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# What is Parenting Coordination

A GUIDE FOR SEPARATED PARENTS

Parenting Coordination is a service offered by a qualified and experienced mediator; for parents who want to carry on co-parenting their children after separation but are experiencing difficulties because there has been conflict about what the arrangements for the children should be.



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## Do I need a Parenting Coordinator?

What often happens when there is conflict is that parents go to court and ask it to make a ruling about the things they are in dispute about; where should the children live, when should they see the other parent and for how long, etc. Putting aside for a moment questions about whether the court is the best forum for this, Parenting Coordination picks up where there has been an order made but there are still ongoing issues. Parenting Coordination deals with the fact that a court order is still only a piece of paper; open to (different) interpretation and reliant on the attitude and the behaviour of the people concerned.

In other words, you've got your order – but what now? The court order says the children will spend 'every Wednesday until 7pm' with one parent. What it doesn't say is; who is responsible for travel arrangements at 7pm? What happens if that parent is unable to collect from school, who covers childcare costs? What happens if the school was closed on Wednesday; who has the children during the day?

In other words, sometimes the court order is not in fact the end but the beginning. Maybe what the court ordered wasn't what you wanted, so how are you going to work with those arrangements? How can you co-parent when relations with your ex haven't improved at all since you separated and, indeed, have become worse through the lengthy and bitter litigation?

This is where parenting coordination comes in. If you want things to change for the better and you're interested in a less hostile relationship with the other parent so that the level of conflict the children are exposed to decreases - then Parenting Coordination could be the stepping stone you need to get to a better place.

## What does a Parenting Coordinator do?

A Parenting Coordinator will help you in a number of ways. They can help you look at the children's needs and how they can be best met by both of you now separated. If your children are of an age to express their own views and opinions, the children can meet the parenting coordinator as part of the process. The definition of insanity is doing the same thing again and again but expecting a different result. A Parenting Coordinator will use his or her coaching skills to help you find different strategies for managing your own emotions, understand your feelings about the conflict and look for positive and practical solutions that will help you as a family in the future.

And, if you really are stuck on what happens at 7pm on a Wednesday, where the passports stay, how ballet/football kit is dealt with – then the Parenting Coordinator does have the ability to make those sorts of decisions for you both, so that you can move on and you don't need to go back to court for serial, expensive litigation. Also, because the Parenting Coordinator is qualified as a mediator, she/he can also spend time with you together, working through new issues that might come up. For example, holidays, new partners, house moves etc.

A Parenting Coordinator doesn't take over responsibility for decisions that should be made by parents. But we recognise that parenting can be tough at the best of times! – and, when you have separated and the adult relationship is under strain, that's bound to have an effect on how you manage the children together.

## What next?

As with all mediation processes, we would first go through initial screening to check that it's suitable and safe for everyone involved. Once a Parenting Coordinator has met with you both separately, everyone signs up to parenting coordination agreement. This is a confidential process and we make sure that everyone understands what is involved. It also sets out the time period the process covers; typically up to two years (the amount the Parenting Coordinator is needed during that period varies but they are a resource to help as needed). There is of course cost to this, which the Parenting Coordinator would discuss fully with you at the outset. The process kicks off by the Parenting Coordinator meeting each of you separately; checking he/she understands your situation, you both understand the process and agreeing costs and timescales from there.

- Does this sound like something that could be of real help to you and your family?
- Are you keen to get beyond litigation, acrimony and be able to have your life back so you're not in constant dispute with your ex?
- Do you want the very best for your children? Of course, we all do!

**If nothing else has worked to date, why not give this a try?**

**Please call Sarah Smith,  
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on (01423) 543117**