



Christmas It's all jolly, isn't it?

Many of us will now be looking forward to the festive period with the build-up beforehand and the festive days themselves. However, for many others, the Christmas period is not such a happy time, particularly if a relationship or marriage has come to an end or if it looks like it might do so.

For those with children, there are also often issues regarding the arrangements for the children over Christmas which need to be discussed and agreed with the former spouse or partner. Indeed, the festive period generally can put additional strain on many people when making arrangements to spend time with family and friends but this can be even more testing if the whereabouts of children during those times has yet to be agreed between parents.

I therefore set out some tips below which may be useful when trying to agree the Christmas arrangements for your children.

Communication during Christmas

There is often a temptation to use Christmas (particularly the first one after a separation) to make a point to your former partner or spouse about how well you and the children are doing following the separation. However, this is only likely to increase animosity between you and it is almost certain that it will not benefit the children.

Therefore, my tip for communication during this period is to keep it to a minimum, potentially with messages limited to dealing with the children's arrangements only. Also, a simple message to the other parent when you have the children over Christmas about the children having a nice time should be fine but there is no need for the message to dwell on any other point or for it to imply that you or the children are not missing the other parent.

Arrangements for children at Christmas

For any parents thinking about the arrangements for their children over Christmas, it is understandable if this feels difficult to address with your former spouse or partner. My first tip for dealing with the children's arrangements over the festive period and,

in particular, for the festive days themselves is to bear in mind that Christmas for the children can usually be enjoyed over several days rather than on Christmas Day alone.

Therefore, if you are the parent who may not be spending Christmas Day with the children this year, then try not to worry about this. Instead, try to make the most of your time with the children on the day(s) you will be spending with them which may include a full repeat of Christmas Day or at least a repeat of some of the activities from Christmas Day. Certainly, it would be hard to imagine any children being disappointed by the prospect of having more than one Christmas Day.

Compromise

Another tip is to be prepared to compromise on some aspects of the arrangements in order to reach an agreement with the other parent. It is after all the season of goodwill and compromise is often the key to reaching an agreement.

Legal advice

Finally, if you are concerned about being able to reach an agreement with your former partner or spouse about the arrangements for the children over Christmas or if discussions have not yet led to an agreement, then you may wish to consider taking legal advice about this.

As solicitors, we are used to advising on arrangements for children over Christmas and will be able to assist you with this. Your solicitor will also be able to consider with you the methods by which you may be able to negotiate a settlement with the other parent, including through solicitors, at mediation or, if necessary, by way of a Court application.

We are always happy to assist with such matters. The key, however, is that the earlier you seek legal advice, the more useful it is likely to be.

Matthew Thom is a Senior Solicitor at our Beaconsfield office. Matthew is a Resolution Accredited Specialist in the areas of complex and high net worth finances as well as private law children matters. ■



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