

How can the FCO support you in international parental child abduction cases?

As families enjoy time away from school and work over Christmas and New Year, the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) is reminding people of the support available in cases of international parental child abduction.

International parental child abduction is when one parent removes or keeps a child from the country they normally live in, without the consent of the other parent or in breach of a court order.

Parents do not always realise their actions could be classified as abduction or that abduction is a criminal offence.

How can the FCO help?

The FCO can help those affected by child abduction and in custody cases where the child is under 16 and where there is a British link within the family, including in cases where the child is a dual national. FCO support can include:

- Informing a parent whether the country which their child has been taken to is operating the 1980 Hague Convention. If the country is a signatory, the FCO can put parents in touch with the relevant authorities in the UK so they can submit the applications.
- Providing a list of English speaking lawyers in a particular country, if parents need to apply for custody and permission to bring their child back to the UK through overseas courts.
- Trying to verify whether a child has arrived in a particular country if parents do not know where they are.
- Contacting the relevant authorities to check what progress has been made in finding children reported missing with the police overseas.

The FCO has provided assistance in 260 international parental child abduction cases so far this year , and in 2,425 cases since 2010. The FCO is contactable on 020 7008 1500 seven days a week and 24 hours a day. You can also read FCO advice on International Parental Child Abduction [here](#).

Andrew Stephenson MP, Minister for Consular Policy, said:

The break over Christmas and New Year, when schools have broken up, is sadly a time where we tend to see a spike in parental child abduction. Abduction can be a devastating ordeal for all involved, in particular the child.

If people do need assistance as a result of parental child

abduction, they can contact our consular staff and reunite who we partner with, who will do everything they can to help.

If you suspect that your child may be abducted, you should also contact the charity reunite, which provides advice and information to parents and families whose children have been, or might be, abducted overseas. You can call them at any time on 01162 556 234 or visit their [website](#).

Alison Shalaby, CEO of reunite, said:

A child who is parentally abducted often experiences serious emotional distress, which can have a life-long impact. Parents and the wider family are suddenly thrust into an uncertain and unfamiliar situation which, in some cases, is completely unexpected and seems impossible to resolve.

However, many of these cases can be resolved, whether that be through mediation or the legal process, and children are able to maintain a meaningful relationship with both parents. Through our telephone advice line we can provide specialist, confidential advice and support, and assist parents in resolving the situation in the best interests of their child. We would urge any parent whose child has been abducted, or who fears their child may be abducted, or any parent who is considering abducting their child, to call us on 0116 2556 234.

Parental child abduction has such harmful consequences that we would urge parents, whatever their situations, to seriously consider what actions are in the best interests of their child.

Further information