

## FACTSHEET No 19:

### Parenting Coordination Services



Here at Progressive Mediation, we can now provide parenting coordinator services; Frances Place will be qualified as a parenting coordinator from May 2018. We can provide this service from Totnes and surrounding areas.

#### **What is a Parenting Coordinator (PC)?**

Parenting coordination is a dispute resolution process that can be court ordered or agreed upon independently by separated parents. These are parents who have an ongoing pattern of high conflict regarding arrangements for their children and are unable to agree on anything. This practise has been more widely used in the US, Canada, South Africa and Europe in the last few decades but is now being introduced to the UK.

The underlying principle of a parenting coordinator being involved in these situations is to keep a focus on the children's best interests. Parenting Coordination is designed to help high conflict parents find a way of working together and minimising conflict in the interests of their children.

Where decisions for children's arrangements are required, and the parents are unable to make arrangements without anger, it can have a serious impact on the children's developmental and psychological needs. The PC's intervention will reduce the amount of damaging conflict between parents to which the children are exposed.

Divorce and separation in themselves need not harm children, what causes them harm and possible ongoing problems throughout their lives is being in the middle of conflict between their parents

#### **How does Parenting Coordination Work?**

After separation or divorce, there are still many ongoing decisions that need to be made regarding arrangements for the children. It can be anything from diet through to which school they will attend or frequency of contact. The PC will be as involved as they need to be depending on the needs of the family, the extent of the conflict or what stipulations are in place from court.

For the parenting Coordination to work, both parents need to be in agreement that the PC will be involved in the decision making and will be the mutual point of contact. Unless both parents are completely on board with this, it cannot work. Even though the parenting coordinator is there to work with the parents, the overarching focus of their work is to uphold the best interests of the children and encourage each parent to do so as well.

## Examples of How a Parenting Coordinator can Help

A common cause of anger and conflict around arrangements for children can be the 'pick up' and 'drop off' for when the parents swap time with the kids. Some examples of how dispute can arise:

- “She always turns up late to pick up the children, which makes me late for work and the children become anxious that she isn't going to come at all.”
- “I just wanted to swap one weekend so that the children could come to a family wedding with me. Why is he so inflexible and selfish?”
- “I do not understand why I can't pick the children up from his house, waiting at the motorway service station is ridiculous!”

You can see how just the simplest of things can escalate into full blown rows, when communication has broken down between parents. Not only is this stressful for the parents, but it is very damaging for the children to be privy to fights like this which involve them. (Remember children love both of their parents and it is distressing to be stuck in the middle of this sort of conflict).

The PC will advise and make suggestions to the parents to resolve issues and improve the levels of communication between them. Often it helps to have someone there to channel these disputes through, someone who is impartial and has the children's best interests to heart. This is very similar to the role of a family mediator, but it isn't confined to the mediation sessions which usually stop when agreement of big issues are reached. This is more of an ongoing and continuous support to ensure that things don't break down over small issues as life continues.

## Benefits of using Parenting Coordination Services

There are many benefits to using a PC to help you to work out issues and problems with your ex-partner. Here are just a few:

- Reduce stress – arguing and fighting on an ongoing basis with someone you wish wasn't in your life but they have to be as you had kids together, can be very stressful. Both parents and children will benefit from less stress in their lives if someone is there to help resolve conflict.
- Better communication – this has to be a good thing between the parents, but your children will also see an alternative way to communicate. If their role models have only shown how to communicate through fighting, to see another way is healthy. They will learn empathy, compromise and the ability to listen rather than just dictate.



Further Information & Help:

Call 0788 903 9393 or email:

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[charles@progressive-mdiation.co.uk](mailto:charles@progressive-mdiation.co.uk)

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- Less time in court – some high conflict parents who struggle with every decision and are determined to constantly bash the other parent, proving them to be wrong, often end up in court. With a PC there to act as a mediator, these parents will spend less time and money in court.
- More time – If you are spending less time arguing with an ex-spouse over arrangements, you will have more time to spend with your kids doing positive activities and making happy memories.

### **Could a Parenting Coordinator Help You?**

Are you in a high conflict relationship with an ex-partner? Do you find it hard to communicate and decide for the children without fighting? If you would like to find out more about our parenting coordinator services please ring us for an informal chat on 0788 903 9393.



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