

Top Ten Tips for Lone Parents from the Lone Parent Helpline

1. *Make sure you are receiving all the financial support that you are entitled to*

Splitting up from your partner may mean you become entitled to new benefits or tax credits or are now entitled to a higher amount. If you're already receiving benefit, or if your ex-partner was claiming benefits for the family, you must inform the benefits and/or tax credits office of the change. You should do this straight away so that you don't get overpaid or lose money. Call the Lone Parent Helpline on 0800 018 5026 for information about what you are entitled to.

2. *If you are unsure about your housing rights*

After a relationship breakdown and/ or separation from your ex-partner, you will usually have the right to remain in your home. Contact Shelterline for free housing advice on 0808 800 4444 or call the Lone Parent helpline on 0800 018 5026 for help. You can also get advice from your local Citizen's Advice Bureau, the housing advice service at your local authority or a local law centre.

3. *If you are experiencing violence or harassment*

Women can contact the Scottish Domestic Abuse helpline on 0800 027 1234 for advice and information or if you need somewhere safe to stay. Men who are experiencing violence should call Mankind on 0870 794 4124 for support and referral to a refuge.

4. *Make arrangements for child maintenance*

Try to come to an agreement with your ex-partner. However, if this is not possible, contact the Child Support Agency national helpline on 08457 133 133, who can calculate and collect maintenance on your child's behalf. For more information call the Lone Parent Helpline on 0800 018 5026 and ask for our booklet, *Maintenance through the CSA*.

5. *Dealing with isolation and loneliness*

At times it can be difficult to cope as a lone parent, especially if you have just been through a bereavement or relationship breakdown. Lots of lone parents find it helps to share experiences and ideas with people who have been through the same thing. Contact the Lone Parent Helpline in Scotland 0800 018 5026. If you need some support and advice about parenting, contact Parentline Scotland on 0808 800 2222.

6. Find out about childcare

Contact ChildcareLink on 0800 96 02 96 or see www.childcarelink.gov.uk for details of your local Children's Information Service (CIS) who can provide information about registered childcare providers in your area. If you are working, you can get help towards the costs of certain childcare through Working Tax Credit, call the Tax Credits Helpline on 0845 300 3909. If you are thinking of looking for work or training you may get help with childcare costs to do this through the New Deal for Lone Parents, call the information line on 0800 868 868.

7. Ask your employer about flexible working

Find out if you have the right to ask your employer to consider a request for flexible working to change the hours and/or your patterns of work. You may also have the right to unpaid Parental leave. For more information call the Lone Parent Helpline on 0800 018 5026 and ask for our *Employment Rights* booklet.

8. Apply for a Council Tax discount

If you are the only adult in your household, you will qualify for a 25% discount on your Council Tax. Older children who you still receive Child Benefit for and students do not count as adults. Contact the Council Tax department at your local authority; the telephone number will be in you local directory.

9. Open your own bank account

If you have a joint bank account and/or credit card with your ex-partner, contact the bank to cancel it and open your own bank account. You will need this for any tax credit and/or benefit payments you are entitled to, as benefits are no longer paid by order book.

10. Make a Will

If you haven't already made a Will, you should do so now so that any property you own is distributed in the way you want and your wishes about your children are considered. You may also need to alter any Will you made before you separated from your ex-partner. For more information, call the Lone Parent helpline on 0800 018 5026.