

Information for Families

Co-parenting and child arrangements in a global pandemic – advice for families

How to talk to your child about Covid19: “Provide facts about what has happened, explain what is going on now and give them clear information about how to reduce their risk of being infected by the disease in words that they can understand depending on their age” World Health Organisation, March 2020

- ✓ In these uncertain times, maintaining a sense of routine will help your child to feel safe and secure. Whilst your child's school is closed, consider sticking to normal meal and bed times and any other family rituals your child takes comfort in – for example, movie night or reading a book together
- ✓ Unless there are justified medical/self-isolation issues – or some future States of Guernsey issued guidance or expectation associated with leaving the house – children should also maintain their usual routine of spending time with each of their parents. If there is an Order in place this should be complied with unless to do so would put your child, or others at risk. This will help your child to feel a sense of consistency, whilst also reassuring them that the parent they don't always live with is safe and healthy. You may need to think creatively about how a contact takes place. For example, a trip to the park (not the play area) or a walk outside rather than a family or social get together.
- ✓ A child's contact with their parent should be the priority. It may be that extended family members need to have contact indirectly or in other ways.
- ✓ If you're not able to maintain your child's routine due to illness or self-isolation, or non-availability of people who ordinarily support your child's contact, then communicate clearly and honestly with your co-parent. If it is not safe for you to communicate directly (for example, if there has been a history of domestic abuse) then consider using a trusted third party to help you.
- ✓ Think creatively about how you can support your child to stay in touch with their other parent and family members during any period of self-isolation. Skype and Facetime are great ways to catch up and can be used to read stories, sing and play together. With older children you could also consider a watch party – where you gather online to watch a movie or video, commenting and 'reacting' in real time.

✓ The Roseville Contact Centre has been closed with immediate effect, for the foreseeable future. If you have queries about this please contact FPAS or your advocate. You are not permitted to change contact as ordered by the court, however, if both parties can agree a proposal AND FPAS agree and approve that the proposal is in the best interests of the child, it is likely that the court will approve a change to the current order. Alternative contact cannot take place until or unless the court makes a revised order.

✓ Be extra vigilant when making sure that children cannot hear discussions about the court case or any dispute you may have with your child's other parent. This is particularly relevant now as they are at home and there may be court hearings by Skype / teleconference. Exposing children to these disputes can result in them feeling confused, having divided loyalties and may harm them emotionally.

The possibility of "remote hearings" is being explored by all relevant parties. This could mean hearings take place via email, video conference or telephone. Contact your FPA or Advocate to discuss your particular case. Please do be patient though as everyone is trying to reorganise matters as best they can.

✓ If your household is not in self-isolation, then it is still recommended that you and your child maintain sensible social distancing from members of the public. This means avoiding social activities such as going to restaurants, theatres and cinemas – and only using public transport if you really have to.

✓ Unless you or your child has an underlying health condition or other vulnerability, transporting them from one home to the other would usually be a legitimate journey.

✓ Think carefully about maintaining a two-metre distance from other people, carrying hand sanitiser and tissues, and thoroughly washing hands on arrival home. It is crucial that both parents practice sensible hygiene. This means following States of Guernsey advice such as hand washing more often, for 20 seconds. Clean and disinfect regularly touched objects and surfaces more often than usual, with your normal cleaning products.

✓ Encourage your child to catch their coughs and sneezes in a tissue and ensure they also comply with hand washing advice.

Further information about Covid19 can be found on the [Gov.gg](#) and [World Health Organisation](#) websites.