

What is Parental Responsibility?

Under the law, if a child's mother and father are married when their child is born, both parents have legal rights towards their child. These rights are called 'Parental Responsibility'.

Parental Responsibility gives you the right to decide, or be consulted about, your child's:

- Education
- Medical treatment
- Home
- Marriage
- Religion

Do unmarried fathers automatically have Parental Responsibility?

No. If a child's father is not married to the mother when their child is born, only the mother has Parental Responsibility. However, the father will get responsibility if he marries the mother later.

Can unmarried fathers get Parental Responsibility?

Yes. By reaching a **Parental Responsibility** Agreement with the mother. (A Parental Responsibility Agreement form has to be completed and then recorded at the Principal Registry of the Family Division.

You can get these forms from Family Courts, but you are advised to seek legal advice.) Or by getting a **Parental Responsibility Order** or **Residence Order** from the Court.

Can anyone else get Parental Responsibility?

Yes. The Court can make a Residence Order. This gives Parental Responsibilities to the person granted the Order.

Certain people can apply for a Residence Order, including **parents, family relatives, foster carers and an adult with whom the child has lived for a specified period of time.**

A Residence Order also says where a child will live and sets out other conditions about how he or she will be cared for.

The Court can appoint a **Guardian** with Parental Responsibility.

The Social Services Department has Parental Responsibility when it obtains an Emergency Protection Order, Interim Care Order or a Care Order.

Can I find out more about gaining Parental Responsibility or Residence Orders?

Yes. It is best to seek legal advice. You can get the name and address of a solicitor from:

- Your local Family Proceedings Court or County Court
- A Citizen's Advice Bureau
- A law centre
- A local library