



Keeping the School Informed

Family circumstances can change. Schools need to know what these changes are and if any court orders have been made which will affect a child's education.

Pupils records need to be kept up to date.

Please let schools know:

- (1) What court orders are already in place.
- (2) When a new court order is made.
- (3) Whenever a person with parental responsibility for a child changes address.

Getting Further Advice

If your family includes step-parents or unmarried fathers who would like to know how to get PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY, ask at:

- (1) Citizen's Advice Bureau
- (2) Law Centre/Solicitor
- (3) County or Magistrates Court

Your school's education welfare officer can also help you to seek the right advice.

For advice on how the Children Order can affect your child's education in WELB please contact the education welfare service:

In Derry/ Londonderry

District Office
35 Foyle Street
Derry / Londonderry
Tel: 02871 272300
Fax: 02871 374033

In Enniskillen

Enniskillen District Office
28 Dublin Road
ENNISKILLEN BT74 6HN
Tel: 028 66 343900
Fax: 028 66 323493

In Limavady

2A Ballyquinn Road
LIMAVADY BT49 9ET
Tel: 028777 60936
Fax: 028777 609311

In Strabane

41, Derry Road
STRABANE BT82 8DX
Tel: 02871 884027
Fax: 02871 880010

In Omagh

1, Hospital Road
Omagh, BT 79 OAW
Tel: 02882 411289
Fax: 02882 411293

Parental Responsibility

The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 became law on the 4 November 1996. It aims to strengthen the relationship between parents and their children even if parents have separated, or divorced, or even if the courts have said there should be no direct contact.

The Children Order also gives children rights to be listened to whenever welfare decisions are made about them, and sometimes the right to take their own independent action through the courts.

Schools & Parents

The law says schools must register the names of all actual parents, if married, because they each hold PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY for their child. Parental responsibility never ends even if the parent no longer lives with the child, unless there has been an adoption. It is still held by each parent, even if they are separated or divorced. The law also says schools must register the names of any other person having parental responsibility for a child (see p.3)

Teachers can not properly care for a child unless they know who, under the law, has responsibility and authority for him/her, and where they live.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Is

All the:-

**RIGHTS
DUTIES
POWERS
RESPONSIBILITIES &
AUTHORITY**

which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his/her property.

*Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
Article 6(1).*

The law says schools should keep persons with parental responsibility informed (**only if the absent person with parental responsibility requests the information**) about their child's education by:

- * sending each of them a copy of their child's annual report;
- * inviting each of them to the school to discuss their child's progress; and
- * involving each of them in decisions about their child's education.

The law says that all persons with parental responsibility for a particular child must be treated equally.

Getting Parental Responsibility

When actual parents are not married the law says **only** the mother has parental responsibility for the child, but a father, in this situation, can get his share of parental responsibility by:

- * jointly registering the birth of the child with the mother (applies on or after 15 April 2002);
- * marrying the mother;
- * signing a legal agreement with the mother; or
- * getting a Parental Responsibility Order from the court.

Other adults who live with a child, like step-parents, partners or grandparents, can acquire the right to share parental responsibility by asking the court for a Residence Order. This gives them responsibility and authority for the child for as long as they stay living together.

Where a child is Looked After by a Health & Social Care Trust, the Trust shares parental responsibility for that child for as long as the child is Looked After.

The original parents only ever lose their share of parental responsibility when their child is adopted. They always hold parental responsibility however many other people share it with them.

Why Getting Parental Responsibility Matters

- * You are able to have a say in decisions about the children in your family. Schools have to consult with you first when making decisions on such things as admissions, transfer, GCSE options, assessment of Special Educational Need etc.
- * It will help teachers, doctors, educational welfare officers, educational psychologists and others to know who to contact when decisions have to be made.
- * It can strengthen the relationship between you and the children you look after.

Those Without Parental Responsibility

The law also says that adults who live with and provide care for a child but do not have parental responsibility, eg step-parents, other relatives or foster parents, should make sensible everyday decisions in the child's best welfare.