

Co-parenting and child arrangements in a global pandemic – advice for families

How to talk to your child about Covid19: “Provide facts about what has happened, explain what is going on now and give them clear information about how to reduce their risk of being infected by the disease in words that they can understand depending on their age” World Health Organisation, March 2020

✓ In these uncertain times, maintaining a sense of routine will help your child to feel safe and secure. Whilst your child's school may be closed, consider sticking to normal meal and bed times and any other family rituals your child takes comfort in – for example, movie night or reading a book together before bed.

- ✓ Unless there are justified medical/self-isolation issues – or some future nationally issued guidance or expectation associated with leaving the house in your area – children should also maintain their usual routine of spending time with each of their parents. If there is a Child Arrangements Order in place this should be complied with unless to do so would put your child, or others at risk. This will help your child to feel a sense of consistency, whilst also reassuring them that the parent they don't always live with is safe and healthy.
- ✓ If you're not able to maintain your child's routine due to illness or self-isolation, or non-availability of people who ordinarily support your child's contact, then communicate clearly and honestly with your co-parent. If it is not safe for you to communicate directly (for example, if there has been a history of domestic abuse) then consider using a trusted third party to help you.
- ✓ Think creatively about how you can support your child to stay in touch with their other parent and family members during any period of self-isolation. Skype and Facetime can be great ways to catch up and can be used to read stories, sing and play together. With older children you could also consider a watch party – where you gather online to watch a movie or video, commenting and 'reacting' in real time.
- ✓ If any court directed spending time arrangements are missed, think about how you and your co-parent may be able to 'make up' your child's time after the restrictions are lifted. Remember, any rearranged spending time arrangements should always be for your child's benefit and should not be used as a source of tension or conflict – especially at a time when your child is likely to be feeling anxious about the effects of the pandemic.



***Did you know?** The Family Procedure Rules 2010 allow for remote hearings in appropriate cases. This could mean hearings take place via email, video, telephone or Skype. The government has issued guidance [here](#).*



- ✓ Be extra vigilant when making sure that children cannot hear discussions about the court case or any dispute you may have with your child's other parent. This is particularly relevant now as they are at home and there may be court hearings by Skype / teleconference. Exposing children to these disputes can result in them feeling confused, having divided loyalties and may harm them emotionally.
- ✓ If your household is not in self-isolation, then it is still recommended that you and your child maintain sensible social distancing from members of the public. This means avoiding social activities such as going to restaurants, theatres and cinemas – and only using public transport if you really have to.



- ✓ Unless you or your child has an underlying health condition or other vulnerability, transporting them from one home to the other would usually be a legitimate journey (based on the current government guidance).
 - ✓ Think carefully about maintaining a one-meter distance from other people, carrying hand sanitiser and tissues, and thoroughly washing hands on arrival home.
- ✓ It is crucial that both parents practice sensible hygiene. This means following Government advice such as hand washing, more often, for 20 seconds. Clean and disinfect regularly touched objects and surfaces more often than usual, with your normal cleaning products.
 - ✓ Encourage your child to catch their coughs and sneezes in a tissue and ensure they also comply with hand washing advice. The National Infection Prevention and Control Manual has [lots of helpful ideas and materials](#) to encourage children to make hand washing part of their everyday routine

Further information on the availability of SPIP (Separated Parents Information Programme) and the provision for Supervised Contact will be made available in coming days.

Further information about Covid19 can be found on the [Gov.uk](#) and [World Health Organisation](#) websites.