

PARENTHING WEEKLY

The costs the formula never counts

This year gave the core figure a shared number. The costs that trigger the rows sit outside it, and October is when they get decided.

The number settled one thing, and moved the argument

In January, Ireland published its first child maintenance guidelines and a free calculator. For the core weekly figure, two houses now start from the same number instead of two guesses. That lowers the temperature.

The guidelines are just as clear about what they leave out. Education, childcare, medical and disability costs sit outside the calculator, to be agreed separately. Those are the ones that set off the rows: the winter coat as the evenings draw in, the school trip, the dentist, the mid-term childcare. The formula gave the core figure a shared starting point. Everything around it is still a conversation between two homes.

26 Oct

The October bank holiday lands inside the school mid-term, a full week with no timetable holding it up.

Placed on the first of the month it is a plan. Left to the 23rd it is a scramble.

THIS WEEK'S TIP

Have the December conversation in October

The arguments separated parents have in December are rarely decided in December. They are settled now, in the quiet stretch before anyone is under pressure, or they are left until the week the bill or the plan lands. Family support services say the same thing every year: open the mid-term, the bank holiday and Christmas early, while it is calm and the child never hears the negotiation.

The practical move is small. Take the handful of things that sit outside any formula, the mid-term week, who covers the coat and the trips, how gifts are coordinated, what happens if a child wakes up unwell on the 24th, and write them down somewhere both houses can see. Not to win anything. So neither house is guessing.

● parenting.ie



**The plan you make in
October is a decision. The
one you make in December
is a reaction.**

Same conversation, ten weeks apart.
The only thing that changes is who is
under pressure when you have it.

One calm place for the parts no formula reaches

ParenThing keeps the mid-term week, the shared costs and the plans both homes rely on in one calm, private place, agreed and visible before anyone is under pressure. Not a referee. A record both houses can see.

So the child never has to carry the message between two doors.

Start free at parenthing.ie

SOURCES

Child Maintenance Guidelines for Ireland, Department of Justice, gov.ie

New child maintenance guidelines don't add up, Irish Examiner, irishexaminer.com

Department of Justice launches Child Maintenance Calculator, Treoir, treoir.ie

The Family Justice Strategy in 2026 and Beyond, McCarthy and Co Solicitors, mccarthy.ie

October Bank Holiday in Ireland 2026, Office Holidays, officeholidays.com

