Holidays and Special Days**

**Keep In Touch**

**Money Checklist**

**Points About Contact Visits**

## Introduction

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Although separation and divorce are adult answers to adult problems, children are affected. When a parent moves away from the family home children may feel loss, anger, sadness and even guilt. Children may feel these things less if parents continue to co-operate.

Your responsibilities for your children remain although you are no longer living together. If it does not prove possible to work together to make arrangements, you can seek help from family, friends, a family mediator, a counsellor or a lawyer.

The Parenting Plan is designed to help you make arrangements for your children and to discuss these with them and others who may be involved. It contains information, guidance, ideas and sections you can fill in, if you wish. Every family and their circumstances are different and you will need to work out what suits you all best. You don't have to fill out the Plan. You may just wish to read the information or use it as a guide to the issues you need to talk about with your former partner and your children. The Plan is not designed to cover money matters although there is a money checklist. You may need to seek advice about this - see the Getting Help Section.

If you do complete the Plan, you may want to make sure that you each have a copy of the completed Plan and think about who else should have a copy, for instance children and grandparents.

In some situations, for example, if there has been domestic violence or risk of harm to a child, the Plan may not be appropriate. In this case you should seek advice from a lawyer.

If you fill in a Plan and sign it, it is a statement of your intentions as parents. It is not a legal document. It is not an order of the court, nor is it intended to be enforced by the court. If you feel there may be a need for a court order, you should discuss this with a lawyer. The Plan is simply designed to help you make your own arrangements. Children grow up and situations change so you will need to revise the plan from time to time.



## Getting Help

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There are a number of organisations providing information, advice and help for families where parents have separated or divorced; help for children, parents, grandparents, friends and relatives.

There are also a great many books, some for parents, some for children, some for parents to read with children, as well as lots of storybooks and novels. Jersey library has a special section on family matters.

## Getting Help in Jersey

### Relate - Jersey Marriage Guidance

2nd Floor, Charles House,  
Charles Street,  
St Helier, JE2 4SF  
Tel: 734980

### Family Mediation Jersey

Suite 7, Bourne House  
Francis Street  
St Helier  
JE2 4QE

### Citizens Advice Bureau

The Annexe  
St Paul's Community Centre  
New Street  
St Helier, JE2 3WP  
Tel: 08007 350249 and 724942

### Centrepoint Contact Centre

Tel: 735151 (1)

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## Conclusions



This Plan has been read and discussed by us as parents and with our children, we sign to indicate our commitment to it. As things change over the years we will hope to discuss matters in a similar way, discussing any changes with our children as appropriate.

Mother \_\_\_\_\_ Father \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

The Plan can also be signed by other people if you think it will help everyone to feel committed to what has been discussed - your children, a step-parent, grandparent etc.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Family Relationship \_\_\_\_\_ Family Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Family Relationship \_\_\_\_\_ Family Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

We acknowledge that each of us remains a parent and we are jointly responsible for the welfare and development of each child. We are responsible for the day-to-day care, control and discipline of each of our children while they are in our immediate care.

Who will look after this plan? \_\_\_\_\_

Who will have a copy of this? \_\_\_\_\_

When do you plan to consider revisions? \_\_\_\_\_

## Planning Your Children's Future



### Children:

- Need to feel involved in planning their future.
- Should be helped to maintain the best possible relationship with both parents
- In most cases, need to keep in regular contact with each parent.
- Need love and care given in a consistent and predictable way.
- Benefit from stability - in relationships with family and friends, living environment, in school, in clubs and activities.
- Find change - even small change - hard.
- Need clear and honest explanations and information, appropriate to their age, about what is happening and why.
- Need opportunities to express their views and should be listened to. However, they should not be forced to express a view (for example which parent they prefer to live with) or made to feel that the responsibility for any decision rests with them.
- Need their views to be taken into account before any final decisions are made. If decisions are made against their wishes, this should be acknowledged and the reasons for doing so explained to them.
- Need to know their family history, origins and relationships in order to have a clear sense of belonging.
- Usually want to keep in touch with their wider family (brothers and sisters, step family, aunts, grandparents etc) and family friends.
- Need to know how they can keep in touch with people they care about, for example by contact visits, letters, phone, e-mail, video tapes, and skype.
- May feel insecure about their parents' new relationships, if and when they occur. It is important to introduce new long-term partners sensitively.

Each child's needs are different and arrangements for one child may not be appropriate for their brother or sister. Needs change as children grow up and as your circumstances change. Try to look ahead and discuss the impact of change together and with your children, before difficulties occur.

## Some Important Points

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### About Contact Visits:

- Contact arrangements should be discussed with your children and their needs and wishes taken into account.
- There is no right set of arrangements that will suit everyone.
- Contact visits are meant to be enjoyable but they can be stressful at first for all concerned. They are worth persevering with because they can benefit you all.
- It is helpful for children to have a regular pattern of contact visits.
- The pattern for contact visits should be established as soon after separation as possible.
- The best pattern of visits will vary with the age of the child.
- Shorter, more frequent, visits may work better for younger children.
- If visits are very short, or very infrequent, it may be difficult for a parent and child to feel relaxed together.
- Overnight stays, where possible, are important in allowing the parent and child to experience ordinary daily routines together.
- Failure by either parent to stick to the arrangements for contact may be distressing for the child and make them feel less secure.
- It is not always helpful to see arrangements after separation as a simple extension of what has gone before - you may want to do different activities together now, see each other at different times etc.
- Because emotions are often raw following a separation, it may be difficult for parents to agree on contact arrangements. If there is no practical alternative a contact centre may be used temporarily.

## Money Checklist

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You may also be making arrangements for the financial support of your children. If your plan for your children is going to succeed, you need to be clear with each other what can be afforded and who is going to pay for what. These are some of the things that you need to consider:

Are there regular payments already being made by both of you?

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Who will pay for clothes, shoes and trainers for the children?

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Who will pay for school or club uniforms, sports kit or equipment?

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Who will pay for travel - visits to parents, grandparents other people?

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Who will pay for school trips?

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Who will pay for large items such as bicycles, computers, musical instruments or driving lessons?

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How will you give your children pocket money?

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How will you support your children through college, university or other training courses?

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*You may wish to contact your local Citizens' Advice Bureau for money advice.*

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## Changes

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Moving house, new job, new school, new partners, new babies. Not only do children's needs change, but adults' needs change too. New circumstances may mean that the arrangements for your children need to be changed. You need to decide how you will go about changing the plans. Some parents arrange to meet at regular intervals to assess how things are going. Others review their arrangements as and when circumstances change.

What changes do you consider important and how and when will you tell each other when the need for change arises?

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How are you going to review the arrangements for your children when changes do occur? How will you involve the children?

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## Communication With Each Other

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### And With Your Children

Discussing change in your family situation can benefit you and your children. It can help avoid misunderstandings and friction between you as parents. It will show your children that they continue to be important to you. Clear communication will also help make the changes run as smoothly as possible.

#### When discussing changes with each other:

- Think about when, where and how often you are going to discuss things.
- Respect each other's views.
- Support each other as parents in, for example, discipline or the children's education.
- Think about your continuing responsibilities as parents, rather than the difficulties of your past relationship.
- Try not to row or criticize each other in front of your children.
- Remember that we all make mistakes, and just because one particular topic provokes a row, it does not mean you should give up talking altogether.

#### When discussing changes with your children:

- Make time to talk to each child separately as well as together.
- Show your children that you support each other as parents, even though you no longer live together.
- Use words and ways of talking that don't show blame.
- Explain your plans clearly and what effects these will have and listen carefully to your children's views.
- Reassure your children wherever possible.
- Remember that each child is different and will react in their own way to your separation or divorce.

**ABOVE ALL, DISCUSS ARRANGEMENTS WITH YOUR CHILDREN AND LISTEN TO THEIR VIEWS.**

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## Your Names And Your Children's Names



Mother \_\_\_\_\_

Father \_\_\_\_\_

In the spaces below, give the full names and dates of birth of each child. If any of your children have a different parent, indicate this after their name below. The name by which a child is known should be changed only with the consent of both parents or by Court order.

First Name	Family Name	Date of Birth
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Name of any other person with an interest in and relationship to child, e.g. grandparent, separated parent.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____



## Other Arrangements

These might include family pets, sports, school journeys, learning to drive the car, the suitability of friends, or any other of the any issues raised for parents and children while the children are growing up. For example:

- Who will be responsible for family pets?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Will your children be able to continue with any special arrangements for sport, drama, music, groups or other special interests?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How will your children learn to drive? Who will pay?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Who will help them get a Saturday job? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Anything else? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Health



Who will be responsible for arranging:

- Routine medical and dental checks, and vaccinations?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Any regular medication? \_\_\_\_\_
- Any routine equipment e.g. inhaler? \_\_\_\_\_
- Home - based therapy or educational programmes?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Any speech - language therapy or hospital appointments?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Any special needs, e.g. special diet? \_\_\_\_\_
- Will you each have a note of these arrangements? \_\_\_\_\_
- How often will they be updated? \_\_\_\_\_
- Who will do this? \_\_\_\_\_
- If one of your children suffers from a chronic or permanent condition or illness, how will you make sure they get the treatment they need, whoever they are staying with?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- If one of you is ill and unable to continue looking after your children, either all the time or during a visit, how will you handle this?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Will the ill parent make the arrangements and inform the other, or will you discuss this first?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Who can you call on in an emergency to help with childcare?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- If you are living far apart from each other, or in different countries, how will you ensure that you are both aware of any health issues that might affect your children's well being?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Living Arrangements



There can be a variety of living arrangements when parents separate. Children usually spend more time with one parent than the other for practical reasons. In most cases children will live with one parent and see the other on visits, but this may not suit your children or your circumstances. You will need to discuss this carefully with each other and your children if they are old enough and understand what is happening. Do not put pressure on your children to decide, but listen to their views. You also need to think carefully about issues concerning the day-to-day care of your children.

Where will your children mostly live?

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How will they spend time with each of you?

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What travel arrangements will be made, and who will pay?

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If a visit needs to be postponed, who will explain this to your children, and how will another visit be organized?

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What will be the arrangements for phoning or receiving telephone calls from one parent, while staying with the other parent?

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## Living Arrangements



If your children are old enough, will they have a mobile phone?

**Yes/No**

Who will pay for this? \_\_\_\_\_

Who will have access to the number? \_\_\_\_\_

Will your children have access to email? \_\_\_\_\_

How will you discuss rules for your children with each other and with them?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What are the three most important rules that you both agree are essential, e.g. on smoking, drugs, motorbikes, cycling to school, wearing helmets on bikes?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Are there any issues you find it hard to agree on and will this be a problem, e.g. time for bed, staying out later, going to the shops alone?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How will you discuss the suitability of other people for sometimes looking after your children, e.g. new partners, child minders, babysitters, neighbours, relatives?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Holidays



Can either of you take your children away on holiday? \_\_\_\_\_

• How will you agree plans for holidays? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

• Can you each take them abroad? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

• Who will obtain and hold their passports? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

• How will you decide what your children do in their school holiday time? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How will you divide the time between each of you?

How much time will your children spend with: grandparents (his parents), grandparents (her parents): other family members and friends?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What travel arrangements will need to be made, and who will pay?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What will happen on the days when the school may be closed. e.g. inset or snow days? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## School & Out of School Activities



- Participation in Personal, Social & Health Education (PSHE)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Careers advice? \_\_\_\_\_
- Others that arise? \_\_\_\_\_
- Will you both allow your children to go on school trips abroad, and if so, how will these be paid for? \_\_\_\_\_
- Do any of your children have out-of-school classes or activities?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Who will make the arrangements for these? \_\_\_\_\_
- How do out-of-school activities or a Saturday job fit in with contact visits?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Staying In Contact



Which friends and family members will your children stay in contact with?	How will they stay in contact?	How often will they be in contact?

Is there anyone else that you as parents feel is important?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Special Days



Children like to celebrate birthdays, religious festivals and other special days in a variety of ways. They also like to be included, as appropriate, in other special family or community events, such as weddings, funerals, anniversaries and celebrations.

What days are special for your family or community?

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Do you agree to discuss whether your children will be involved in these occasions?

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What arrangements will need to be made?

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### Religious & Cultural Upbringing

If your children are being raised in a particular faith or cultural tradition, what arrangements are you making for this to continue?

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If there a particular role for a parent, grandparent or community leader that you need to discuss and agree? How and when will you do that?

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If your children speak a language other than English is it important that they continue to do so?

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How will this be encouraged?

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## School & Out of School Activities



How will the school(s) be informed of your children's changed circumstances?

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How will the parent not living with the children:

- Keep in touch with the school? \_\_\_\_\_
- Receive school reports? \_\_\_\_\_
- Receive information about school events? \_\_\_\_\_

Will you attend school functions together or separately?

- Parents evenings \_\_\_\_\_
- Sports events \_\_\_\_\_
- Other school events \_\_\_\_\_

If there needs to be a change in your children's schooling how will you discuss this?

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How will a choice of school for each of your children be made?

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How will other important choices for your children be made, such as:

- Selection of GCSE courses? \_\_\_\_\_
-