

Separated Parents Factsheet

This factsheet is designed to give you an overview of the support available when you are thinking about separating, are already separated or need help to work out co-parenting issues.

The Family Information Service cannot accept any responsibility for errors or omissions in this factsheet. All information provided is for guidance only and correct to the best of our knowledge at June 2021

Telephone numbers given in this factsheet

Please note for 0845 or 0300 numbers, if you are calling from a mobile or a non-BT landline, you will be charged at the rate set by your service provider. 0800 and 0808 are designed to be a free call but again you may wish to check with your service provider.

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How to contact us

If you are looking for services for families or childcare, visit our website where you can search online www.familyinfobrighton.org.uk Follow us on Twitter <https://twitter.com/BHforFamilies> and like us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/BHFamilies/>

Need extra help?

Email familyinfo@brighton-hove.gov.uk
Telephone **01273 293545**

The Family Information Service is part of Brighton and Hove City Council's Front Door for Families providing support, advice and access to specialist targeted services for parents, carers, young people and professionals. Find out more at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/frontdoorforfamilies

Other information and publications available on our website

- Family Finance – factsheet about financial help available for families
- New to Brighton and Hove – introduction to key resources in the city
- Free childcare for 2 year olds – find out more and apply online
- Childcare funding for 3 and 4 year olds
- Bereavement
- Services for Under 5s
- Services for Young People

Before you separate

If you are having relationship problems, make sure you think carefully and seek the right support, especially if you have children. Decisions made quickly or without any help or support can have long lasting effects on everyone involved. Before making any final decisions, you should consider talking to a relationship counsellor. They are not just there to help you stay together; they can also help if you decide to separate.

For more information visit Relate at www.relate.org.uk or call **01273 697997**.

Separating

When you decide to separate, it is important that you fully understand your legal position. The government has a useful website which can be found at: www.gov.uk/looking-after-children-divorce/overview. This website explains the legal options that may be available to you. A solicitor will also be able to explain all your options and help you to find a way of separating that suits your situation. Solicitors should look at ways to minimise conflict and find the best long term solutions for you and your family.

Brighton & Hove City Council's parent relationships information

There is a wide range of useful information on this website including:

- Managing conflict
- Separated parent relationship courses
- Support for parents who are together, separated or considering separation
- Support for new or expectant parents
- Getting on better cards – relationship self-help
- Links to websites for parents and young people

<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/parent-relationships/support-parents-who-are-separated>

Triple P support for separated parents

Family Transitions Group

This is a five week group providing support and practical strategies to separated parents.

- Coping with difficult emotions
- Helping children manage and express their thoughts and feelings
- Understanding conflict and developing assertive communication
- Problem solving and parenting plans

Parents who are separated do not attend the same course. Courses run concurrently to enable parents to attend individually. Parents need to be referred by a professional to attend this course.

Partner Support Clinic

This service supports parents to enhance their teamwork as parenting partners. The sessions will cover a variety of positive communication tools, working together to problem solve and understand conflict resolution skills. Couples are offered 3 sessions together attending every other week for six weeks. Sessions are held with a Triple P trained Parenting Practitioner.

A referral must be made by a professional working with your family. Parents can also request this work when attending a Triple P information session.

For more information about Triple P support

Call: **01273 294471**. Email: triplep.parenting@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Web: www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/parentingteam

Safety concerns

If you are concerned that your children are not safe with your ex-partner or other family member, it is your responsibility to take protective action. This may include:

- Stopping your children from seeing your ex-partner, or other family members, where there is a risk to your child's safety
- Asking somebody neutral to help with handovers
- Asking for handovers to take place away from the home address
- Asking for communication to be kept to arrangements for your children
- Limiting communicating to text messages
- Using a child contact centre (which provide supervised and supported contact, there are often costs involved)

If you are considering leaving a relationship due to domestic abuse first look at the section on this website with specialist advice and support <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/parent-relationships>

When to contact the Front Door for Families (Children's Services):

If you are concerned that your child's safety is at risk and you are unable to protect them, or you need additional support or advice. Email the team at frontdoorforfamilies@brighton-hove.gov.uk or phone on 01273 290400.

**If you or your children are at immediate risk of harm,
you should always call 999.**

Parental responsibility

Parental Responsibility (PR) is defined in the Children Act 1989 (CA 89) as all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authorities which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and the child's property.

In UK law, all mothers and most fathers have legal rights and responsibilities as a parent – this is known as 'parental responsibility'. A mother automatically has parental responsibility for her child from birth. A father usually has parental responsibility if he is:

- married to the child's mother
- listed on the birth certificate (after a certain date, depending on which part of the UK the child was born in)

Unmarried partners, civil partners and non-civil partners can also acquire 'parental responsibility'. For guidance about this, please see the following website:

www.gov.uk/parental-rights-responsibilities/who-has-parental-responsibility or consult a solicitor.

It is important to know whether you have 'parental responsibility' for your child. It means that you have a right to be involved in making certain decisions around issues relating to education, religion and health and means these would need to be dealt with collaboratively.

Legal Aid

Legal aid can help pay for legal advice. You will be asked general questions about your legal problem and your income and savings.

- To check if you are eligible for legal aid: www.gov.uk/check-legal-aid

Family Law Practices

Bosley & Co., 5 Marlborough Place, Brighton, East Sussex, BN1 1UB
Tel: 01273 608181

Brighton & Hove Law, 63 Coleridge Street, Hove, BN3 5AA
Tel: 01273 205805 Email: advice@brightonandhovelaw.co.uk

Coole Bevis LLP, Lanes End House, 15 Prince Albert Street, Brighton, BN1 1HY
Tel: 01273 323321 Email: info@coolebevisllp.com

Edward Harte Solicitors, 6 Pavilion Parade, Brighton, BN2 1RA.
Tel: 01273 662750 Email: enquiries@edward-harte.co.uk
(No Legal Aid in Public Law Care Proceedings, advice provided only for Special Guardians)

Elaine Parkes Solicitors, (Hove Branch) Office 26 Curtis House, 34 Third Avenue, Hove, BN3 2PD.
Tel: 01424 883183 Email: info@elaineparkessolicitors.co.uk

Fitzhugh Gates Solicitors, (Brighton Branch) 3 Pavilion Parade, Brighton, BN2 1RY
Tel: 01273 686811

Griffith Smith Solicitors, 47 Old Steine, Brighton, BN1 1NW.
Tel: 01273 324041 Email: brighton@griffithsmith.co.uk
(No Legal Aid - Advice on Special Guardianship Orders only)

Goodlaw Solicitors (Brighton Branch), 4 Isetta Square, 35 New England Street, Brighton, BN1 4GQ
Tel: 01273 956270 Email: advice@goodlawsolicitors.co.uk

Goodlaw Solicitors (Hove Branch), 6 The Drive, Hove, East Sussex, BN3 3JA
Tel: 01273 956270 Email: advice@goodlawsolicitors.co.uk

Taylor Rose MW, Sussex Innovation Centre, Science Park Square, Brighton, BN1 9SB
Tel: 01273 447884 Email: info@taylor-rose.co.uk

Reeds Solicitors, Yachtwerks, 28-29 Richmond Place, Brighton, BN2 9NA.
Tel: 01273 733648, email: info@reeds.co.uk

Spearpoint Franks Solicitors, 97 Church Street, Brighton, BN1 1UJ.
Tel: 01273 748749 Email: law@sfsolicitors.co.uk

Mediation

If you do decide to separate, mediation could help you reach important decisions. You might be able to sort things out yourselves but sometimes this doesn't work and involving a professional mediator can help. You are usually required to consider mediation before you can apply to a court to hear your case. The court can refuse to hear your case until you have done this.

- Arrangements for children after you break up (sometimes called custody, residence or contact).
- Where you and your children are going to live
- Child maintenance payments.
- Finances - what to do with your house, savings, pension, debts. Most people who start mediation will reach an agreement without having to go to court.

Mediation Services

- **Brighton & Hove Independent Mediation Service**
Tel **01273 700812**
Email mediation@bhims.org.uk
Website www.bhims.org.uk
- **Iris Brighton**
Tel **01273 315430**
Email admin@irisbrighton.co.uk
Website www.irisbrighton.co.uk
- **National Family Mediation**
Tel **0300 4000 636**
Email general@nfm.org.uk
Website www.nfm.org.uk
- **Mediation East Sussex**
Tel **01424 446808**
Email admin@hrmediation.co.uk
Website <http://www.mediationeastsussex.co.uk/>
- **Relate**
Tel **01273 697997**
Email reception@brightonrelate.org.uk
Website <https://www.relate.org.uk/sussex/brighton-hove-worthing-eastbourne-districts-relate>

Mediation vouchers – July 2021

The family mediation voucher scheme is a time-limited scheme, designed to support parties who may be able to resolve their family law disputes outside of court. The Government has set up the scheme in response to Covid-19 to support recovery in the family court and to encourage more people to consider mediation as a means of resolving their disputes, where appropriate. To support this, a financial contribution of up to £500 towards the costs of mediation will be provided, if eligible.

<https://www.familymediationcouncil.org.uk/mediation-vouchers/>

Putting children and young people first

When parents separate, it is important to discuss the day to day care of their children. This can sometimes be difficult if the separation has not been agreed by both parents or where domestic abuse has been a factor in the separation. A mediation service may be useful in these circumstances to help the parents make decisions that are in the best interest of their children.

In most cases, children will be happier as they grow up if they have a positive relationship with both parents. Your relationship has ended but you still have a joint caring role for your children.

The following websites have lots of information about how to talk to your children and how to develop agreements about their on-going care.

Useful websites

<https://www.cafcass.gov.uk/>

<http://www.sortingoutseparation.org.uk/en/browse/children-parenting>

Shared parenting

Equal parenting, co-operative parenting, or parallel parenting

If the parents decide they are going to share the care of their children, they will need to think about how they can ensure the children have full and free involvement with both parents and are brought up with the guidance and love of both parents. This can be set out in a parenting plan:

<https://www.cafcass.gov.uk/grown-ups/parenting-plan.aspx>

This is a document that both parents have input to and can be changed, with the consent of both parents, as the circumstances of the family changes and/or as the children grow up, for example when they start school or become teenagers.

When shared parenting is not an option

Shared parenting is not always an option but it is still important that children have contact with their non-resident parent if it is safe for them to do so. It is important that handover times are carefully managed and the children are handed over in a calm and non-confrontational manner. If this cannot happen, then a variety of other options need to be considered:

- Is there a relative or family friend that one parent can drop off to, and then the other collect from, with a small interval of time so that parents do not meet?
- Can the handover happen in a public place where emotions are more likely to be kept in control?
- Depending on the age of the children, they could be collected from school/nursery – it is important that the school / nursery knows of this arrangement.
- A contact centre could be used.

It is important that both parents keep these arrangements as the children will feel secure knowing what is arranged. Parents should think carefully about:

- not using the child to pass information to each parent
- not questioning children about the activities of the other parent, the time is supposed to be spent as parent and child time
- agreeing a method of communication to convey messages about your child's needs, for example practical things such as medicine, homework and playdates, or emotional things such as an issue they are worried about.
- If contact does not happen, make sure they are able to contact the other parent to speak to them so they are not worried about them
- do not use contact or withdrawal of contact as a threat or weapon
- you should make every attempt to encourage your child to see their parent. However, you cannot force a child to go,
- talk to your child/children, try to find out why they do not want to go. Are there issues with your ex partner having a new relationship or stepchildren? Try and propose new contact options that reassure your child/ren. Could they see their parent at a friend or relatives house or at a different time? Would they prefer not to stay overnight for a while? Try and work out an arrangement that they can look forward to.

Local organisations that can help parents

Brighton & Hove City Council's Parenting Team offer parents support through the Triple P Positive Parenting Programme. www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/parenting or call on **01273 294471**

Safety Net offers a range of support to parents, including one to one and group work.

Visit www.safety-net.org.uk, or Call Safety Net to find out more, Tel **01273 411613**

Organisations that support children and young people

- Childline www.childline.org.uk
Information, message boards and online chat available Tel **0800 1111**
- Divorce Aid www.divorceaid.co.uk
There is also a teen section on the website
- The Mix <http://www.themix.org.uk/>
This is a site for teenagers, not younger children, including pages about divorce.
Tel **0808 808 4994**
- Right Here Brighton and Hove <https://ymcarighthere.com/>
Mental and emotional wellbeing support for young people in Brighton and Hove.
- Youth Advice Centre (YAC) - Advice and support for young people in Brighton and Hove.
Tel. **01273 624432** Email yacbrightonservices@ymcadlg.org Drop In: Monday – Friday 3pm – 6pm at 11 St Georges Place, Brighton, BN1 4GB
- The Wellbeing Service <https://www.brightonandhovewellbeing.org/>
Tel **0300 002 0060** Email spnt.brightonwellbeing@nhs.net
- Pick your Own <https://www.pickyourownbrighton.com/>
Tel **07725 472346** Email Elizabeth.pickyourown@gmail.com

When co-parenting or contact arrangements go wrong

The following questions and advice are designed to support you with the most frequent issues raised relating to parenting after separation. It is important to recognise that sharing parenting does not always feel like a fair process. You will need to put your own feelings to one side and focus clearly on what is best for your children long term.

1. My ex partner does not collect or return the children on time what should I do?

- Try speaking to them calmly at a time when you can both concentrate
- Write to them by letter or e-mail keep your communication factual. Clearly outline the time you expect them to collect or return your children and how long you will wait if they are late. Keep a copy of your letter.
- You could ask your solicitor to write a letter explaining how important it is to keep your contact arrangements
- Ultimately if they continue to be late you could stop contact but you would need a good reason to do this and should seek legal advice as your ex-partner may start legal proceedings

2. My ex partner won't let me see my children even though we agreed that I would see them every week. How can I see my children?

- Try to speak to your ex-partner calmly explaining how important it is to see your children
- Speak to other members of your wider family to see if they can negotiate on your behalf
- Write to your ex partner explain why you would like to see your children and how you would like contact arrangements to work. You could offer to pick your children up from school or nursery, see your children at a friend or relatives house or other arrangements that reassure your ex partner.
- If you have a court order stating that you have contact go back to your solicitor

3. My children do not want to see their father/mother and I do not want to force them what should I do?

- You should make every attempt to encourage your child to see their parent. However, you cannot force a child to go.
- Talk to your child/ren try to find out why they do not want to go. Are there issues with your ex partner having a new relationship or stepchildren? Try and propose new contact options that reassure your child/ren. Could they see their parent at a friend or relatives house or at a different time? Would they prefer not to stay overnight for a while? Try and work out an arrangement that they can look forward to.

4. Question: My ex-partner does not care for our children the way I would like. I am very worried about them I do not think they are safe what should I do?

- Try speaking to your ex partner and calmly explain your concerns and find out if they need some support. Remember there are lots of different parenting styles
- Write to your ex-partner outlining your concerns and how you would like to solve them.
- If you really don't think they are safe you can stop contact but you would need to seek legal advice especially if there is a court order for contact
- If you have serious concerns about the safety of your child contact the Front Door for Families. Tel 01273 290400 or email frontdoorforfamilies@brighton-hove.gov.uk

5. My ex partner is leaving the children on their own in the house what should I do?

- From the age of about 12 children could be left for a short time if they are emotionally mature and have a safe local community with neighbours and friends they could call on if they are worried Children cannot be left alone overnight
- For more information read the NSPCC home alone advice: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/in-the-home/home-alone/>

- If you think your ex-partner is struggling to afford and organise childcare could you or another family member offer to help?
- If you need to find childcare contact FIS www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/fis or call **01273 293545**
- If you have serious concerns about the safety of your child contact the Front Door for Families on **01273 290400** or email frontdoorforfamilies@brighton-hove.gov.uk

6. Question: My ex partner wants to move away from Brighton with our children what should I do?

- Legally your ex-partner can move anywhere within the United Kingdom with your children without gaining your consent or discussing it with you. Speak to your solicitor if you are worried.
- If there is a legal order in place which outlines the time you spend with your child (like a 'Child Arrangements Order' or a 'Contact order'), your ex-partner would still be legally bound to grant you this contact with your children when they move, or your ex-partner should apply to court to have the order varied. If your ex-partner does not do this then you would be able to make an application to court for enforcement of the order.
- If your children move some distance away, the arrangements for seeing your children may need to be changed for practical reasons, and you may need to negotiate with your ex-partner how the travel arrangements are managed (and who pays for it).

7. Question: My ex partner wants to take our children abroad to visit relatives. I do not want the children to go and I am worried they would not be brought back what should I do?

- If your ex-partner is considering moving abroad with your children, they will require your consent only if you have 'Parental Responsibility' for your children.
- Make sure that you have the children's passports
- You could stop contact but would need to seek legal advice about doing this
- See a solicitor to start proceedings to get a court order stating that the child/ren cannot leave the UK
- Contact the police if you think your ex-partner is intending not to return

When it is not possible for children to see both parents

In certain circumstances it is not safe for children to have contact with one of their parents. If you have serious concerns about the safety of your child you should contact the Front Door for Families

Tel 01273 290400 or email frontdoorforfamilies@brighton-hove.gov.uk

You should also contact a solicitor. – see page 4.

Domestic abuse

Those who have experienced abuse from a partner or ex-partner will often try to keep it from families, friends, or authorities. They may feel ashamed or blame themselves.

- They may love their partner and not want them to be criticised or punished.
- They may be frightened that if they tell anyone and their partner finds out they will be in danger of even worse abuse.

Domestic abuse is under-reported. It has the highest rate of repeat victimisation of any crime. On average, a woman will be attacked 35 times before reporting it to the police.

Local organisations that can help you:

- **Domestic Violence Unit - Sussex Police:** The Domestic Violence Unit is part of the Anti Victimisation Unit of Sussex Police. They work in partnership with voluntary and statutory agencies to provide support and advice to both male and female victims of domestic abuse. If you need help or feel afraid in your relationship and want to access non judgemental support and advice you can contact the police by calling **101**.
- **Brighton & Hove domestic abuse services**
The specialist domestic abuse support in Brighton & Hove is provided by Victim Support. Sussex Supportline **0808 1689274**
Out of hours Supportline **0808 1689111**
For more information: <https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/resources/sussex/>
For general enquiries please email sussexadmin@victimsupport.org.uk

Professionals:

- To make a referral by email: sevctu.referrals@victimsupport.cjsm.net
To make a referral by phone please call: 0300 323 9985
- **Brighton Women's Centre:** The only holistic women centred organisation in Brighton and Hove providing services to women in the city for over 35 years. BWC can offer women choice and the safety of anonymity. Women are supported to build their self-confidence and independence leading to empowerment and self-development.
Tel 01273 698036 www.womenscentre.org.uk

National organisations that can help you

- **Respect - Men's Advice Line** The Men's Advice Line is a confidential helpline for male victims of domestic violence and abuse. They welcome calls from all men who are in heterosexual or same-sex relationships. They offer emotional support, practical advice and information on a wide range of services for further help and support. Their focus is to increase the safety of men experiencing domestic violence, the safety of their children and to reduce the risk.
Tel 0808 801 0327 www.mensadviceline.org.uk
- **National Domestic Violence Helpline** The Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline, run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge, is a national service for women experiencing domestic violence, their family, friends, colleagues and others calling on their behalf.
Tel 0808 2000 247 www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk

Meeting a new partner

It is natural for people to look for and form new relationships after divorce or separation. Whenever this happens it is worth bearing in mind that new relationships after separation have an impact not just on you and your new partner, but also on your children and your ex-partner.

If you are the parent with the new partner

You may want to delay introducing your children to a new partner until you are sure that the relationship is serious. Your child may resent or feel threatened by a new partner, especially if they feel they have to share you. Alternatively, your child may form a very positive relationship with their parent's new partner and can become attached to them. If the relationship then doesn't last, they may feel hurt, and dealing with multiple relationship breakdowns can be very difficult for a child to deal with.

If your ex-partner has a new partner

Understandably you will wonder how the new relationship will impact on your children. For many separated parents the introduction of a new partner is a common source of conflict. A parenting arrangement that has been working well may become difficult if one parent insists that a new partner should spend time with the children and the other parent insists that they should not.

Safeguarding children

If you have concerns about the safety of your children around either your new partner or the new partner of your ex-partner, you may be able to gain information about their previous offending history by contacting the following organisations:

Domestic Abuse Surgery To find out information about your partner's offending history you can drop in for free specialist information and advice provided by staff from Sussex Police. Every Wednesday 9 am until 12 pm at Hove Town Hall.

The Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme or 'Sarah's Law' in England and Wales allows anyone to formally ask the police if someone with access to a child has a record for child sexual offences. Police will reveal details confidentially to the person most able to protect the child (usually parents, carers or guardians) if they think it is in the child's interests. To find out more information about how the scheme operates in Brighton and Hove and how to make applications for disclosure contact Sussex Police at www.sussex.police.uk or by calling **101**.

Who needs to know you are separating

If you are going through a separation or have recently split up with your partner, it can be difficult to think straight and let everyone know who needs to. However, by letting the following people know as soon as you can, you can keep your finances in order and make sure that the people around you and your children can offer you the support you need.

Your child's school, college or childcare setting

It's important that the key people in your children's lives know what's going on. This way, they can keep an eye out for them and offer support when it's needed. If they feel that your child is struggling to cope, they will be able to suggest further sources of help and support for you and your family.

Royal Mail

The person who moves out of the family home should get their mail re-directed to their new address. This is very important, as if their post is still going to your address it could be taken as evidence that your ex is still living there. You can do this online at www.royalmail.com, or pop into your local post office and pick up a form. A cost applies for this service.

If they are not willing to do this, you should return any of their post with the message “not at this address” written on the envelope.

Electoral roll

You should let Electoral Services know who is now currently living at your address. This is important as it will demonstrate that your ex partner does not currently reside at your address.

Email electors@brighton-hove.gov.uk, or call **01273 291999** to request a form.

Tax credits

If you're already receiving tax credits, you should report any changes in your circumstances to HM Revenue and Customs as quickly as possible. You should let them know if you have permanently separated from your partner and if you have changed your name and address. If you are not claiming any tax credits you might now be eligible or entitled to a higher amount, so it is worth finding out.

Call 0345 3003900

Child Benefit

If your ex-partner was claiming Child Benefit and you are now going to be responsible for your children, and want to claim it, you can switch who claims the benefit. Your ex-partner should contact the Child Benefit Office and explain that they no longer want to claim Child Benefit. You will then have to make a new claim for it. **Visit www.hmrc.gov.uk, or call 0300 200 3100.**

Reducing your Council Tax or Rates Bill

If you're the only adult in your home following your separation, you can apply for a single person discount of 25% off the full amount of your Council Tax bill. If you have children over 18 living with you who are still in full-time education, they may not be classed as an adult for Council Tax purposes. Other people, such as full-time carers, are exempt as well.

Visit www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/counciltax, or call **01273 291291**

Where will you live?

If you and your partner have decided to split up you'll need to think about what to do with the family home, for example:

- Will one of you stay in the home, at least in the short-term?
- Could both of you live together in your home but not as a couple?
- Would it be best if you both move out and each find a new home?

If it's possible for you and your partner to talk about your housing situation and come to an agreement when you split up, this can help avoid lengthy and costly legal proceedings.

In most cases your housing rights will depend on;

- Whether your home is rented or owner-occupied
- The legal status of your relationship
- Whether you have children
- Whether you are renting or buying a home

It is really important that you don't just assume that you and your partner have equal rights regarding the property, or that one partner has more rights than the other. It is very important that you seek advice before making any decisions about where you will live.

Shelter provides a lot of useful information on their website, as well as a free housing advice helpline which is open Mon-Fri from 8am-8pm and weekends 8am-5pm. Calls are free from landlines and most mobile networks. **Helpline 0344 515 1540** www.shelter.org.uk/advice

Money Matters

Emergency help

If you find yourself in a situation with no money or food for your family you can apply for help from:

- Local Discretionary Social Fund Tel **01273 293117**, or you can apply on online via the Brighton & Hove City Council website.
<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/council-tax-and-benefits/housing-benefit-council-tax-reduction-and-discretionary-help/apply>
- Family Information Service (FIS) Tel **01273 293545**. FIS advisors can refer you to a local Foodbank.

Benefits

You may be able to claim benefits, or receive a higher amount of the benefits you already receive if you have permanently separated from your partner. If you already receive benefits you must notify the relevant benefit office of your change of circumstances. If your situation is complicated, or you get turned down for any benefits, the Welfare Rights Team in the Council may be able to help.

Benefits Advice is available from the Jobcentre **0800 1690 190** or the Citizens Advice Bureau **0808 278 7815** There is also more information and online claim forms available on the www.gov.uk website.

Contact details:

Benefits Advice at the Jobcentre – **0800 1690 190**

Tax Credits - **0345 300 3900**

Housing benefit and council tax reduction - **01273 292000**

Welfare Rights – **01273 291116**

Child Maintenance Options – **0800 988 0988**

Child Maintenance

To maximise your income you could get financial support from your ex partner. The Child Maintenance Options Service can advise and support you to make a Family Based Arrangement if both parents are happy to work together to work things through together, or if this is not possible they can arrange a Statutory Agreement. There is a fee of £20 to register with this service if you need to make a Statutory Agreement but this is waived if the applicant is a victim of domestic violence.

For more information call their Freephone number **0800 988 0988**.

Debts and budgeting

Help and advice is available if you are struggling to pay your bills, or if you need help to work out a budget. Contact one of the advice agencies as soon as you can and do not be tempted to take out loans that may create a bigger problem. Money worries affect all of us at some point so it is important to get help as early as you can so that you can provide a secure future for you and your family.

See 'Useful contacts' for contact numbers.

Mortgage and rent issues

Seek professional advice from a solicitor if you have a joint mortgage or rental agreement. One of you, or both of you will still be responsible to make the payments and you will have to reach an agreement. Tell your mortgage lender straightaway if you are struggling to meet the repayments. If you are on a low income, or on benefits, you may be entitled to help with your rent.

Contact the Housing Benefit Team - **01273 292000**.

Council tax reduction

If you are on a low income, or on benefits, you may also be entitled to a discount on your Council Tax. Contact the Housing Benefit Team - **01273 292000**.

Useful contacts and websites

Child Maintenance Options (Child Support Agency)

Child Maintenance Options is a free service that provides impartial information and support to help separated parents make decisions about their child maintenance arrangements. The website contains a useful maintenance calculator.

Telephone **0800 988 0988**

Text OPTIONS to 6664

Website <http://www.cmoptions.org/>

Families Need Fathers

If you are separating or divorced and are worried about not seeing your children - or worried about the effect the breakdown of your relationship might have on them, Families Need Fathers can provide you with the support and information you need.

Telephone **0300 0300 363** 24hr helpline

Email admin@fnf.org.uk

Website www.fnf.org.uk

Family Rights Group

Family Rights Group is a charity that works with parents whose children are in need, at risk or are in the care system and with members of the wider family who are raising children unable to remain at home.

They offer advice to parents, grandparents, other relatives and friends about their rights and options when social workers or courts make decisions about their children's welfare. They campaign for families to have a voice, be treated fairly and get help early to prevent problems escalating.

Free helpline - 0808 801 0366

Website <http://www.frg.org.uk/>

The Money Advice Service

The Money Advice Service is a national organisation that offers free, clear and unbiased advice to help everyone to manage their money better. Their website is packed with useful information and has a section aimed specifically at parents, which can help you plan and manage your finances. There are also online calculators that you can use to help you work out your household budget.

Visit www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk, or call their helpline to speak to an adviser on **0800 138 7777**. You can also put in a request online for an adviser to give you a call

Sorting Out Separation

Sorting out Separation is a FREE online service for people who are dealing with divorce or separation. www.sortingoutseparation.org.uk will: - show you where to find reliable information, easy-to-use tools and specialist services on a range of topics.

Website www.sortingoutseparation.org.uk/.../home

Coram Children's Legal Centre

Coram Children's Legal Centre provides free legal information, advice and representation to children, young people, their families, carers and professionals, as well as international consultancy on child law and children's rights.

Telephone **0300 330 5480**

Website www.childrenslegalcentre.com

Family Law Clinic

The Family Law Clinic offers free, 30 minute interviews at Sussex Law School every Wednesday between 2pm and 6pm (free parking). This service is open during the University term times only.

The Family Law Clinic aims to provide a public service to local people who seek legal advice on family-related issues. At the same time, the Clinic aims to provide opportunities for students at the University of Sussex develop and improve their practical legal skills.

Interviews take place at the Freeman Building, University of Sussex campus.

Areas on which they offer advice:

- family disputes
- divorce
- separation
- children issues
- co-habitation
- financial issues (procedures)

Telephone **01273 876797** and leave a message with your name, contact number and brief account of your legal issue or question. A student will call you back and arrange an appointment

Email lawclinic@sussex.ac.uk

Website <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/law/clinical-legal-education/flc>

Dad Info

DAD Info is a website which offers a place where Dads can talk and be heard, and find answers to their questions.

Website <https://www.dad.info/>

Association of Breastfeeding Mothers

The Association has a factsheet on their website providing information about the legal framework surrounding arrangements for children following a family break up and how these relate to a breastfeeding child.

Tel **0844 412 2948**

Website www.abm.me.uk

St Peter's Church

The Divorce and Separation Recovery course is both practical and supportive, giving any separated or divorced person the opportunity to discuss the challenges they are facing and the tools to deal with these effectively. Based on Christian principles, it is helpful for any person with or without a church background.

Email dsr@stpetersbrighton.org for information about the next course. www.stpetersbrighton.org

Contact Centres

National Association of Child Contact Centres (NACCC)

The NACCC supports and promotes safe child contact at around 350 Child Contact Centres. A Child Contact Centre is a neutral place where children of separated families can spend time with one or both parents and sometimes other family members. They are child centred environment.

Telephone **0115 948 4557**

Email contact@naccc.org.uk

Website www.naccc.org.uk

Iris Brighton

Tel **01273 315430**

Email admin@irisbrighton.co.uk

Website www.irisbrighton.co.uk

**To request a paper copy of this factsheet to be sent to your address contact the
Family Information Service on 01273 293545**