

Parenting Contracts

A Guide for Parents

Parenting Contracts

Every mum, dad and carer needs support from time to time, especially if their child is having problems at school. As a parent or carer, you can get this support through a parenting contract.

What is a parenting contract?

- A parenting contract is an agreement between a parent or carer and either the LEA or the governing body of a school.
- Your child's school or LEA may offer a parenting contract if your child is truanting or if they have been excluded from school.
- Parenting contracts are NOT a punishment. They are a way for you and the school or LEA to work together to help improve your child's behaviour or attendance and for you to get practical support from the school or LEA. This may be provided directly by someone from the school or LEA or by another organisation such as the voluntary sector.

Who can be offered a parenting contract?

- Parenting contracts can be offered to any mum, dad, step-parent, foster parent or other carer, whether they live with the child or not. The school or LEA will usually try to contact all of the child's parents or carers to discuss what each of them can do to help improve their child's attendance or behaviour and the types of support they might need. Depending on the circumstances, the parents/carers may then enter into a joint parenting contract or separate parenting contracts.

What does it involve?

- Parenting contracts are intended to give you support – to help you help your child get the most out of school. They are also intended to encourage a positive working relationship between the school, LEA and you so that you can all work together to tackle truancy and poor behaviour and try to resolve problems.
- Under the contract, you agree to do certain things e.g. ensuring that your child arrives at school punctually every day for a fortnight by accompanying them to school/making arrangements for them to be accompanied or signing a weekly behaviour report and discussing any problems raised with your child.

Do I have to enter into a parenting contract if my child's school or LEA offers it to me?

- No – parenting contracts are a voluntary arrangement between the school or LEA and the parent. You cannot be forced to enter into the contract.
- However, they do provide you with a chance to get support and to help your child get the most out of their education.
- If you decide not to enter into a contract, you will need to try to find other ways of improving your child's behaviour or attendance and it may be worth discussing with the school or LEA how you intend to do this. If there is no improvement, the LEA will have to consider what further action should be taken. This could include applying for a court order to make you attend parenting classes to deal with your child's behaviour or prosecuting you for your child's irregular attendance.

My child has been truanting/excluded and the school/LEA has offered a parenting contract – what happens now?

The school or LEA should invite you to a meeting to discuss the parenting contract. Your child may also be invited to attend depending on their age and understanding.

- DO NOT WORRY. Parenting contracts are not a punishment and being offered a contract is not a bad reflection on you in any way.
- The meeting is for you and the school/LEA to discuss your child's attendance or behaviour, the reasons behind it and ways in which it might be improved. You can also use it to discuss more generally any difficulties which you/your family are having and types of support that may be helpful to you.
- The offer of a parenting contract is an opportunity for you and the school or LEA to work together to tackle any difficulties which your child is having. Tackling these issues now can make a real difference



to your child's life chances. Repeated exclusions are very disruptive to a child's education and those who are excluded or who truant are far less likely than their peers to get five or more good GCSEs and more likely to become involved in crime.

- A parenting contract is also an opportunity for you to get the help that you might need both in relation to parenting and more generally.
- Before you attend the meeting, it is important to have a think about what you would like to get out of it. In particular:
 - What do you think about your child's truancy/behaviour and are there any reasons behind it which it would be helpful to discuss at the meeting?
 - Are there any things which would help you to improve your child's attendance or behaviour e.g. help with transport to school, regular meetings with your child's form teacher, etc?
 - Are you experiencing particular difficulties at the moment and, if so, might the school or LEA be able to help or let you know where you can get help – e.g. benefits advice, parent groups, counselling, etc?
 - What might you realistically be able to do to improve your child's behaviour and attendance e.g. accompany them to the school gate every day, sign a daily behaviour report, attend regular parenting classes, etc?
- It may also be helpful to write down any questions you have for the school or LEA.
- If you are anxious about the meeting, ask the school or LEA if you can bring a friend or family member along for moral support.

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Further information

National contacts: www.parentcentre.gov.uk
www.dfes.gov.uk/behaviourandattendance

For further help and support, contact the Parentline Plus helpline on 0808 800 222 or visit their website
www.parentlineplus.org.uk

For advice relating to exclusions, contact the Advisory Centre for Education on 020 7704 9822 or at www.ace-ed.org.uk

Local contacts: *(To be completed by local distributor)*