

WHAT DO CHILDREN WANT FROM CONTACT?

There has recently been some interesting research into what children think about being separated from one of their parents. The research was a joint project between the Universities of Sussex and Oxford and funded by the Nuffield Foundation. It is the first major study in the U.K to ask young adults who experience parental separation in their youth what they thought about the contact they had with the non-resident parent.

By tracking their experiences of contact through their childhood and into adulthood the study tries to highlight the long term impact of contact arrangements on parent/child relationships.

The Report findings, in summary, are as follows:-

1. It was rare for children to blame the resident parent for contact not happening or being disrupted. Most children said that this had been the responsibility of the non-resident parent (ie the parent that left the home) or that it would have been their own decision.
2. Resident parents were much more likely to have actively encouraged contact than to have undermined it.
3. Key ingredients in successful contact include no parental conflict; a good pre-separation relationship between the child and the non-resident parent and the non-resident parent demonstrating his or her commitment to the child and the child being consulted about the arrangements.
4. The continuity of contact and its quality are more important to successful contact than its frequency and there is no 'best' level of contact.
5. The child's pre-separation relationship with the non-resident parent predicts both the quality of contact and the child's relationship with the non-resident parent through childhood and into adulthood.