Christmas & New Year: How It Can Cause Family Stress

Tuesday 11 December, 2018

Shakin' Stevens famously declared Christmas as the season of *"love and understanding"*, and in most cases that is true. It is not always rosy however, as Tilly Bailey & Irvine's Private Family Law Solicitor Shamin Ali explains....

"Christmas is traditionally a festive time for families to come together and to celebrate.

Unfortunately, the festive period can be a stressful time for families and family relationships. It can also be an expensive time of the year, causing financial strain on the family which can lead to further fall-out."

Couples may endure tensions when spending long periods of time together. For couples who are already experiencing difficulties in their marriage, Christmas can increase the stresses and strains of normal family life.

Sometimes it can escalate. Victims of domestic violence should in the first instance contact the Police, who said that between 15 December to 16 January last year there were a total of 2,656 calls for help in relation to domestic abuse – 82 fewer than in 2016. On New Year's Day there were 139 calls, down from 175.

In some cases the Police can issue a Restraining Order against the offender. Otherwise, steps can be taken through the Courts to protect members of the family who may be at risk.

Contact arrangements about the children can also cause issues for separated families. Forward planning is important. If possible it is best to ensure that both parents and the children know which parent the children should be with and when.

Plan your Christmas contact early and try to agree contact arrangements in plenty of time. If matters cannot be agreed then initially mediation should be attempted. We are happy to recommend mediators who will be able to assist families in reaching an agreement.

If agreement cannot be reached then an application can be made to the Court for a Child Arrangement Order, which can define contact arrangements.

We at Tilly Bailey & Irvine's Private Family Department wish you a very happy and peaceful Christmas, but if your family Christmas is not what you would hope or had hoped it to be, please contact us on 01740 646000.

We have offices across the North East in Stockton, Hartlepool, Wynyard and Barnard Castle.

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