



What is a parenting plan?

This Stowe guide explains what a parenting plan is and how it can help people to co-parent successfully after a divorce or separation.

A parenting plan is a written plan completed by parents after a divorce or separation. The plan covers the practical issues of co-parenting, providing a framework for discussion and space to detail arrangements.

Separation and divorce are traumatic for all involved but perhaps even more emotionally complex where children are involved.

Despite the trauma and upset, parents are linked for life through their children's schooling, development, further education and life events including weddings, the arrival of grandchildren etc.

Learning to co-parent

Learning to co-parent after a divorce or separation is tricky. However amicable the split, adapting to a new family set-up will bring some challenges along the way.

With this in mind, it is vital that both parents focus as much energy as possible on positive and effective co-parenting, not only to reduce stress between them but to protect the children as much as possible from the emotional damage that a family breakdown can bring.

I have worked with many different clients as they navigate the ups and downs of co-parenting. In some situations, communication has broken down completely, making any decision-making, however small, impossible. In others, whilst communication has remained positive, differing views and expectations often cause discord.

Step in...parenting plans

A tool that I have found successful with previous clients is the completion of a parenting plan. So, what is a parenting plan?

The idea behind a parenting plan is that it is completed by both parents together to identify any differing views or expectations and how to handle them.

You can view the CAFCASS parenting plan [here](#).

Writing a parenting plan

Before you begin it is important to think about how you will write the parenting plan. Ask yourself,

- Can we listen to each other?
- Do we agree on what the child/children want/need?
- Can we negotiate equally?

If you can, then sitting down together (neutral territory is still usually best) and working through the plan is a great starting point. To help, the plan



lists a range of questions on the key sections to work through before moving onto making key decisions.

If clients cannot communicate, mediation can be a very useful tool to assist in the completion of the plan.

Working through the plan correctly will allow sufficient time for the parties to discuss any issues that are likely to be problematic. These early discussions can often stop small issues developing into major ones and reduce conflict between the co-parents.

Many clients that have used the parenting plan have told me that they felt reassured that, despite the separation and uncertainty, they are on the same page with their spouse as far as issues concerning the children. This often gives people hope for the future and how things might work.

So much of co-parenting successfully relies on communication and in my experience, a parenting plan is a great tool for identifying parties' expectations at the outset and for opening up discussions.

Need more information?

Call our Client Care Team on **0330 838 7456** to speak with one of our specialist family lawyers or visit www.stowefamilylaw.co.uk