

Child Arrangements Planning Guide

A practical starting point for parents

Who this guide is for

This guide is for parents, guardians, or family members who want a clearer starting point when child arrangements feel uncertain or difficult.

You may be:

- thinking about mediation
- trying to stabilise arrangements that keep changing
- preparing to speak to a solicitor
- or simply wanting to organise your thoughts privately

You don't need to complete everything. Many parents find that working through just one or two sections helps them think more clearly and decide what to do next.

Important information

This guide provides general legal information and practical prompts only. It does not provide legal advice and does not create a solicitor–client relationship.

If there is immediate risk to you or a child, contact the police or emergency services.

Step 1 — Map your child's normal week

Start with what everyday life looks like now.

Use the prompts below to note:

- school days (wake-up, school run, homework, bedtime)
- weekends (activities, travel, family time)
- appointments (who books them and how information is shared)

Why this matters

Decision-makers often focus on routine and stability. Starting with everyday life gives any discussion a solid foundation.

Step 2 — Think about a simple weekly pattern

Now consider whether there is a repeatable, predictable pattern that works for your child.

You might think about:

- school-week structure
- practical school nights
- handover times, places, and who collects

This isn't about perfection. It's about clarity and predictability.

Step 3 — Plan ahead for holidays and key dates

Once the weekly routine is clearer, look beyond term time.

Prompts to consider:

- school holidays and half-terms
- birthdays (child and parents)
- Christmas, Eid, or other cultural or religious holidays
- travel plans and notice periods
- where passports are kept

Many disagreements arise because expectations weren't discussed early.

Step 4 — If work patterns vary, build in structure

If shift work, rotas, or irregular hours are involved, clarity matters even more.

You may want to think about:

- a default plan your child can rely on
- when rotas are shared and how far ahead
- how changes or swaps are handled

Children benefit from knowing what to expect, even when adult schedules change.

Step 5 — Communication boundaries

Clear communication supports arrangements and protects children.

Prompts to reflect on:

- one agreed communication channel
- reasonable response expectations
- avoiding messages through the child
- how decisions are recorded

Good structure here often prevents arrangements from breaking down.

Step 6 — Safety and supervision (pause point)

Pause here if there are any concerns.

You may want to reflect on:

- whether handovers feel safe and appropriate
- whether public places or third parties would help
- whether behaviours suggest advice is needed

Important

If there is immediate risk to you or a child, seek urgent help.

Step 7 — Preparing for mediation or legal advice

If agreement isn't possible, preparation matters.

It may help to:

- set out your key issues in three clear bullet points
- focus on child-centred proposals, not grievances
- keep a simple timeline of missed contact or changes
- save relevant messages in one place

Clear, factual preparation helps others understand your position.

What to do next

If this guide has helped you:

- clarify what might work, or
- identify where things feel stuck

the next step is usually legal guidance.

You may want to:

- book a Strategy Session, or
- use the Support Finder to see what help fits your situation

There's no obligation to proceed.

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