

## CO-PARENTING

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### ❖ What Is Co-Parenting?

Co-parenting is when two or more people who are not (or no longer) married to each other or living together or romantically involved with each other share parental responsibility for a child.

In theory each parent has equal rights and share responsibility (financial and otherwise) and custody of the child.

Donors and recipients considering co-parenting should make their intentions known prior to insemination; if possible a legal document should be drawn to show intentions.

### ❖ Who Can Be Co-Parents?

All sorts of people become co-parents

Co-parent 'mixes' can be made up of:

- A lesbian couple and a gay couple
- A single gay man and a lesbian couple
- A single straight man and a lesbian couple
- A single gay man and a straight woman
- A single gay man and a single lesbian
- A single straight man and a single straight woman

### ❖ Why Do People Choose To Become Co-Parents?

Main reasons:

- **Shared Responsibility**

As co-parents, all the people with parental rights are legally and equally (in theory) responsible for the child's welfare, financial and otherwise.

- **The Welfare Of The Child**

Some people strongly believe in the right/need of a child for at least one mother and a father

- **Biology**

Single men and gay couples have the same urges as their female counterparts to become parents; however because of biology their choices are limited to Adoption, Surrogacy or Co-parenting. Co-parenting can be the least complicated, accessible and affordable option.

## ❖ Choosing A Co-Parent – What To Look For/Think About

Raising children with anyone is challenging, perhaps more so with someone with whom you are not romantically involved, on the other hand this might make it easier to think logically about what will be best for you and your child.

In any co-parenting situation, especially if all parties have parental responsibility, you need someone you can agree with on the important stuff, find out if you have:

- **Similar Values**

What are the most important things in your lives?

Career? Finances? Beliefs? Achievements? Education? Family? Something else?

- **Similar Parenting Philosophies**

What are your views on parenting? Child focused - do you fit your life around your child or parent focused - the child fits into your life. When it comes to discipline; is it okay to smack children or not? And so on.

Different values/parenting views are potential conflict areas but do not rule out a co-parenting relationship as long as you are comfortable with each other's values – if you simply cannot compromise on these, then you need someone whose values match yours.

- **Friendship/Mutual Respect**

You and your co-parent will always be linked and probably be in each other's lives because of your child. You might not be each others' best friends but things will be a lot easier if you at least like each other and there is some degree of friendship there; your child will be happier too for it.

- **Physical Attributes**

Look for traits you find attractive or desirable or at the minimum complements yours.

This might be considered shallow or irrelevant but your co-parent's physical traits may and some will most likely be passed onto your child.

- **Location**

Depending on how hands on and how much access a co-parent wants with a child, your proximity to each other might be an important factor to consider. It will be impractical for most people to visit their child every week if they live in a different country to them.

## ❖ Decisions/ Questions to Ask

<b>Parental Responsibility</b>	Will the mother be the sole legal parent of the child? The biological father and/ step-parents will not automatically be legal parents of the child and may have to take steps to get parental responsibility. (See our document ' <b>About Parental Responsibility</b> ')
<b>Residence/ Custody</b>	Shared or not? How to share custody? Which parent does the child live with?
<b>Access/Contact with child</b>	When, where and how often?
<b>Finances</b>	Financial contributions expected from all parties? If yes, For what? How much? How often?
<b>Disputes</b>	What to do if you don't agree
<b>Role/position of step-parents</b>	If there are step-parents, will these also be legal parents; will they have a say when it comes to the child and if yes, how much of a say?
<b>Other issues</b>	Talk about other things that are important to you especially those you will not compromise on such as sharing religious beliefs with the child or not. Include those that seem trivial too such as child's last name or whether or not boys get circumcised or how many children you plan to have together.

## ❖ Contracts

In the UK co-parenting contracts do not make the donor the legal father of a child and will not take away his financial and other responsibilities to his child. (See our document '**About Parental Responsibility**') Irrespective of what the contract says the court will act in the best interest of the child.

It is however worth having a written agreement stating your individual parental roles and/or contributions (you do not need a lawyer to do this), this can be useful should any disputes arise.

Please see our **sample contracts**

## ❖ Legal Implications

The woman who gives birth to a child is automatically the child's legal parent; however this is not always the case with biological fathers, non-biological fathers and donors even if the parties agree to co-parent.

Please see our document '**About Parental Responsibility**'

## ❖ References

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