

An introduction to parenting plans

What is a parenting plan?

A parenting plan is an agreement that sets out parenting arrangements for children. It can take any form, but to be recognised by a court it must be in writing, dated and signed by both parents. It must also be made free from any threat, duress or coercion.

Because it has been worked out and agreed jointly, it means separating parents do not need to fight things out in court.

What can be included in a parenting plan?

A parenting plan can deal with any aspect of the care, welfare and development of a child. The kinds of issues that may be covered in the plan include:

- who a child will live with
- what time a child will spend with each parent
- what time a child will spend with other people, such as grandparents
- how the parents will share parental responsibility, such as deciding on schools
- how a child will communicate with the other parent or other people
- what arrangements need to be made for special days such as birthdays and holidays
- what process can be used to change the plan or resolve any disagreements about it
- any other issues the parents want to include.

How does a parenting plan work?

It empowers parents to arrive at their own decisions about suitable parenting arrangements.

Because it is voluntary it can be changed at any time as long as the change has the agreement of both parents.



A parenting plan is not a legally enforceable agreement and is different from a parenting order, which is made by a court and is legally enforceable. However, if parents proceed to court at any time, the court will be required to consider the terms of the most recent parenting plan when making a parenting order in relation to a child.

The court will also consider the extent to which both parents have complied with their obligations in relation to the child, which may include the terms of a parenting plan.

If there is a court order made after 1 July 2006 setting out parenting arrangements, the parents can agree to change those arrangements with a parenting plan (unless the court order says otherwise). Knowing they are not required to go back to court to change a parenting order makes it easier for parents to agree on parenting changes.

Where can I find more information about the family law system?

[Search](#) for more information about parenting plans on Family Relationships Online.

