

Help
With

Separation for Children and Families

In the UK it is estimated that more relationships will ultimately break down than stay together, leaving more than one in four children experiencing parental separation by the age of 16. (*Information taken from Office of National Statistics*)

All parents will be concerned about the effects of any separation will have on their children. Even if both parents/parties mutually agreed on the separation it will still be difficult to cope.

Separation is an upsetting and confusing time for parents and children. It can be a time of stress and anxiety with voices being raised and feelings reaching boiling point. Regardless of a child's age, they are likely to experience similar emotions to their parents, although express them in a different way. Some of the reactions to separation children may experience include feeling angry, guilty, a conflict of loyalty between their parents, denial, and mood changes, tantrums, health or school problems.

Talking with your children is vital during the separation process. Children need to be told where each parent will be living, how contact will be maintained with their dad, and that mummy and daddy still love them and will continue to be there for them. Having access to both parents and trying to maintain a routine will help your children to adapt to the initial changes. Acknowledge that it is OK to feel sad or angry and help your children to find healthy ways to express their emotions. Reassure your children that the separation is not their fault and explain that they cannot fix or change what is happening in the family. Above all, try to shield your children from any arguments as children experience parental conflict as stressful and upsetting. The whole family is going to need time to adapt to the changes, so try to take one step at a time and don't be too hard on yourself. Talking about your feelings with a family member or friend, whom you trust, will help to reduce your feelings of isolation.