

Press release: A Christmas reminder of support available in child abduction cases

In the run up to the Christmas holidays, the FC0 is reminding British people of the support available to them 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 preventing their removal. Parents don't always realise that their actions could be classified as abduction or that abduction is a criminal offence.

This year*, the FC0 provided assistance in 228 international parental child abduction cases.

The FC0 can help in child abduction and 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. Help we can provide includes:

- Telling parents whether the country which your child has been taken to is operating the 1980 Hague Convention – a treaty that includes a process for returning children under 16 who have been abducted internationally by a parent. If the country your child is in is a signatory to the Hague Convention, the FC0 can put parents in touch with the relevant authorities in the UK so they can submit the relevant 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 FC0 is contactable on 020 7008 1500 seven days a week and 24 hours a day.

Harriett Baldwin MP, Minister for Consular Policy, said:

Christmas is traditionally a time when families gather together, and many people go abroad to visit relatives and loved ones.

Sadly, it is also a time when child abduction cases surge. Child abduction can be a devastating ordeal and we deal with hundreds of instances of it every year. Should the worst happen, you are not on your own. Contact our partners at reunite or our consular staff, who will do everything they can to help you.

The charity reunite offers advice to parents and families whose children have been abducted overseas and anyone can call their hotline at any time on 01162 556 234.

Alison Shalaby, CEO of reunite, said:

When a child is taken to or kept in another country the impact is felt by the whole family, and particularly by the child themselves. Although the time after an abduction can be distressing and even traumatic, such situations can have a positive outcome, and there are options and help available to all parties to find a constrictive resolution to the situation.

During the past year reunite has been pleased to support many parents caught up in the stressful issues regarding child abduction, by offering ongoing advice and support through our advice line, and undertaking many successful mediations through our specialist mediation service. The most important thing to remember is that this is not a situation you have to handle alone, and reunite are here to help.

*Figures are from 1 January – 20 December 2018