

Ensure that your child (if old enough) can contact you at any time on their visit

If your ex partner questions your child about you, tell them to try to let their dad know that they shouldn't be asking those questions (you can make this part of a contract in a contact order and you can ask a solicitor to write to them telling them that this is inappropriate)

If you have to leave your home, make sure that your children take some familiar items with them, such as comfort toys.

Reassure your children often that you will stay together

Give your children ownership of their rooms in the new home

Let them decorate and make their rooms their own

Take them around their new area and familiarise them with places and things

Speak with them honestly about what is happening and in a way that is age appropriate. The key to getting your child through any difficult situation is love and communication.

If you feel that you are not coping with your child or that their behaviour is worsening or dangerous it is important to get help and support as soon as possible. You can speak with your IDVA, a teacher, your health visitor, your midwife or your GP. All of the above agencies have a duty of care to you and your child. If your child is considered at significant risk of harm then these agencies may have to share information with each other. Where possible, we, and they, will attempt to get your permission to share information. In some cases though, we may need to share information without your permission if it would put your child at further risk if we did ask permission.

Other factsheets in this series

Leaflet 1 Pregnancy and domestic abuse

Leaflet 1a You, your child and domestic abuse

Leaflet 2 Parenting Babies under 18 months

Leaflet 3 Parenting Toddlers (18 -24 months)

Leaflet 4 Parenting Preschool Children

Leaflet 5 Parenting 5 - 12 year olds

Leaflet 6 Parenting Teenagers

Leaflet 8 How to talk to your children about domestic abuse/violence

Leaflet 9 Communicating with your child about domestic abuse. What children need to hear from the victim

Leaflet 10 Successful Parenting

You can access these factsheets and find out more information about domestic abuse at the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership website

www.cambsdasv.org.uk

Cambridge Women's Aid **01223 361214**

(City/South Cambs)

Refuge **07787 255821**

(Fenland, East Cambs, Hunts)

Children's Social Care (Cambridgeshire)

0345 045 5203

Specialist abuse services for children & young people (Peterborough) **01733 669404**



**Cambridgeshire
& Peterborough**
Domestic Abuse & Sexual
Violence Partnership

Separation, moving home and contact



Leaflet 7

SEPARATION, MOVING HOME AND CONTACT

This leaflet is one of a series of ten. They are designed to give you information on how domestic abuse may impact on your children and how you can help your child to overcome the effects of domestic abuse.

Leaflet 7 looks at separating, moving home and contact issues that arise in many homes where there is domestic abuse. You may have finally gotten to the place where you can safely leave your abusive relationship to protect you and your children. This is a traumatic time for you and your children. Even though you hope that the abuse may now end because of the separation, you may still experience difficulties from your ex-partner around the separation, your new home and contact with his children. Your children can be affected, not only by the separation, house move or contact, but how you and your ex-partner deal with this. This is a time when your ex can continue to try to control, manipulate and abuse you through your children. This leaflet will briefly explore how you can help your children through the separation and moving and how to ensure contact is appropriate and safe.

SEPARATION ISSUES

Your children, despite the experiences of abuse, may still love their abusive parent and be upset that you are no longer living together. Life may seem very unstable for them and they may no longer feel as though they can predict events. Their abusive parent may exploit this situation and make it appear as though the separation is your fault and try to get your children to blame you for this. This is a very big life event and one that they will need lots of time, love and support to get through.

MOVING HOME-ISSUES

In some situations, you may move home. This will mean that your children may be taken away from friends and familiar things. They may feel frightened and insecure. The world again may appear unpredictable and they may worry that they are not going to see their abusive parent. As was said before, they may still love him despite the abuse. They may want to stay with him and not understand why they can't. Your abusive partner may play on this and use your children against you to stop you moving and may continue to harass and abuse you in an attempt to get you back to the family home. If you are moving to a refuge, this can be a difficult time as they may not have any of their favoured or valuable comfort objects with them.

CONTACT ISSUES

Your children may want to continue to see their other parent. If there are issues which mean that they cannot visit with him they may become angry at you. Their other parent may use this against you and tell your children that you are deliberately stopping them from seeing him. If he does see them, he may make unreasonable demands for information from them about where you live, what you do etc. There are many things to consider and do around contact which will be briefly explored below. During these times you will need to be patient and understanding with your children. It may be very hard for them to understand why they cannot see their other parent and this will add to an already very traumatic situation.

At all times, you need to be patient with your child. Even teenagers and older children may be worried and upset that their environment is changing and they may not have contact with their other parent.

They may act out and challenge you on the separation and/or move. These are all natural responses to traumatic events. A separate leaflet will discuss communicating with your children about the abuse and "respectful parenting and re-establishing leadership with your children" is another that you may find useful.

HOW DO I HELP MY CHILD THROUGH SEPARATION, MOVING HOME AND CONTACT?

There are a number of very basic things that you can consider and do with your child around separation, moving home and contact.

Reassure your child through the separation that you are trying to keep them safe and that you will try your best to let them see their father.

Stick to the routines that they had before the separation as much as possible, this will give them a sense of continuity and security

Spend time with other favourite members of your family

Do things that they enjoy (but don't become permissive - see leaflet "Respectful Parenting-with Children Who Have Witnessed Domestic Abuse")

Ensure that if you are considering allowing contact that you check that this is both safe and appropriate

Ensure that you know your rights around parental responsibility

If you have joint responsibility, you can apply to the courts for a residency order and a contact order

Ensure that your child wants to go to see their other parent before agreeing contact with the other parent