My family’s changing

why is this happening?

what will happen next?

look inside for advice from other young people

If you want more help, see the contact details on the back page
Why is this happening?

There are lots of reasons why some parents split up. Usually it’s because one or both of them is unhappy. They might think they need to be apart to make things better.

Your parents may argue and shout, but you must remember it’s not your fault that this is happening.

This booklet can help you work out how you are feeling. You might want to show it to your mum or dad, or other adults.
It can be very confusing when parents split up. You could talk to an adult, like a parent or teacher, about any questions you have.

- Why are mum and dad angry?
- Who can I talk to?
- What about Ben, my dog?
- Do they still love me?
- Where will I live?
- Why are mum and dad angry?
- Who can I talk to?
What do you want for the future?
Use this page to write down what you want to happen. If you want, you could show it to your parents. You might not get what you want, but it might help to write it all down.

where would you like to live?
who would you like to see?
where would you like to go to school?
what activities would you like to do?
When mum and dad split up, I moved to a new place with my mum. I was worried that I wouldn't get to see my friends any more, but when I visit my dad I get to see my friends too. Plus I have new friends where I'm living now.

When my family changed I thought my life was ruined. But I found lots of different ways to help me cope - try to look for the positives!

Me and my sister are still together with mum. I still live in the same house and go to the same school. I wasn't sure how often I would see my dad, but it turned out ok and I see him at weekends.

I thought that when it was just dad and me living together I wouldn't get to see my nana and her cat Betty, and this upset me. I still get to see them at weekends and holidays though.
What happens next?

When parents split up, they have to think about lots of different things, like where you will live and when you will see the parent that you don’t live with.

Sometimes parents find it difficult to agree on plans for their children. They may talk to mediators (people who are trained in helping parents agree) or get advice from lawyers.

If parents can’t agree, a judge or magistrate from a family court might be asked to help. A family court is very different to a criminal court where people go when they might have done something wrong.
The judge may ask a Cafcass worker to talk to you and your parents. The Cafcass worker will tell the court what they think will be best for you.

The judge will listen carefully to what everyone has to say, and then try to help everyone agree. If this still isn’t possible, the judge will make a decision on what’s best for you.
How do you feel?

You might feel sad, lonely, angry or confused. It’s normal to feel all these things. Sometimes you might feel lots of different things all at once. It’s ok to have mixed feelings, like feeling happy and sad at the same time.

How do you feel? You can write down other feelings here too.
Sometimes we talk about feelings and sometimes we keep them hidden.

There are lots of feelings to find in this word search. Which of these feelings are you keeping hidden?

There are ten more feelings in this word search – can you find them?

c w s r e t y h i o p
a c d c g h s a d z x
j v o a a q w p r h y
e h i n l r j p g o k
a f z g f v e y m p s
l w e r e u y d i e p
o s d y g h s k l f x
u v w o r r i e d u y
s y i a f r a i d l d
l o n e l y b n m a s
c v b n m q w e r t y

afraid  hopeful  sad
angry  jealous  scared
confused
happy  lonely  worried ✓
Feelings: let them out!

If you’re angry, sad or worried, you might want to keep your feelings hidden. But sometimes it helps to talk to someone.

Talk to people who are close to you:

• your family
• friends and their families. Some of them might have been through the same thing
• teachers and youth workers.

If you don’t want to talk to someone you know, you could call one of the numbers on the back page.

don’t bottle up your feelings - let them out!
Let your parents know how you feel

Talk to your parents about how you feel and what you want to happen. Be honest about how you feel, and don’t be afraid to ask questions. Just say what you think is right and what you want, not what other people want.

If you want, you can write down what you want to talk to your parents about here.
**Quick tips**

Buy a pad to scribble on when you get angry.

Do something that makes you happy – watch one of your favourite films or read a favourite book.

Do some sport – football, swimming or dancing can make you feel better.

If you feel really angry, hit a big, soft cushion.

These things won’t make things go back to the way they were, but they might make you feel better.
see your friends!

play music!

See your friends!

email your friends
Dealing with change

Change is not always easy. It might take some time for everyone to get used to new ways. But most children find that things get better over time.

Some children live with their mum or dad most of the time, and visit the other parent at weekends or over the holidays.

Some children spend the same amount of time with each of their parents.

Some children spend time with other people, like grandparents.

Some children have stepfamilies. A stepfamily is when one or both of your parents live with someone who isn’t your mum or dad. They may have children too.

Remember, families come in all shapes and sizes!
When my dad got remarried I was really upset but now I realise it’s great because I have two families and I get to spend time with them all.

My friend’s parents are getting a divorce. He tries to be ok with it but he just ends up being spiteful to cover up his feelings.

My mum and dad have split up and I’m sorry to say it’s for the better. They couldn’t get on together and just argued.

My mum and dad are divorced but I got lots of help from my school and the rest of my family.
Help!

Childline
A special help line for children
0800 1111
www.childline.org.uk

Divorce Aid
Advice for children and families going through divorce
www.divorceaid.co.uk

It’s not your fault
Advice for children whose parents are splitting up
www.itstnotyourfault.org

National Youth Advocacy Service
Information and advice
0800 61 61 01
www.nyas.net

Voice
You can call this number if you are unhappy with decisions that have been made about your care
0808 800 5792
www.voiceyp.org