



Quick reference on out-of-court options for resolving disputes around children

The following sets out sources of information and services available to parents who have separated or divorced and are having difficulty agreeing arrangements for their children. Some of the information may also be of use to relatives (for example grandparents) who are considering approaching the family courts over disputes about seeing children.

Cafcass recommends pointing parents to a [new website](https://helpwithchildarrangements.service.justice.gov.uk/) hosted by the Ministry of Justice which sets out all support options available, including how to prepare for making an arrangement, and the options for making arrangements. The information is set out in a way which encourages out of court resolution and also has a strong focus on safeguarding. The website can be accessed at <https://helpwithchildarrangements.service.justice.gov.uk/>

Many of the services listed below are mentioned on the MoJ website; the following can be used as a quick-reference guide.

| Service | Website | Information available |
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| The Parenting Plan | https://www.cafcass.gov.uk/grown-ups/parenting-plan.aspx | <p>For many parents this can be the first step to finding ways to resolve their dispute, by providing a structure to make good decisions for their child. Parents can start to work on this themselves and involve the other parent when they can. The Plan is backed up by other services that can help with developing skills, understanding children’s’ needs, and getting support to make an agreement.</p> <p>One parent who has used the plan stated: “If we’d had this resource at the beginning of our separation, I believe my ex-wife and I would have been able to work amicably to agree on the best arrangements for our sons and we would have saved a lot of money, time and angst”.</p> |
| Splitting Up – Put Kids First | http://www.splittingup-putkidsfirst.org.uk/home | This is a free, online parenting plan with direct links to help parents learn the skills they need to make it work for them both, particularly refreshing the skills that parents need to communicate better. |

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| Getting it Right For Children | http://theparentconnection.org.uk/programmes/programmes/getting-it-right-for-children-when-parents-part | Getting it Right for Children is an online skills development programme specifically designed to help parents communicate better. It is a straightforward, practical programme with videos etc. that can help parents communicate better with their ex-partner and find solutions about childcare issues as they arise. |
| Separated Parents Information Programme | https://www.cafcass.gov.uk/grown-ups/separated-parents-information-programme-(spip).aspx | This course involves group work with other parents. It helps parents think about their child's point of view, learn from other parents, find out about sources of help, and think about what they can do to improve your situation. Parents do not attend the same group sessions. It is not necessary for both parents to attend but it is often better if they can. |
| MoJ - Mediation | https://www.gov.uk/looking-after-children-divorce | Contains advice about mediation, information on when legal aid may be available for mediation, and "find your local mediator". |
| | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=va59Ksk6XZQ | A MoJ video 'Understanding Family Mediation' explains what mediation is, the benefits of it, why people may prefer to use it over going to court, and what a MIAM is. |
| Family Mediation Council | www.familymediationcouncil.org.uk | Information on mediation, MIAMS, process, cost, and how mediation links with the court process. "Find a mediator". Links to a number of organisations. |
| HMCTS | www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-courts-and-tribunals-service | Links to find the appropriate court and to download forms and guidance. The site directs potential applicants to the CAB for help in completing forms. |

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| MoJ – Legal Aid | https://www.gov.uk/legal-aid/overview | Legal aid overview, eligibility and how to claim. |
| AdviceNow | http://www.advice-now.org.uk/ | Practical guides on a range of different topics for Litigants in Person and ‘top picks’ from the rest of the web, to help parents manage their legal issues. |
| MoJ – Advice for self-represented parties (LiPs) | https://www.gov.uk/represent-yourself-in-court/overview | Information and guidance forms about what happens at court and what parents must do if they represent themselves. Information and guidance about McKenzie Friends is also available. |
| Resolution | http://www.resolution.org.uk | Provides lots of information on the divorce process, the various options available, child issues, finances, child support, DV, appropriate support services, affiliated solicitors, mediators, and accredited specialists. |
| The Law Society | www.lawsociety.org.uk | Provides a ‘find a solicitor’ option. |
| Supported contact | http://www.naccc.org.uk/ | For parents seeking a venue for contact, this provides a neutral place if no other is possible. This is just a venue and is not the same as supervised contact. NACCC is the only accrediting body for contact centres – which means that staff and venues are checked and training is given to the volunteers. In general it is best for children to move on from contact centres after a short time |
| Supervised contact | http://www.naccc.org.uk/ | Supervised contact ensures the physical safety and emotional well-being of a child when risks have been identified. It also assists in building and sustaining positive relationships between a child and members of their non-resident family. |
| OnePlusOne | http://www.oneplusone.org.uk/ | Relationship research, tools, advice, support, and online forums moderated by trained counsellors. Also provides links to other useful websites and programmes for parents. |
| Relate | www.relate.org.uk | Counselling and support for relationships and breakdown, including via email, free live chat or telephone. Also advice and information. |

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| Local Authorities | http://local.direct.gov.uk/LDGRedirect/Start.do?mode=1 | If a parent has issues that indicate that they or their children may be suffering or at risk of suffering harm, their local authority should be the first port of call and may also be able to direct them to appropriate local services. |
| Refuge | http://www.refuge.org.uk/ | Guides on recognising domestic abuse, advice and support, and details the 24 hour DA hotline. |
| Child support laws | http://www.childsupportlaws.co.uk/ | Information about the laws relating to child support and maintenance in the UK. The advice provided is both for those seeking to pay child support and those not receiving the money they expect. |
| MoJ | https://www.gov.uk/browse/childcare-parenting/divorce-separation-legal | Contains advice on how child maintenance is worked out, a 'child maintenance calculator', using the CSA, and child maintenance under different circumstances. |