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PREPARING FOR THE FESTIVE PERIOD

Christmas can be a difficult time, especially for splitting families. Careful planning can help ensure children spend quality time with their parents and extended families, reducing friction and helping to create better memories for all.

Planning ahead

Consider the children's holiday plans as early as possible to allow time to make arrangements with your employer, as well as extended family and friends.

On the road

Travelling during the holidays can present its own challenges, with increased traffic on the roads and public transport issues to contend with. If the children need to travel to reach the other parent, timings should be carefully thought out.

Two Christmas days

If you live in the same area, consider sharing Christmas Day. If geography and other factors make that unworkable, a second Christmas could be arranged, with children seeing the other parent before or after Christmas Day. Ultimately, it is about reaching an agreement which places the children's best interests at the centre.

Many children will be up at the crack of dawn on Christmas Day itself, eager to look under the Christmas tree. Remember that the other parent will be missing their children. Arranging a time for a telephone or video call could help both parents feel involved on Christmas morning.

Communication

If you are struggling to agree a plan, think about contacting a mediator or a solicitor for advice and guidance. Teenagers might have their own ideas about what they want to do over the Christmas period, so it is worth checking with them. Once arrangements are made, informing the children at the earliest opportunity can help manage their expectations and reassure them that they will spend quality time with both parents.

Presents

If your children still write to Father Christmas, share the wish-list with the other parent and family members, and decide between you who will buy which gift - or whether you are happy to share the cost of bigger items. Don't compete with the other parent and, depending on your circumstances, try to share the practical and financial load.

What about next year?

As decorations are packed away, it might feel too soon to start looking ahead to next Christmas. However, if you struggled to make arrangements this time, or they didn't work, you can begin to discuss how things could be done differently next year.

Back to school

The Christmas holidays, being the first long holiday since the start of term, offer a chance for parents to review how their child is settling in. By working together, you can agree what resources or support your child needs on return to school in January.

For more information, or to discuss your family law needs, please contact:

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