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## Sun, sand and shared custody

*By Tracy Beaumont*

The summer holidays are now upon us and we are all looking forward to the hard-earned break, but they can be one of the most challenging times of the year for separated parents.

With six long weeks to plan around, disagreements over time with the children can quickly escalate.

Many parents manage holiday contact between themselves and a flexible, cooperative arrangement is often the best outcome for children.

However, if communication regularly breaks down, a written Parenting Plan or Child Arrangements Order can provide clarity and help avoid conflict.

Many orders include specific provisions for the summer break, such as splitting it equally or alternating it year by year.

It is also important to consider the needs of grandparents, so sitting down with a solicitor to work on an order together through mediation is often the best approach.

### Taking children abroad

For many of us, the summer means Spain, Sangria and sun, but under the Child Abduction Act 1984, it is a criminal offence to take a child under 16 out of the UK without the consent of everyone who holds parental responsibility or without leave of the court.

If you do not have an existing Child Arrangements Order in place, then written consent from the other parent is strongly advisable.

A signed letter kept with your travel documents, including the child's details, destination, travel dates and the other parent's signature, can prove invaluable if you are questioned at the border.

If the other parent refuses permission for your child to travel overseas and you believe this is unreasonable, mediation using a trusted solicitor is usually the first step. If that fails, you can apply to the court for a Specific Issue Order.

### Plan ahead

Agreeing on arrangements before the summer holidays really kick in can help avoid last-minute disputes.

Even where relations are amicable or trips away are short, putting plans in writing ensures both parties are clear on what has been agreed.

If you need help putting workable arrangements in place or require assistance with mediation or a court application, our family law team is here to help.



For further advice, please contact Tracy in our Family Department on 01904 528361 or at [txb@hethertons.co.uk](mailto:txb@hethertons.co.uk)  
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