

Children in the Middle

Divorce, or separation, isn't easy on any party to the proceedings and least of all the children.

Whilst being a child of divorced parents does not carry the stigma it did 25 years ago, it is still dreadfully hard for children – no matter what age.

When a couple tell friends and family they are to separate, or divorce, many children, unsurprisingly, initially think it is their fault. "Was I too naughty? Did I stay out too late? Are they fighting because I got into trouble at school?" These and many other self-doubting thoughts go through children's minds.

Often, the next stage is anger – children become angry because they think their way of life is about to change for the worse and, sadly, many times it is. They become withdrawn, quiet and, often, get into trouble to get their estranged parents attention.

Confusion and a sense of being torn between parents can set in when parents try to work out such arrangements as school pickups, tea, shopping, swimming lessons, haircuts, school uniform shopping, school events, parents evening. Children can feel emotionally pulled because they may not want to go to a certain event with one parent, but feel bad that they do not want to.

Here at DGR Law we are parents, as well as lawyers, and see many divorced families struggling to make their children still feel loved. We work with clients to ensure that they understand and appreciate it is hard for children. Clients going through a divorce are often consumed with guilt, anger or confusion and they can sometimes forget that children are stuck in the middle.

When a divorce petition is completed and issued to Court there must be a Statement of Arrangements for children who are either under 16, or over 16 but under 18 if they are receiving education or training for a trade. This contains home and property details, education needs, childcare, maintenance, contact arrangements and children's health. This statement is often a contentious document with each parent having a different opinion on the future of their children.

If this document cannot be agreed it does mean that one parent could apply for a Child



Arrangements Order, which means a Hearing in front of a District Judge.

At DGR Law, we work with families to make arrangements for Children. The new Child Arrangements Programme introduced in April of this year has removed the terms "Residence" and "Contact" and replaced them with "Agreed Arrangements" and "Undertakings". This allows Family Judges to work with the families and their respective solicitors to agree much more than just where the children will live. The Order includes undertakings that parents must make to look after and provide for their children, as separated, or divorced people.

Family Judges in our area are now recommending that parents in these circumstances attend a Separated Parents Course, not to learn how to be separated, but to learn how to interact with each other and make workable arrangements for all parties in the family. This is an extremely useful course and we do encourage any Clients going through a divorce to consider this.

DGR Law is a firm committed to making the divorce process as simple as possible, with children always at the forefront of our thoughts and efforts.

For further information or a free 30 minute consultation contact me, Karen Salmon, on 01672 511797 or email me at Karen@dgrlaw.co.uk