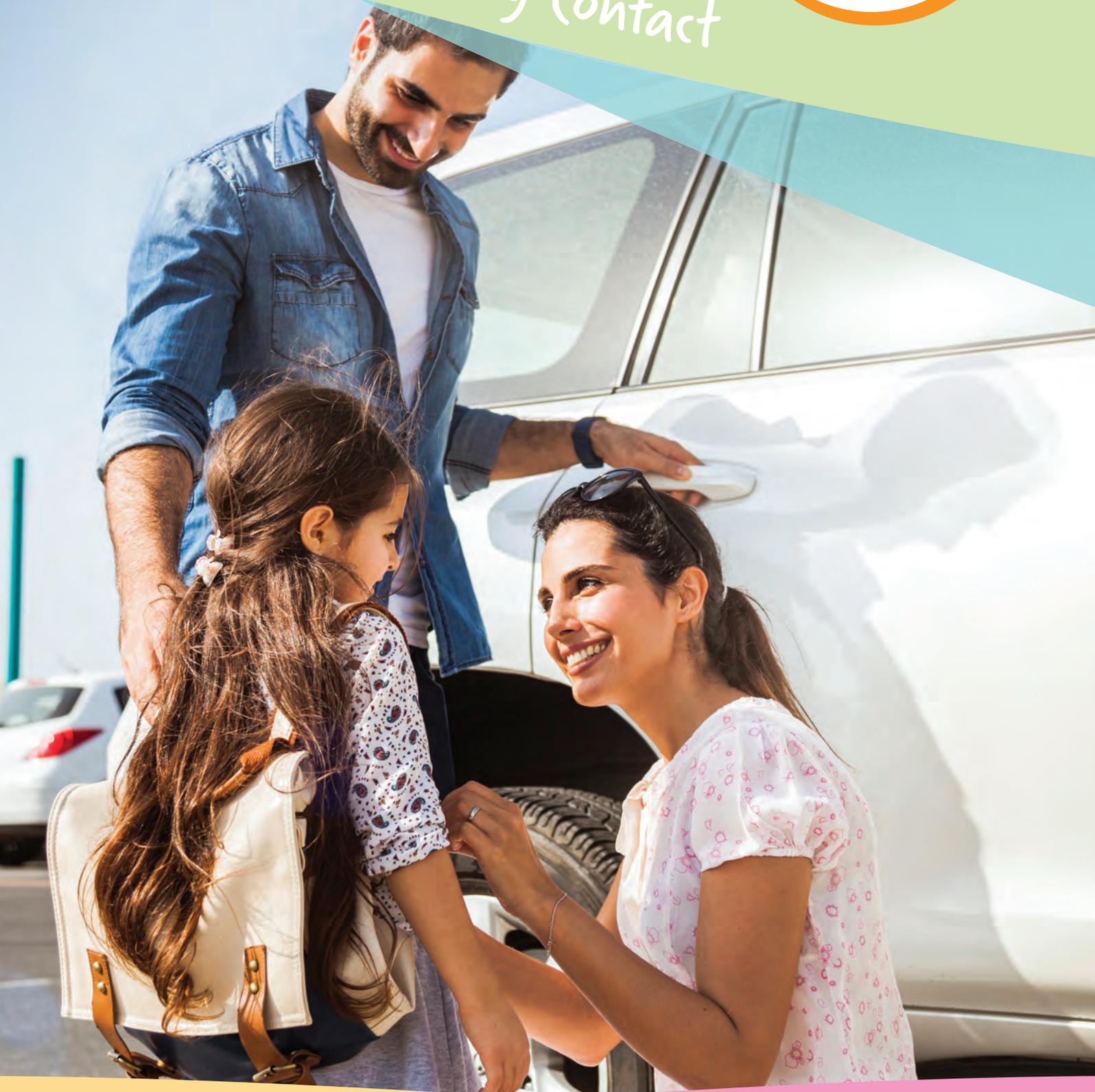


areyouok?
ask the question - make a difference



Encouraging Healthy Contact



A family resource

areyouok?

ask the question - make a difference

Telling you how stupid you are
means they don't RESPECT you

Not allowing you to go anywhere unless
they say so shows they don't TRUST you

Forcing you to do something you're not
comfortable with is not getting your CONSENT

No matter who 'they' are, a healthy
relationship will always be based on

RESPECT, TRUST, CONSENT

If your's isn't, visit www.areyouok.co.uk

You can also contact:
Young Person Violence Advisor
01803 208398

Devon Rape Crisis Service, Young Person Counsellor
01392 204174

Torbay Domestic Abuse Service
01803 698869

Sexual Assault Referral Centre
01392 436967



This *Positive Contact* toolkit has been developed by the Splitz Safeguarding team in collaboration with our Domestic Abuse Support Advisors from the Adult team, and our partners at NDADA (North Devon Against Domestic Abuse).

It has been designed to support and inform parents; to aid them to help children and young people understand and manage the difficulties of contact after DSVa (Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse). It is intended to encourage exploration, discussion and debate; to aid understanding, increase safety and security, as well as build confidence and emotional awareness in parents and their children.

The themes in this pack are linked to Devon County Council's 2016 strategy to end DSVa and Torbay DASV Strategy 2018-27. This strategy focuses on prevention, early help and intervention, support and protection as well as promoting recovery and resilience.

Splitz Safeguarding Team work to increase the safety and well-being of children and young people affected by domestic abuse and to break the cycle of abuse. This resource compliments and builds on other toolkits developed by the Safeguarding Team; *Exploring Healthy*

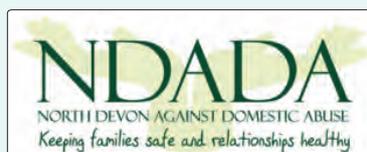
Relationships and Building Healthy Futures.

These toolkits can be used by both families and professionals supporting them. This toolkit, in particular, contains advice and resources to help parents navigate and achieve positive happy contact arrangements for all the family. NDADA provide support for families and children both in the community and in their refuge.

We hope that you enjoy using this resource. If you require any further information about our service, or the support we can offer, please contact us.

Emma Stephens
Chloe Grove
Emma Woodgate
Beth Cuffe

With thanks to
Shaun Leworthy, Wendy Fudge & Sarah Alford



areyouok?
ask the question - make a difference

Morning News

1 Today, 2020

ed by the Splitz Safeguarding team in collaboration with

sitive
ontact

JOB VACANCY

Job title:
Parent

Job description:
**On call permanently,
to meet the slightest whims
of egocentric, irrational
small persons.**

Conditions:
**No guaranteed rest breaks.
No back-up. No thanks.
Buy your own equipment.**

Hours: **24 hours per day**

Holidays: **None**

Training: **None**

Pay: **None**

Length of contract: **21 Years!**

dictorum atque factorum
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habemus;

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bonum.

Ne amores quidem sanctos a sapiente
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dignitate transitum est ad honestatem

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sum te oratio est. Facete M. Causa autem



Your Bill of Rights

You have the right to be you.

You have the right to put yourself first.

You have the right to love and be loved.

You have the right to be treated with respect.

You have the right to be human - NOT PERFECT.

You have the right to be angry and protest if you are treated unfairly or abusively by anyone.

You have the right to your own privacy.

You have the right to have your own opinions, to express them, and to be taken seriously.

You have the right to earn and control your own money.

You have the right to ask questions about anything that affects your life.

You have the right to make decisions that affect you.

You have the right to grow and change (and that includes changing your mind).

You have the right to say NO.

You have the right NOT to be responsible for other adults' problems.

You have the right not to be liked by everyone.

**YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO CONTROL
YOUR OWN LIFE AND TO CHANGE IT IF YOU
ARE NOT HAPPY WITH IT AS IT IS.**

As a child, I have the right to...

Be Safe

Be Safe

Not be scared

Say what I think

Be myself

Not be hurt

Be loved

Not be scared

Not be hurt

Be myself

Be loved

Be safe

Be loved

Say what I think

Not be hurt

Say what I think

Not be scared



Dear Parent,

We hope this letter finds you well.

We understand that child contact can be challenging at times and sometimes it can be difficult to know who or where to turn to. We know that trying to juggle family life after a relationship breakdown can feel overwhelming. You may be struggling to know how to talk to your children about what has happened, or finding it difficult to manage your own emotions around the situation at home.

This toolkit has been designed with you and your family in mind. It offers advice, information and support to help you navigate the (often rather jargon-filled!) world of child contact arrangements, whilst offering a range of family-friendly activities and ideas to help you consider how to move forward.

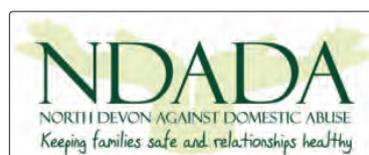
The most important message that we hope you take away from the toolkit is that you do not have to go through any of these difficulties alone. At the back of this toolkit, there are a number of organisations listed that can offer both practical and emotional support for parents and their children who have experienced domestic abuse or violence. Reach out to us - we are here to support you!

And don't forget... once in a while... take a step back, take a deep breath and find the time to look after yourself. You deserve it!

Very best wishes,

Splitz & NDADA

areyouok?
ask the question - make a difference



Issues around contact can have a significant and long-lasting impact on the emotional well-being and relationships of children and young people. How does a child make sense of adverse childhood experiences, such as domestic abuse, whilst still managing to achieve and flourish? Growing up, in itself can be challenging enough!

Children who have lived with and experienced domestic abuse often have to deal with the cumulative negative effects of conflict around child contact. Giving children the opportunity to talk and express their fears, thoughts and feelings with a trusted and supportive adult can be hugely beneficial for their mental health and well-being. This trusted person can be a parent, other family member or anyone who has a supportive relationship with your child.

A child's relationship with their non-abusive parent, wider family and supportive adults is of key importance to helping them make sense of their experiences of previous domestic abuse, and manage the difficulties of contact in the here and now. This can, in turn, help to build resilience. Encouraging children to talk about their emotions with parents and other adults helps them to understand emotions and emotional openness and helps to build secure attachments.

Allowing children to strengthen their relationship with their parent or care giver is

equally as important. This can help to build a greater shared understanding and enable the important adult in their life to understand their child's frame of reference. It helps to ensure that the child feels listened to and understood. This improves their self esteem and helps to restore and build key relationships in their lives going forward.

Furthermore, open communication helps children to process and make sense of their lives, to appropriately rationalise and understand their experiences, and to address early attachment insecurity. Opportunities to access emotionally

open communication within a relationship facilitates the construction of a more coherent and realistic interpretation (Bretherton, 1999). Children who are not provided such opportunities to communicate openly can end up internalising difficult emotions. This can lead to anxiety or depression, oppositional behaviours and/or end up causing further distress and difficulties in their relationships with others.

Encouraging children to talk about their emotions with parents and other adults helps them to understand emotions

Emotions often experienced following domestic abuse can include anger, shame, resentment and blame. These can have a major impact on the lives and well-being of children and young people, unless they are given the opportunity to explore and express these emotions. Often there is a fear within parents of making things worse, thereby resulting in a parallel process whereby neither feel able to share their thoughts, feelings, worries and concerns.

Therefore, it is important to give children the time and space to talk openly about their lives. This can be done through a range of activities, from creating safety plans to exploring support networks. In having an open discussion about the child's concerns around contact, the child is aware that it's okay to talk about these things. They are given an explicit message that they can share their thoughts, feelings and fears, knowing that it won't make things worse or upsetting for their parents, wider family or professionals working with the family.

It is important to give children the time and space to talk openly about their lives

This gives children a positive message about themselves, one that contradicts negative messages that they are unworthy of gaining attention but actually are acceptable and loveable. The support provides reassurance helping them understand what's happening in their lives but also aids their resilience and self esteem as they learn others find them acceptable, thereby aiding their ability to cope and manage relationships, and ultimately improving their well-being.

This resource gives adults (be it parents, caregivers or professionals involved in the lives of young people) the opportunity to provide this encouragement and nurturing care. Please grasp this opportunity and use it to support the lives and future development of children and young people.

References:

Bretherton, I. (1999) 'Updating the "internal working model" construct: some reflections', *Attachment & Human Development*, vol. 1, no. 3, pp. 343-57.





Emotional Well-being



Managing emotions
What you want for your child
Body maps
Looking after you

A family resource

Managing emotions

To start to understand our emotions we need to ask ourselves two questions:

How do I feel?	How do I know I feel that way?
For example: <i>I feel sad</i>	For example: <i>Because I am crying and struggling to get out of the house</i>

Why do we have emotions?

Emotions are not always consciously controlled. The limbic system is the area of the brain which deals with emotions.

This part of the brain evolved fairly early on in human history, making it quite primitive, meaning that emotional responses are based around the need to survive.

Emotions are strongly linked to memory and experience. So, if something bad has previously happened to you, your emotional response to the same stimulus is likely to be strong.

When faced with conflict, human beings work off of the survival instinct of 'fight or flight'. This means that you might want to run away from an intimidating situation or 'fight it' for example by shouting or swearing.

How can we tell how others are feeling?

There are lots of ways that we can tell how others are feeling, such as observing **what they say** and **how they behave**.

Research suggests that more than 80% of communication is non-verbal, meaning that it comes from **body language** and **facial expressions**.

Many of us don't like to talk about our emotions and so they tend to be expressed even more in our body language.

Understanding this link to memory and past experience gives you the key to **understanding your emotional response**.

Your emotional responses don't necessarily have much to do with the current situation, but you can overcome them with **reason** and **by being aware of your reactions**.

Remember everyone experiences emotions!

Emotions are **normal** and **healthy** and it's important to recognise when we feel emotions and what has triggered this feeling

Managing my feelings around child contact

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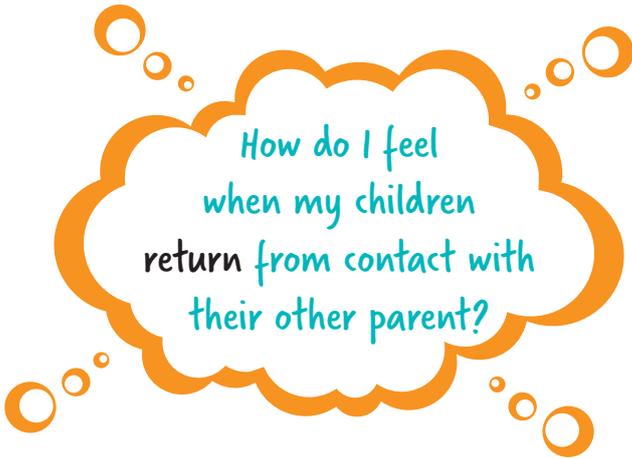
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Top Tip

- Think about things that you say or how you behave

How do I currently manage my feelings?

What would help me to feel/think differently?

Where do I get my support?

What you want for your child

What children **need**

- ✓ To know **it's not their fault**
- ✓ To **be listened to**
- ✓ To know **it's okay to feel sad or angry**
- ✓ To know **they can ask questions**
- ✓ To know **they are loved**

What children **don't need**

- ✗ To feel that they have to choose **one parent over the other**
- ✗ To hear **negative comments about other parents**
- ✗ To **pass messages from one parent to another**
- ✗ To feel **responsible for the break-up**



What you want for your child

Many of your children's initial questions will be focused on themselves and how the separation will affect them. By allowing your child to ask questions, you will be able to address their concerns and ultimately work out what they want. We have listed some of the common questions below. This is to help you feel prepared and confident in how you respond.

Where am I going to live?

Where's Mummy going to live?

Is this my fault? Are you mad at me?

Where's Daddy going to live?

Where will my siblings live?

Will he/she still love me?

Will I still see other family members?

Will I have to move?

Will I have to change schools?

Will I have two houses and two bedrooms?

Where will my stuff go?

Can I still see my old friends when I'm there?

Will he/she drive me to see my friends?

Do my friends know? Will everyone else know?

What can/should I tell them?

Will we still be close? When will I see him/her?

Will I have any friends there?

Can I stay over? Can I leave some of my stuff there?

Will I have my own room?

Will he/she still come to my...

(Netball games/football games, etc.)

Body maps

What you need:

- ✓ Paper
- ✓ Pens or paints

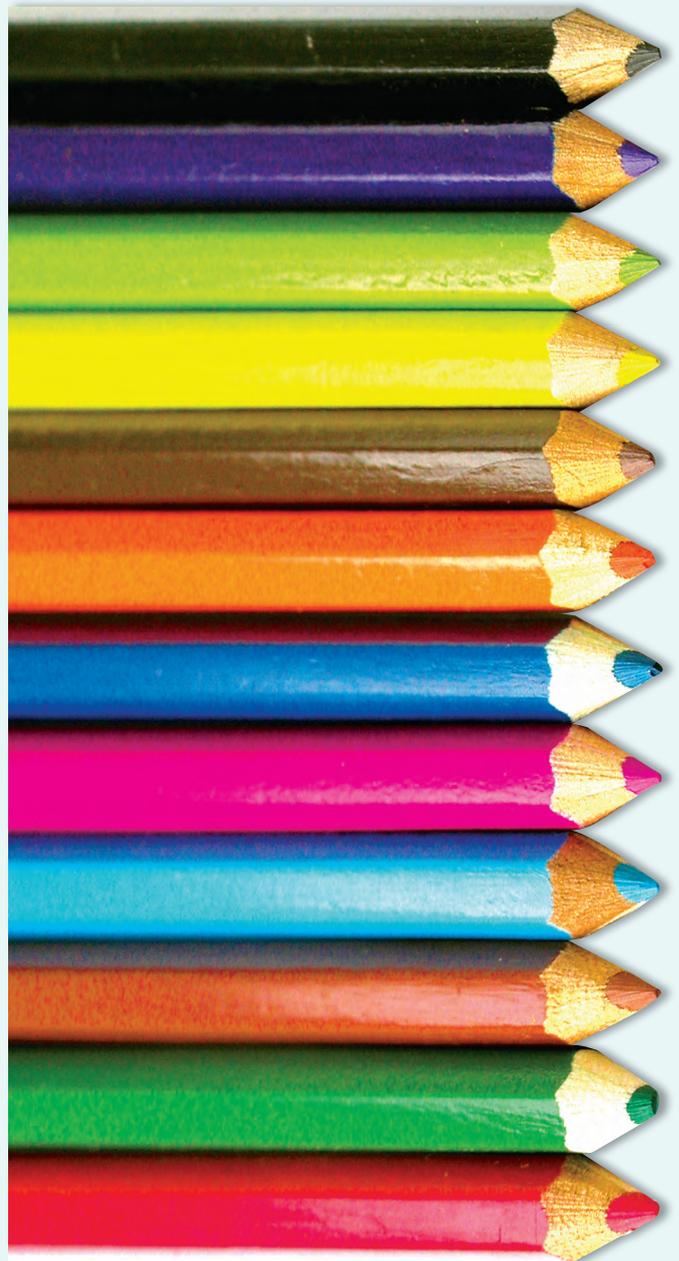
How to...

Draw pictures of each other and decorate how you would like.

Discuss with your child how different emotions make you feel.

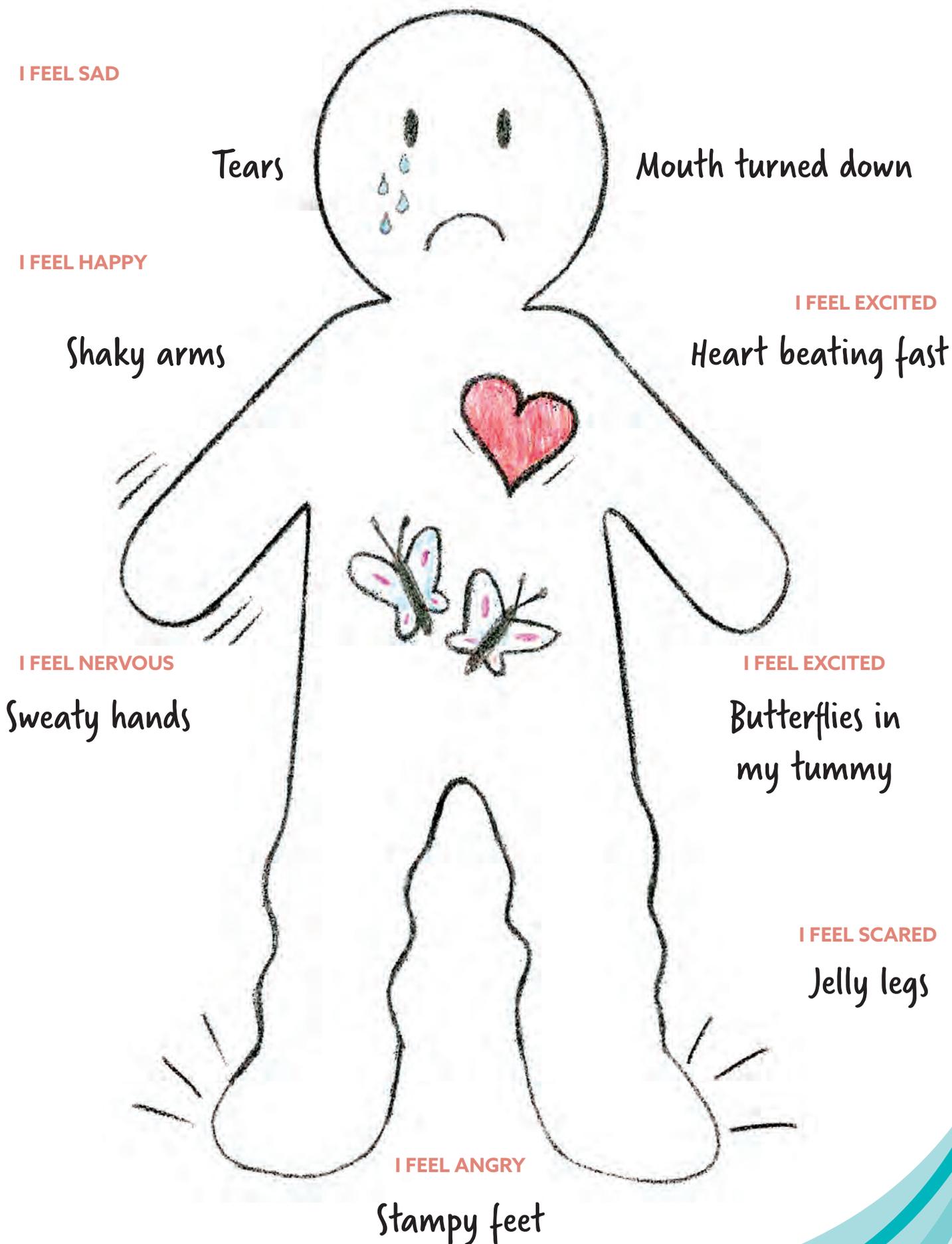
Once you have discussed these emotions you and your child can draw or write these emotions and body feelings onto your pictures of you.

If there are times when your child experiences a different emotion that they haven't had before or a body feeling that they experience with it, go back and add it together with the others, recapping about what you learnt together before.



For example,
when you're sad
you have tears

When you're
excited or nervous
you have butterflies
in your tummy



Looking after you

1,440 minutes a day... 10,080 a week... Can you find 10 minutes for you?





Successful Communication



Talking to children
Hearing your child
Family bonding
Effective communication
Worry stones

A family resource

Separation is usually emotionally difficult for parents and for children, but being able to listen well to your child might be the key to helping them - and you

However hard you try, it is very likely that your child will pick up your anxious, distressed or negative feelings. These feelings can get in the way of listening, but only by listening well and openly to them can you find out what is actually worrying your child.

What can help you is to develop your emotional 'readiness'- to really listen and respond. This means acknowledging your own feelings, and any negative thoughts about the other parent, and then being able to set them aside so that you can really listen to your child. Then you can

understand them better and respond in the ways that most help.

It's very common to feel a range of difficult feelings during a separation

It's very common to feel a range of difficult feelings during a separation and sometimes these can seem overwhelming. This section provides a range of tools that can help you to consider how to communicate these emotions effectively; how to create a safe and trusting environment that fosters effective communication; and

how to support your children in talking about how they feel.



Talking to children about domestic violence & abuse

Children can feel...

Powerless

Because they can't stop the violence

Confused

Because it doesn't make sense

Angry

Because it shouldn't be happening

Guilty

Because they think it's something they've done wrong

Sad

Because it's a loss

Afraid

Because they may be hurt, they may lose someone they love, others might find out

Alone

Because they think it's only happening to them

What children need to hear about domestic violence...

It's not okay

It's not your fault

It must be scary for you

I will listen to you

You can tell me how you feel

I'm sorry you had to see/hear it

You do not deserve to have this in your family

I will help you stay safe

There is nothing you could have done to change/prevent it

We will talk about what to do to keep you safe if it happens again

How to talk about your former partner...

Speak about your former partner in a general way

Try and avoid 'name calling'

Challenge behaviour, not the person

Your child may still love the abusive parent and may be confused by feeling this way.

This may be hard for you! But it will really help your child if she/he is able to express these feelings

Ideas for helping children when they have witnessed DV...

Talk about it with them when they're ready

Listen to them

Talk about their feelings

Show understanding

Let them know violence is not okay

Take them to counselling if they need it

Let them be children and try and share your own worries with another adult

Talking to children about domestic violence & abuse

How denial can affect children...

- Child learns that violence is normal
- Child is afraid to talk about the violence
- Child is confused, doesn't understand
- Child blames her/himself
- Child learns to deny and not to talk about their feelings
- Makes them feel like they are crazy
- Makes them feel lonely, isolated from their friends
- Child learns it's not okay to ask about the violence or discuss it
- Gives children unrealistic beliefs about the causes of violence
- Remember: it's a lot scarier for children when no one ever talks about the violence**

Examples of ways of overcoming obstacles...

- Be patient. Don't push it. Try another time. They usually hear you anyway
- Acknowledge that it may be uncomfortable for you to talk about the violence. Try to get more comfortable by talking to someone you trust
- Acknowledge that it may be scary for you to remember the violence. It's scary for your kids too. Once you start talking, it may feel less scary.
- Acknowledge that saying that you don't have time is probably because it is difficult, or you don't feel capable of talking to your child about it.
- Acknowledge that it may be uncomfortable for you to talk about the violence**

Hearing your child's voice and listening

Children interpret situations differently. When parents separate, the way a child understands and processes this might be very different to what is actually happening or has happened. It is important that any child or children are listened to and heard by their parents.

Here are some comments from children who have experienced separation and how it was for them.

"I wish that my parents would stop shouting at each other, I try and tell them but they don't care or listen to me! It's not like it was before, I wish we could go back in time!"

"Mummy's always asking about Daddy's new girlfriend. I don't want to lie to her but Daddy says not to tell her."

"Dad says Mum doesn't want to see me and I don't know why..."

"I'm scared that if Mum takes us away we won't get to see Dad again. She keeps saying that he isn't good enough to look after us but I know that he is. It makes me want to leave."

"I know that my Dads both love me but I wish they would stop asking me who I love the most."

"They said that I had to live with Grandma and Grandpa for a while. Now Mum says I have to come home but Granddad won't let me."

Family bonding time

These activities are designed to encourage children and families to have fun together and help foster a safe and trusting environment. In turn, this will help to encourage open and effective communication. These activities should be a fun, happy time in which the child feels safe. There should be lots of positive encouragement, to help boost a child's confidence and self esteem.

These can be used with children of all ages and adults too.

They are meant to be silly!

They are meant to be fun, NOT stressful. If things are getting out of hand or too stressful. Stop. Try again another time.

Dancing

Pick a lively song and jump and dance around the room for 5 minutes. Ensure it is just one song, so no one gets too over excited!

Mask Making

Grab an old box and cut out some eye holes, then decorate.

Make a Pizza

Get together and make a pizza, using all your favourite ingredients (and maybe experiment with some unusual ones. Baked Beans? Tuna?)

Family Film Night

Pick a film suitable for everyone, make some popcorn, sit on the sofa and share.



Treasure Hunt

Draw a map, either of the garden or local park or similar. Decide what you are going to search for and how many. (e.g. 6 loud noises, 3 birds sitting on a wire, 3 pretty leaves) Then go out, enjoy the fresh air and work as a team to find the items on your list.



Car Journey

If you are going on a journey in the car, work as a team to spot as many 'pre-decided things' as you can. Ideas might be to see how many yellow cars you can spot. Or 'For Sale signs', people walking dogs, so on.

Appreciation Notes

Leave notes around the house for each other to find, reminding each other what their special qualities are. (Betty, you have done so well in your exams, I am so proud of you.)

Family Painting

Get a big canvas, piece of paper or cardboard and get creative. Everyone adding to the picture. You can make it abstract or maybe a picture of the whole family (stick figures are fine if none of you want to draw.) You could then write on all the brilliant qualities each of you have.

Tips for communicating effectively

Being able to make effective plans for your children with their other parent relies on good communication. Thinking about these skills might help:

Stay calm

- ✓ Relax your shoulders
- ✓ Breathe through your diaphragm rather than shallowly through your chest
- ✓ Take deep breaths and deliberately breathe more slowly

Learn to listen

- ✓ Try to focus, so your attention isn't divided
- ✓ Take a position of curiosity: you might be surprised or wrong about what you expect to hear
- ✓ Only listen: if you're talking it means you can't be listening - you can't do both at once!
- ✓ Take your turn to talk after you've listened: you are more likely to be listened to if you've listened well yourself
- ✓ Leave pauses to allow the other person to speak

Be clear & polite

- ✓ Make requests simple and clear
- ✓ Observe simple rules of courtesy (be business-like)
- ✓ Think about the most important point. Stick to that point - take one thing at a time
- ✓ Make sure you have the background information you need and reflect on what might work for you and the children

Speak for yourself using "I" statements

- ✓ Phrase things in a way that is about what you think or have noted or want, not what you assume or know the other person does! For example:

"I get angry when you ask me about money in front of the children"

Rather than...

"You always try to stir things up by asking about money. You know I hate it!"

Family activity: Worry stones

Worry Stones

Worry stones are ideal for children and young people who are 'bottling up' their feelings or becoming preoccupied with worries and issues. It gives them a chance to take the worry 'out of their head' and put it onto something else. Lots of children find this is useful, as it means they can think about the worries individually and not feel swamped down by them.

What you need:

- ✓ 5 nice stones or pebbles
- ✓ A small bag or box that the stones fit into
- ✓ Permanent pens if you want to decorate them

How to...

Take a family trip to the seaside and start exploring! Encourage your children to pick out stones big enough to hold comfortably in their hand but not too big they are heavy or too small (they'll get lost!)

Discuss the worry stones with your child. The idea is to place one worry on each stone - it's not a problem if they don't have enough worries! If there are more worries than stones, ask them to pick out the most pressing worries.

Your child can then put the worries on the stones any way that they want. Many children hold them in their hands whilst thinking about the worry, some children put them against their heads and 'will' the worry into them. Another option is to use the permanent pens to decorate the stones.

Once the worry is in the stone, put the stones in the bag or box. Explain that then they must not be disturbed (i.e. the child must not think about the worry).

Pick a 10 minute slot when the worries can come out of the bag and the worries can be thought about again. This is called 'Worry Time'. When the time is up, they must go back in the bag/box. Repeat this on a regular basis.



Top Tips

- It is important not to question what your child's worries are if they aren't forthcoming in telling you or if they tell you and they seem trivial. Don't challenge this
- Remember that it is not necessary for your child to share the worry with you



Safety



In safe hands
Safety check-list
Safe handovers
Friendly forest
Contact plans
Safety rainbow

A family resource

Activity: In safe hands

In safe hands

This activity is designed to help children and young people identify who they can go to for support. It encourages them to explore their own safety network and ensures they are aware that there are people who are able to help them when they need it.

What you need:

- ✓ Paper & Pens
- ✓ Or shrink plastic and permanent markers

What do you do?

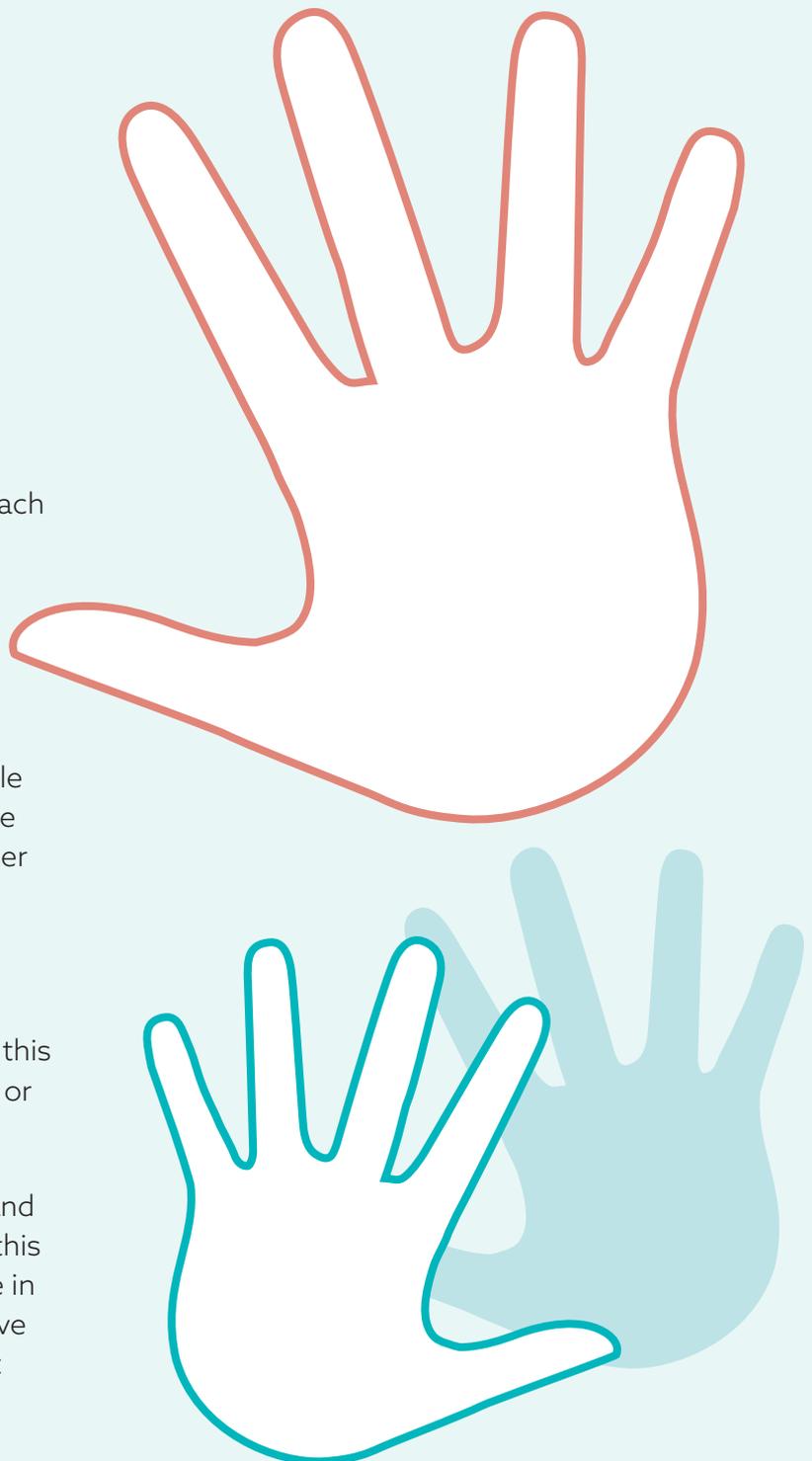
Draw around your child's hand and cut it out.

Think about other adults your child can approach to access support and discuss this with your child. If you find it difficult, ask questions – Who would you go to if you were sick? Who would you go to if you were lost?

Gradually ask the most appropriate questions for your child's situation to ensure they are able to identify the most appropriate people. These might be a social worker, 999 for police, teacher in school, so on.

Write a person's name on each finger of the drawn hand. If there is someone on the hand who is very special then they could also mark this in some way (by drawing a ring on that finger, or colouring that finger nail in a different colour).

Then encourage your child to decorate the hand in any which way they like. If you have drawn this on shrink plastic, before you shrink, put a hole in it so you could turn it into a key ring. If you have drawn it on paper, find a special place to put it where your child can regularly see it.



Safety check list

Our Family Safety Check List

In our family we help each other to stay safe. We listen to each other and we work as a team. We know that it isn't our fault. We will keep this plan up-to-date and in a safe place.

In our family, we have a special safety word. We use this word to tell each other we are worried or scared and need to talk. It is...

When we hear our safety word we....

Places where we are safe at home...

Places where we are safe outside of home...

Adults who can help me feel safe...

Things I know...

This is not my fault

Lots of people love and care for me

The number for the police in an emergency is **999**

Safe handovers

A handover book is a diary used to communicate with your child's other parent about your child. It can be an easy way to ease communication between the two of you. The diary can be swapped back and forth at the time of handover and include all the parenting issues that need communicating.

This can include food, sleep, bedtime, late nights, doctor's appointments, good moods, bad moods, homework to be completed, lost socks, anything that may be relevant to the two of you. You can also include the date, time and handover place for next time.

Think about how you word things, and try to avoid accusations or hostility. For example, "Sarah was upset about missing her friend's party... Let me know when and where and I'll be glad to take her next time" instead of "don't arrange for her to go to parties when I have contact".

or...

"Sarah seemed upset with me at first but eventually we had a great time, please can you encourage her about the handover? We are going to the zoo next time, I'm sure she will enjoy it" instead of "Stop turning the kids against me".

Remember that the handover book could easily be picked up and read by the child/children so don't write negative comments or use it to abuse the other parent. Furthermore, should contact and communication break down and become a legal process documents like a handover book/ emails/text messages all become evidence so think carefully about your content.

Saturday 28 March

Sarah seemed upset with me at first but eventually we had a great time.

Please can you encourage her about the handover. We are going to the zoo next time. I'm sure she will enjoy it.

Follow these steps to ensure a safe handover:



Friendly forest

Ensuring children do not feel isolated is the key to building resilience when a child has experienced a difficult event or situation. The best way of identifying a good support network is by exploring who the child feels they can turn to and encouraging them to identify safe people they can trust.

This activity is designed to help your child explore who they feel they can talk to or gain support from. The aim is to identify different types of support from different places.

What you need:

- ✓ Worksheet or Paper
- ✓ Pens, crayons, paints, scissors, glue

What do you do?

Discuss with your child who would be a good person in a support network - someone the child trusts, someone who is kind, doesn't make them feel worried or scared. You could ask:

Who would you go to if you were worried or scared, sad or hurt?

How would that person make you feel better?

You can use the worksheet opposite this page or draw your own tree:

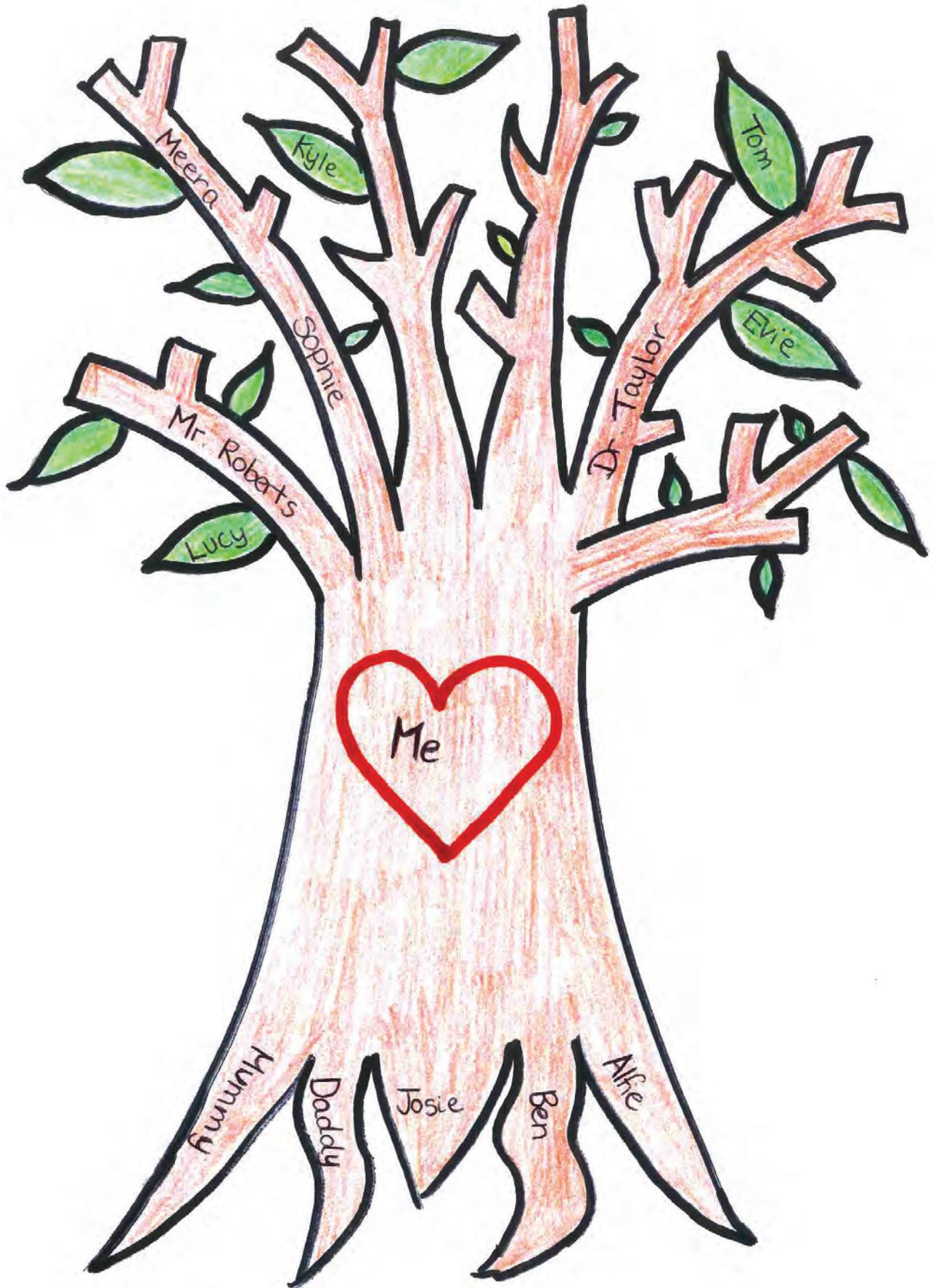
- 1 The roots of the tree are for the child to identify their family
- 2 The trunk can be a space where the child write their own name
- 3 The branches are people who help support the child and family - teachers, social workers, doctors, and nurses for example
- 4 The leaves are then a place for the child to write the people they love and want to include, for example, friends at school



Activity:
Friendly forest



Activity: Friendly forest



Contact plans

When your children are at contact with an abusive parent, this can be a difficult time for you. If you are going through the courts for contact, you can be supported to protect your children by asking your solicitor to arrange a **contact contract** that can be put to the judge to approve, along with the contact order.

However, if you choose not to follow this route there are other options to consider. You and your child's other parent could decide to create a **contact plan**, which outlines both your plans for child contact. A **contact plan** enables you to ask for specific things to happen or not happen, and ensure that your children are safe and well during contact.

How to:

Think about specific things that your child's other parent may do which would cause harm or upset

Make a list of these things to discuss at an agreed time away from the child

The plan should have very specific arrangements around the dates, times and location of contact and arrangements for the safe transfer of your children. If you do not feel afraid or threatened, you may be able to manage the handover yourself. However, if you are afraid or threatened by your former partner, ask a trusted family member or friend to transfer your children to their other parent

The plan can state, for example, that your children are to remain with their other parent throughout the contact period and not be left with others

At any time you can ask for any others to be added but try and remember that requests should be reasonable. A good contract is well balanced and primarily considers the needs of the children.

Once things have been agreed, it is important for your children that all adults involved follow the same plan.

Try and make the experience for your children as positive as possible. It might be hard, but remember there is support out there if you need it. We've listed a number of organisations at the back of this toolkit that can provide emotional and practical support around child contact if you're finding it difficult

Contact plans

Another thing you can put in place for your children when they are at contact is a **Contact Safety Plan**. This is similar to the **Family Safety Checklist on page 31** but is specifically for your children whilst they are at contact with their other parent. Your Contact Safety Plan could include:

Information about how your children should respond if their other parent asks questions about you. For example, *'please don't ask me questions about my Mum/Dad. It makes me uncomfortable'*.

Make a plan for calling you or another family member who can help if your children feel unsafe. They should know how to use a phone and how to make reverse charge calls if necessary.

Teach your children to call **999** in an emergency and how to recognise when they need to call **999**.

If you have more than one child, you can discuss with them how to keep each other safe.

You should explain to your children that you are not making them take sides when they call you if they feel upset.

Clearly explain to your children the time and arrangements for contact. Remind them that there will be different rules at different houses, for example 'at mummy's house you are allowed to eat sweets but at daddy's house you are not' or 'at daddy's house you are allowed to watch television until 9pm, but at mummy's house you are only allowed to watch television until 8pm. Explain to your children that the rules are different in lots of different places, just like their best friend will have different rules in their house, school will have different rules, Grandma will have different rules, etc.

Activity: Safety rainbow

Safety Rainbow

This activity is designed to allow children to evaluate how safe they feel, whilst ensuring that parents have an understanding of any concerns their child may have.

What you need:

- ✓ The Rainbow Dial
(it might be easier to photocopy the dial and laminate it so it can be reused)
- ✓ Split pin
- ✓ Scissors

What do you do?

Cut out the arrow and attach to the Rainbow Dial using a split pin. The arrow should be able to move to point to each number.

Discuss with your child the statements to the right and ask them to evaluate where they would point the arrow on the rainbow (1 disagrees and 10 strongly agrees).

Try not to refer to the numbers as 'scores' as your child might try and get a 'better score' by minimising any concerns.

Discuss with your child what they feel needs to happen to move closer towards the sunshine.

Evaluation Statements

I feel safe at home

I know how to keep myself safe

I feel safe when I have contact with my non-resident parent

I like School

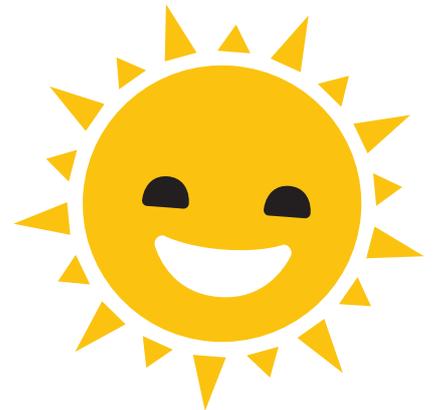
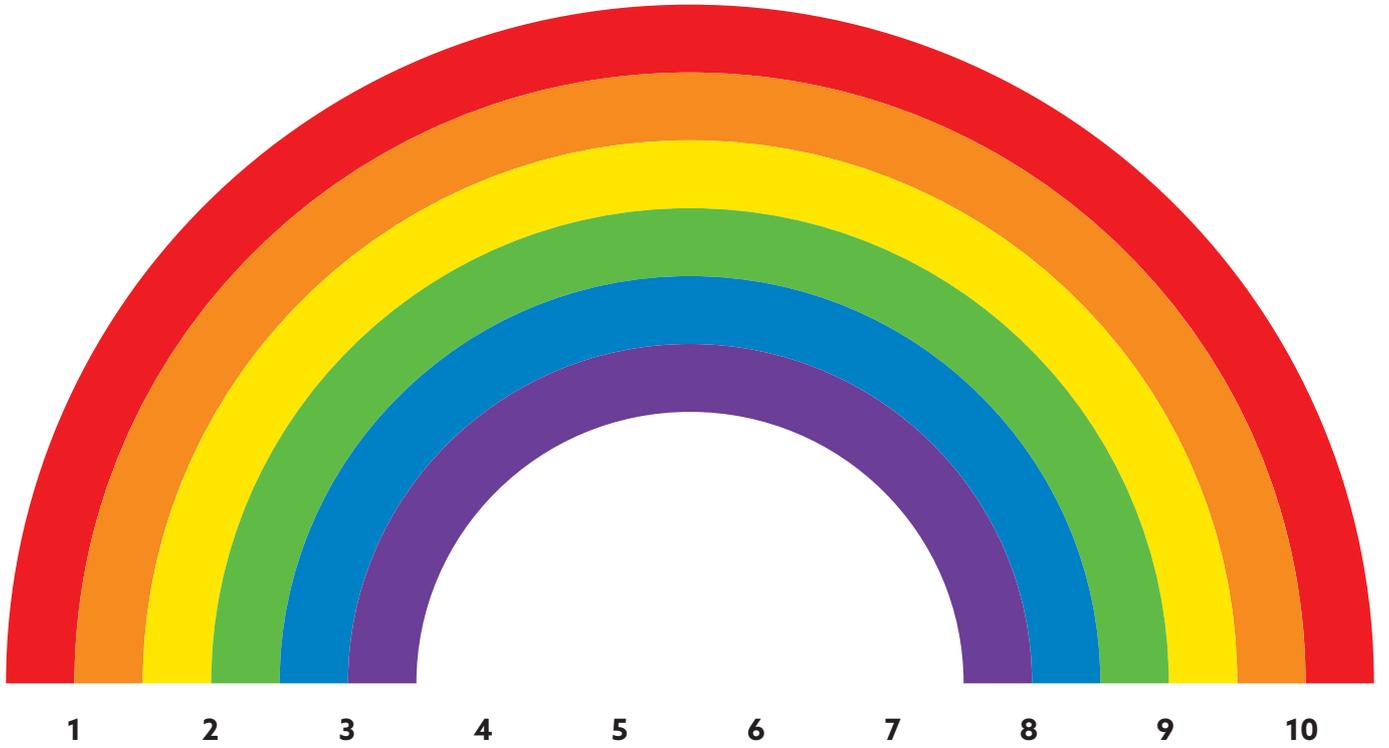
I have a good support network

I feel confident

I can manage my emotions positively

I am sometimes mean to others

Activity:
Safety rainbow





Looking Legally...



Parental responsibility
Legal Aid
The law
Templates
Mediation
Arrangements

A family resource

Over the next few pages we have tried to explain some of the most common legal terms and jargon that you may come across in relation to making contact arrangements.

Parental Responsibility

A person who has Parental Responsibility has the authority and legal duty to make decisions about the care and upbringing of their child. This includes providing a home for your child and protecting and maintaining their welfare. When decisions need to be made concerning a child, all parents with Parental Responsibility are allowed to have a say in that decision.

Parental responsibility includes providing a home for your child and protecting and maintaining their welfare

Having Parental Responsibility does not give a parent the automatic right to contact. Mothers have automatic Parental Responsibility as do married fathers. Unmarried fathers who are not on a birth certificate do not have automatic Parental Responsibility.



Legal aid can help meet the costs of legal advice (including speaking to a solicitor; having them write a letter on your behalf; family mediation; and representation in a court).

This funding can only be accessed for some types of cases, but it does include forced marriage, domestic violence and child abuse proceedings. Evidence of the abuse would need to be provided, but can include any relevant criminal convictions; a letter from the MARAC, if you were deemed high risk; a letter from a health practitioner; or a letter from a supporting organisation. Legal aid is means tested and evidence regarding your financial situation would be needed, to assess whether you meet the legal aid criteria. This could include details of income, benefits, savings and assets (including the value of any property owned).

Not all solicitors offer legal aid so it is worth enquiring amongst different firms. Once you have found a solicitor that does offer legal aid

an appointment is made to fill in the application form, backed with supporting evidence. The solicitor will then send this to the Legal Aid Agency who will process the application and make a decision concerning eligibility. This can take up to four weeks, but may take longer to process. If an application is needed as an emergency, this can be processed within 2-3 days, but again can take longer.

It is important to note that it is not essential to be represented by a solicitor and many people choose to represent themselves, as a litigant in person. The court should give consideration and guidance to enable you to represent yourself. If represented by a solicitor, it is also important to remember that they are acting on your behalf and taking instructions from you.

Funding can only be accessed for some types of cases

Civil law deals in all matters of law that are not criminal, including family law. A survivor of domestic violence can make an application for an injunction (a court order) either to the Family Proceedings Court or the County Court (usually through a solicitor). Other family proceedings (such as child contact or divorce) also take place in the County Court. Civil Courts reach decisions on a balance of probability rather than the evidence being beyond all reasonable doubt.

Non-Molestation Order

A Non-Molestation Order is obtained through the Civil Court and stops a person 'associated' with the victim from using or threatening violence against you and your child, or intimidating, harassing or pestering you. This could, for example, include prohibiting the other person from communicating with you, coming within a set distance (normally 100 meters) of your property, place of work or children's school. Each Order is unique and will take into consideration your individual circumstances. Non-Molestation Orders have the power of arrest, which means a proven breach is a criminal offence and the offender could be brought to court and punished through the criminal justice system. A breach of the Order could also be seen as a contempt of court and dealt with before the Civil Court.

Each Order is unique and will take into consideration your individual circumstances

If you need an emergency Non-Molestation Order, you can apply for it "ex-parte" (meaning without notice). This is helpful if you need immediate protection. An application would need to be made to the court and a date would be set to attend without the other party being present. It is possible to get a hearing within 1-2 days when an emergency application is made. Emergency orders can be granted for up to 28 days. At the initial hearing another date would be set to return to court to enable the other party to attend and be given the opportunity to defend the allegations.

The duration of a Non-Molestation Order can be varying depending on the individual circumstances. Normally they last for 12 months but can last for longer.

Occupation Order

An Occupation Order regulates who can live in the family home or can enter the surrounding area. If an Occupation Order is granted the respondent is required to vacate the property within 48 hours, or sooner. Having left the accommodation they are not permitted to return to the property or attempt to enter the

property to enable the peaceful occupation of whoever has residency. Breach of an Occupation Order would be seen as contempt of court and would be dealt with before the Civil Court and could face up to a 2 years' imprisonment.

Child Arrangements Order

The Children Act 1989 includes a Child Arrangements Order, Prohibitive Steps Order and Specific Issue Order. The welfare of any child/children of the proceedings is paramount when making an Order. Areas of dispute to be addressed could include where the child lives, what contact time is spent with the other parent and what types of contact can take place

(such as supervised, direct or indirect contact). The Court will try and reach agreements of all the parties, through assistance and guidance from the court and their advisors. However, if both parties are unable to reach a mutually agreed arrangement then the Court will make an Order as it sees appropriate.

A Specific Issue Order

An Order used to look at a specific question about how the child is being brought up, for example: what school they go to, if they should have a religious education and any other specific issue that is in dispute.

Prohibited Steps Order

This prevents another person (for example your ex partner) from doing a certain action, such as leaving the country with your child

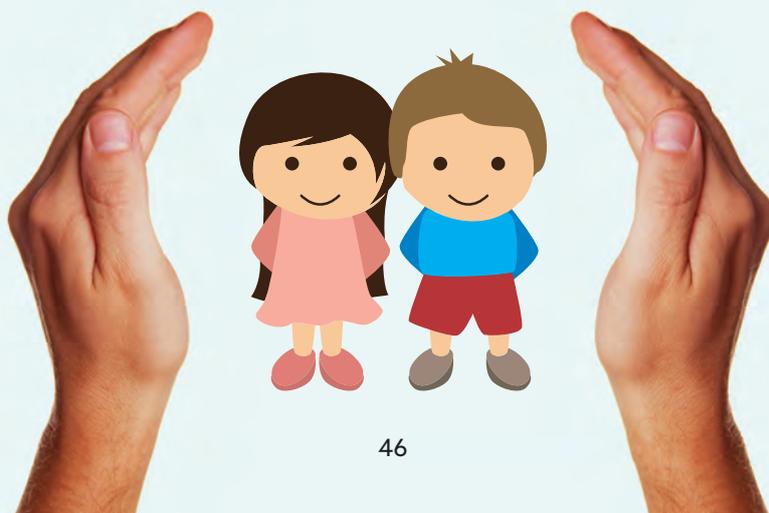
Should someone commit a criminal offence, the case should be investigated by the police and, if there is enough evidence, the Crown Prosecution Service will bring the case to Criminal Court. Many cases will remain in the Magistrates Court, but more serious ones will be held at the **Crown Court**.

Restraining Order

A Restraining Order can be imposed by the Magistrates or by a Judge in criminal proceedings when it is believed that the victim needs the court's protection. Similar to the Non-Molestation Order, it can prevent a person from harassing another person – by phone, text, email, post, social media, attending specific areas and contacting the other person. This Order does not cost the victim anything, but the wishes for one need to be passed onto the Officer in the case who will inform the Crown Prosecution Service to ask for such an Order.

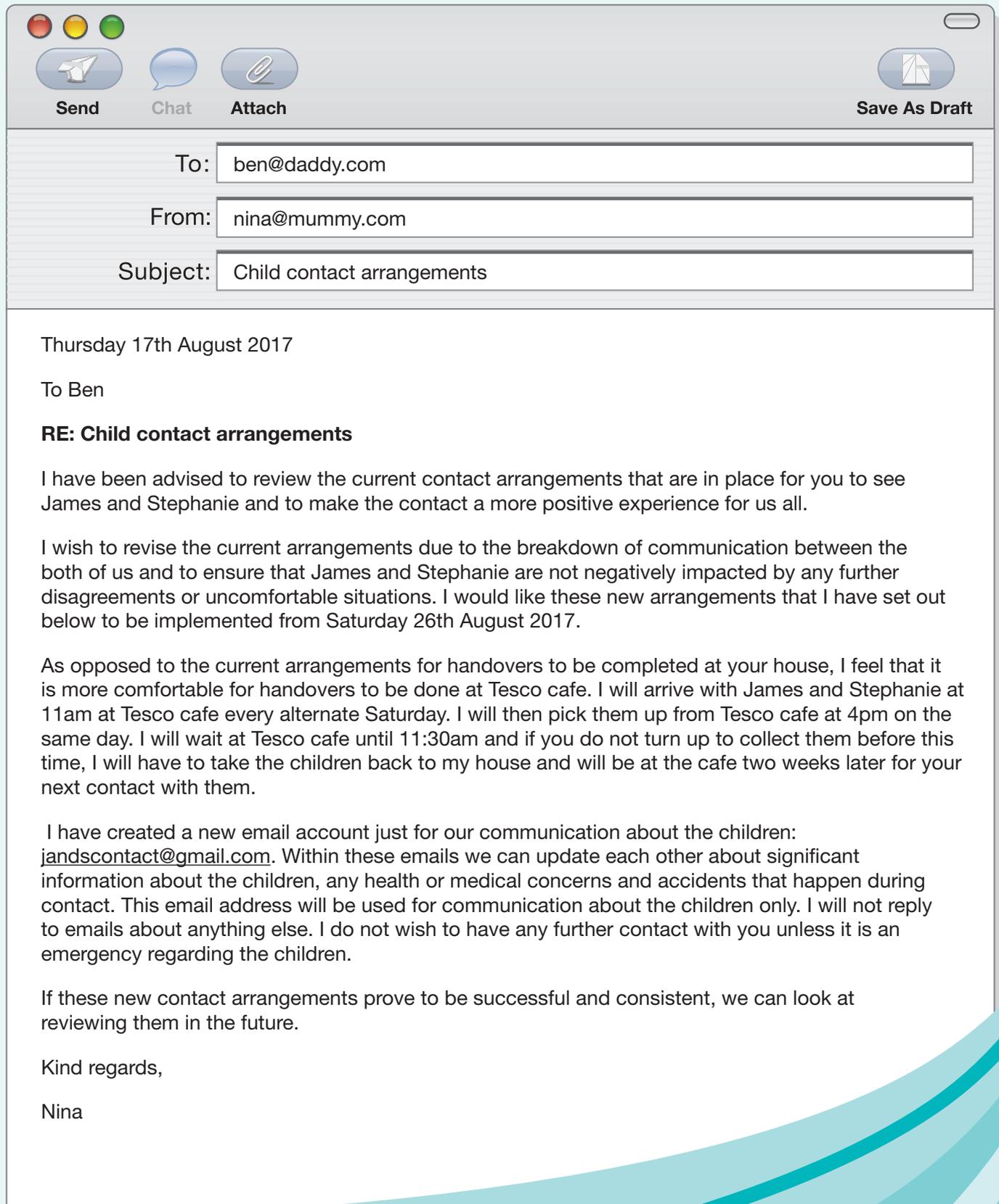
Imposed by
the Magistrates
or by a Judge when
it is believed that the
victim needs the
court's protection

A Restraining Order can be imposed through the Criminal Court by the Magistrates or by a Judge in the Crown Court. This Order prevents a person associated with the victim from using or threatening violence against you and your child, or intimidating, harassing or pestering you. This could for example include prohibiting the other person from communicating with you, coming within a set distance (normally 100 meters) of your property, place of work or children's school. Each order is unique and will take into consideration your individual circumstances. A proven breach of a Restraining Order is an arrestable offense and the offender could be brought to court and punished through the criminal justice system.



Templates

This is a draft email that can be used as a template to help establish child contact arrangements, following a breakdown of communication between you and your partner.



The image shows a screenshot of an email client interface. At the top, there are three buttons: 'Send' (with a paper plane icon), 'Chat' (with a speech bubble icon), and 'Attach' (with a paperclip icon). On the right side, there is a 'Save As Draft' button (with a document icon). Below these buttons, the email header fields are filled out: 'To: ben@daddy.com', 'From: nina@mummy.com', and 'Subject: Child contact arrangements'. The main body of the email contains the following text:

Thursday 17th August 2017

To Ben

RE: Child contact arrangements

I have been advised to review the current contact arrangements that are in place for you to see James and Stephanie and to make the contact a more positive experience for us all.

I wish to revise the current arrangements due to the breakdown of communication between the both of us and to ensure that James and Stephanie are not negatively impacted by any further disagreements or uncomfortable situations. I would like these new arrangements that I have set out below to be implemented from Saturday 26th August 2017.

As opposed to the current arrangements for handovers to be completed at your house, I feel that it is more comfortable for handovers to be done at Tesco cafe. I will arrive with James and Stephanie at 11am at Tesco cafe every alternate Saturday. I will then pick them up from Tesco cafe at 4pm on the same day. I will wait at Tesco cafe until 11:30am and if you do not turn up to collect them before this time, I will have to take the children back to my house and will be at the cafe two weeks later for your next contact with them.

I have created a new email account just for our communication about the children: jandscontact@gmail.com. Within these emails we can update each other about significant information about the children, any health or medical concerns and accidents that happen during contact. This email address will be used for communication about the children only. I will not reply to emails about anything else. I do not wish to have any further contact with you unless it is an emergency regarding the children.

If these new contact arrangements prove to be successful and consistent, we can look at reviewing them in the future.

Kind regards,

Nina

This is a draft separation and parenting agreement that should be agreed and signed by both parties (you and your former partner). This agreement sets out agreements made by both parties in regards to resolving outstanding parenting agreements. This is not a legally binding document, however it is a useful draft document that can be modified and used by both you and your former partner in order to set out clear and formal arrangements.

EXAMPLE

Separation and Parenting Agreement

For: **Billy Martin Smith (Son)**

Agreed on

Between

Nina Sally Farley

(Mother)

and

Ben Paul Smith

(Father)

EXAMPLE

Deed of Separation and Parenting Agreement

Dated

This deed of agreement is made between:

- (1) **Nina Sally Farley** (mother) of 5 Riverlane Road, Exeter, EX1 1TW
and
- (2) **Ben Paul Smith** (father) of 79 Bird Close, Exeter, EX5 7HQ
and
- (3) in respect of **Billy Martin Smith** (son)

INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this agreement is also to finalise our arrangements for the parenting of our son Billy Smith going forward. This agreement aims to benefit Billy over his childhood and enables him to be close to both Nina Farley and Ben Smith.

1. PARENTING AND CARE ARRANGEMENTS

- a. *Outline here who your child/ren will live with and where your child/ren will live.*

EXAMPLE: Billy Smith will reside with his mother, Nina Farley at 5 Riverlane Road, Exeter, EX1 1TW.

- b. *Outline here what days and time your child/ren will see their non-resident parent, the location of contact, any pick up/drop off details, when the agreements will begin, any phone call contact arrangements and any other relevant information.*

EXAMPLE: Billy Smith will have contact with his father Ben Smith every Wednesday overnight and every alternate Saturday (from 11.00am - 4.00pm).

Billy Smith will be collected from his school by his father Ben Smith at 3:30pm every Wednesday and Billy will stay for the night at Ben's house 79 Bird Close, Exeter, EX5 7HQ. Billy Smith will then be dropped at school every Thursday at 8:30am by Ben Smith.

Billy Smith will be taken to Tesco cafe by his mother Nina Farley and collected from Tesco cafe every alternate Saturday at 11:00am by his father Ben Smith. Billy Smith will be taken to Tesco cafe by Ben Smith every alternate Saturday at 4:00pm and collected at this time by his mother Nina Farley.

In addition to the above Ben Smith will telephone Billy Smith every Monday evening at 6:00pm to enhance indirect contact.

EXAMPLE continued

If the father Ben Smith is unable to make any of the days that he is due to have contact with Billy he must contact the mother Nina Farley at the earliest possible opportunity.

These agreements will begin on Saturday 19th August 2017.

- c. *Outline here other people who may look after your child/ren.*

EXAMPLE: The names of others who routinely look after our son Billy Smith include maternal grandparents, mothers of Billy's school friends any anyone else whom the parties agree in writing as suitable or who have good knowledge of Billy and his needs.

- d. *Outline here what the arrangements are when a parent is ill and cannot care for your child/ren.*

EXAMPLE: If a parent is ill and cannot care for Billy the parties will advise the other party and if they are able to assist they will. If they are unable to assist then the parent who is ill can seek assistance from another person of which both parties agree to.

- e. *Outline here what will be communicated between you and your ex partner and how this will be communicated.*

EXAMPLE: Each party will communicate important school/educational information, social event, achievements and any health or medical concerns of Billy. Communication between Mother Nina Farley and Ben Smith will be made via telephone or SMS.

Mediation

Family mediation is a very common way of settling differences during and after separation or divorce. A trained mediator will help you and the other parent or carer agree on arrangements for looking after your children.

A mediator is a qualified independent person who will not take sides or try to get you back together. Mediation can help you and the other parent or carer to agree arrangements for your children by talking things through. A mediator will not tell you what to do but can help you and the other parent or carer to make agreements that are best for your children.

A trained mediator helps you and the other person to talk about the things you cannot agree on between yourselves. The mediator will help you both see if there is any way that you could agree with each other.

A mediator is a qualified independent person who will not take sides or try to get you back together

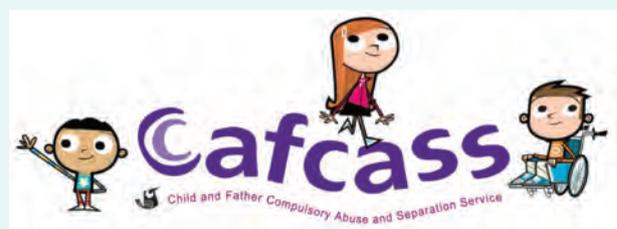
Not all cases are suitable for mediation, especially if there has been violence in the relationship or there are other serious welfare concerns. The mediator will be able to help you decide if your circumstances are suitable for mediation and will not start mediation if they think it is not appropriate.

There is a fee for mediation but you may be able to get legal aid to help pay for it. For more information on

legal aid, visit <https://www.gov.uk/legal-aid>. To find your nearest family mediator, visit <https://www.familymediationcouncil.org.uk/find-local-mediator/>

Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS)

CAFCASS represent children in family court proceedings and make sure that the children's voices are heard and decisions taken in their best interest. CAFCASS is independent of the courts, social service, education and health authorities. They will only become involved in a case at the request of the court, if for example both parties cannot agree or there are child safeguarding concerns. If the court instructs CAFCASS you would be assigned a CAFCASS Officer who will make contact with both parents individually to discuss the children and any issues.



Arrangements

Family-based arrangements are child maintenance arrangements which parents have agreed between themselves. Sometimes these are referred to as family arrangements, voluntary arrangements or private agreements.

More than half a million children in Great Britain benefit from this type of child maintenance arrangements.

Many parents think this type of arrangement is a better option for them and their children because it allows flexibility in what a family-based arrangement contains and no-one else has to get involved.

There are several advantages to family-based arrangements:

- » They are private and are tailored to your family's situation
- » They can be quick and easy to sort out
- » There are no fixed rules so they are flexible and easy to change if both parents agree

Unlike some other child arrangements, a family-based arrangement is completely free to set up.

You decide for yourself how to both support your child

Family-based arrangements allow you and the other parent to decide between yourselves when and how you will both support your child. This can mean fewer arguments about money, and may also help you work together in other ways, which is usually in the children's best interest.

With a family-based arrangement, you and the other parent can decide between yourselves how and when you will both support your child.

For example, you could both agree that the paying parent pays:

- » A fixed regular amount
- » A larger 'lump sum' at various points in the child's life
- » A proportion of their earnings
- » Directly for items such as school uniforms or day trips
- » A mix of some or all of the above



Agreeing child maintenance amounts

If you decide that fixed regular payments would work best for you and the other parent, then the next step is to agree on an actual amount.

Some parents find that the easiest way to do this is to see what their payments would be if they used a statutory child maintenance service. They then use this amount as a starting point for their family-based arrangement.

You can get an idea of what this amount would be using the Child Maintenance Calculator. This can be found on the website listed below.

Once you've agreed an amount, you'll then need to think about how payments will be made. For more help with this, read about the different ways to pay child maintenance.

Paying for things for the children

Many separated parents have a family-based arrangement which states that the paying parent buys specific items for their child, instead of paying money.

For example, you could agree that the parent expected to pay child maintenance pays for clothes, toys, school uniforms or activities such as swimming lessons.

Or, you could decide that the paying parent makes a contribution towards the mortgage or bills for the house where your child lives.

Sharing the care of your children

A family-based child maintenance arrangement doesn't have to just mean one parent paying money to the other. You could decide to share the care of your child- for example, they could stay with the paying parent during the school holidays or a couple of nights a week.

It's all about what you can both agree works best for you.

For more information, please visit Child Maintenance Options at
<https://www.cmoptions.org/index.asp>

Dear Mum,



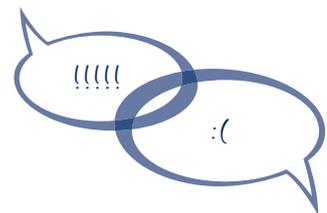
Please help me to love myself. Don't spoil me. I know quite well that I shouldn't have all that I ask for, I'm only testing you - but please give me the discipline I need!

I need my sense of dignity, so please don't belittle me in front of people. I'll take more notice if you talk to me with as much respect as you give to your best grown up friends.

Don't ridicule me or imply that my inappropriate behaviour means that I am bad. It erodes my sense of worthiness.



Don't be too upset when sometimes I say I hate you'. It isn't you I hate but your power over me.



Please be patient with me, I may be a late bloomer.

When you have a bad day, please don't take your frustrations out on me.

Please don't shout or nag. If you do I shall have to protect myself by appearing to be deaf. Please help me feel good about myself by telling me of the good things about myself more often than you tell me of the things you don't like.

Don't bribe me or make rash promises. Remember that I feel badly let down when promises are broken.

The more you give me the safety to expose my true feelings, the more of my inner beauty I will risk showing.

Don't be inconsistent. That completely confuses me and makes me lose faith in you.

Don't tell me my fears are silly. They are terribly real and you can do much to reassure me if you try to understand. Don't ever think that it is beneath your dignity to apologize to me. An honest apology makes me feel surprisingly warm towards you.

Please praise and acknowledge me for who I am and not for the things I do, for then I will grow up without the stress of comparing and competing.

Please keep reminding me that I am basically good and capable and worthwhile, so I can grow up loving and accepting myself.

Don't forget that I can't thrive without a lot of love and understanding... But I don't need to tell you, do I?



Supporting Helplines & Websites

Child Law Advice,
operated by Coram Children's Legal Centre
Providing specialist advice and information on child, family and education law to parents, carers and young people.

<http://childlawadvice.org.uk/>
0300 330 5480

Opening Times:
Monday - Friday, 8.00am - 6.00pm

Citizen's Advice
Providing free, confidential and independent advice to help people overcome their problems. Find your local Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) online.

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>
0300 330 9026

Opening Times:
Monday - Friday: 10.00am - 4.00pm

Childline
Providing phone support for children and young people

www.childline.org.uk
0800 1111

Opening Times: Daily, open 24 hours a day

Child maintenance service
Support around child maintenance
<https://childmaintenanceservice.direct.gov.uk/public/>
0345 266 8792

Gingerbread

Single parent's helpline - support with all aspects of single parenthood

www.gingerbread.org.uk/
0808 802 0925

Opening Times: Monday: 10.00am - 6.00pm
Tuesday, Thursday & Friday: 10.00am - 4.00pm
Wednesday: 10.00am - 1.00pm & 5.00pm-7.00pm

HomeStart South & West Devon

Helping families with young children deal with the challenges they face

<https://www.home-start.org.uk/>
01752 249740

MASH

An enquiry should be made to the MASH when you have safeguarding concerns that may require children's social care involvement

01803 208100
www.mashtorbay.gov.uk

Money Advice Service

Free and impartial money advice

<https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en>
0800 138 7777

Opening Times:
Monday - Friday: 8.00am - 8.00pm
Saturday: 9.00am - 1.00pm

continued overleaf

Further support

NSPCC

Helping children who have been abused to rebuild their lives, protect those at risk, and find the best ways of preventing abuse from ever happening

www.nspcc.org.uk/
0808 800 5000

Opening Times: Daily, open 24 hours a day

Police

Emergency: **999**

Non-emergency: **101**

The Hideout

Providing online help and support to children and young people affected by domestic abuse

www.thehideout.org.uk

Rights of Women

Providing women with the legal advice and information they need to understand and use the law and their legal rights

<http://rightsofwomen.org.uk/>
Family law: 020 7251 6577

Opening Times:

Monday - Thursday: 7.00pm - 9.00pm

Friday: 12.00pm - 2.00pm

Solicitors

Everyone is entitled to a free half an hour with a solicitor

For further advice and support please contact **Splitz Support Service (Devon)** or **North Devon Against Domestic Abuse (North Devon)**



<https://www.splitz.org/devon>

0345 155 1074

Support for adult victims of domestic abuse.
Support for children and young people aged 5-16 who have witnessed domestic abuse.
Support for young people aged 14-16 in their own abusive relationship.



<http://www.ndada.co.uk/>

01271 321 946

Support, advice and help for victims of domestic violence in North Devon.



SPLITZ
Support Service

Splitz Support Service

1st Floor, Buckland House, Pavilion 3, Park 5 Business
Centre, Harrier Way, Exeter, EX2 7HU

Tel: 0345 155 1074 Fax: 01392 368071

Enquiries: admin@splitzdevon.org

Referrals: referrals.devon@splitz.org.cjsm.net

Charity number: 1064764



Splitz Support Service does its utmost to ensure that all information is based upon accurate research and our wealth of experience. We urge users to determine the suitability of the information for individuals requirements. Please feel free to contact our fully trained and experienced staff, who are able to advise you. Splitz Support Service 2017©