

## Keeping Christmas special for children



Christmas presents particular challenges for separating couples, with contact arrangements for children often causing a great deal of anxiety.

John and Susan broke up last November. Susan recalled: “With Christmas just around the corner, we were really worried about how the children would cope.”

Fortunately, they’d chosen Collaborative lawyers to represent them. Collaborative Law is a new initiative designed to allow couples a respectful way of resolving their separations. Its hands-on approach means all discussions take place around a table, instead of in correspondence. The Collaborative process happens very quickly, with the first joint meeting happening usually within two weeks. At their first meeting, the Collaborative lawyers provided John and Susan with guidance on how to deal with their children. They highlighted the importance of ensuring the children were kept out of the inevitable negative emotions which the couple would experience towards each other, enabling them to put together a plan as to how they would share their time with the children over Christmas and afterwards.

John said: “They really helped us focus on our responsibilities in relation to the children and on their needs. We learned it is vitally important to present a united front and make them feel as secure as possible. I think we achieved this. It was a difficult Christmas, but at least we managed to make things straightforward for the children.”

After their positive start, John and Susan were also able to agree the financial details of their separation arrangements through the Collaborative law process.

### **Advice given to John and Susan at their first meeting:**

- Be open and honest with your children and be prepared to listen to what they have to say
- Do not expect them to share your feelings
- Give the children reassurance that they will be safe and that their needs are the first priority
- Reassure children that they are not to blame for the separation
- Present a united front, even if there has been compromise
- Protect them from your own feelings about the separation.

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