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### Do I still have a say in the welfare of my child?

Splitting up with your partner does not mean that you will lose your rights to have a say in the welfare of your children. Gaining custody of a child is not the same as gaining parental responsibility over a child.

#### Parental Responsibility

This is the legal term used to describe all the rights and duties that parents have towards their children. For instance, it gives you the right to agree to medical treatment for your child, to choose which religion they are brought up in, or to choose the school they go to.

When a child is born, the mother has parental responsibility. The father also does, but only if he is married to the mother at the time of birth or is registered as the father on the baby's birth certificate. However, later in the child's life, the unmarried biological father of the child can get parental responsibility by:

1. marrying the child's mother; or
2. making a Parental Responsibility Agreement with the mother; or
3. re-registering the child's birth if no father was registered initially; or
4. getting a court order.

If you become a step-parent because you marry someone who has parental responsibility for a child, you can also get parental responsibility for the child by:

1. making a Parental Responsibility Agreement with everyone who already has parental responsibility; or
2. getting a court order

Both parents get parental responsibility where you adopt a child. Also, any other 'suitable person' can get parental responsibility if the court orders this.

You do not lose your parental responsibility if you get divorced. You will carry on being the children's full legal parent, whether or not the children live with you.



**Lenore Rice**

[lrice@wilson-nesbitt.co.uk](mailto:lrice@wilson-nesbitt.co.uk)

#### Contact us:

Contact us on our free phone number **0800 840 1347** or email us at [family@wilson-nesbitt.co.uk](mailto:family@wilson-nesbitt.co.uk).