



It's All Over for Brangelina – What Happens To Their Adopted Children after Divorce?

After months of rumour and denial, yet another high profile celebrity match has bitten the dust with recriminations and accusations. The news broke that movie star Angelina Jolie had filed papers for divorce, which sent shock waves reverberating around the world. Despite their public displays of affection and their image as the perfectly glamorous ideal couple, trailing their family of 6 children with them around the world to various movie sets or family properties, clearly all was not as it seemed.

Headlines, pages of newsprint and the internet have gone into overdrive with speculation, hoping that the couple will fail to reach a deal and the divorce case will go to court, which will mean full disclosure of the reasons behind the break up.

Unlike most couples, 'Brangelina' won't have to argue over money as they are said to be worth a cool £300million between them. Instead, the bargaining power is the children, with Jolie demanding full custody and only visitation rights for her soon to be ex husband Brad. He meanwhile is going for joint custody. The battle will be brutal and sadly the children in the middle are the ones who potentially will be hurt the most.

Brad and Angelina have three natural children and three adopted children. Divorce can be a very stressful and emotional time for children as they also have to process the idea that their parents are no longer together. The same impact is felt by adopted children, maybe even more so. An adopted child is likely to suffer from deep insecurities and entered into a home that promised them a support network and usually two loving parents.

Of course, upon separation, the child will still have two loving parents but they are likely to feel unsettled and worried about the future. It will be a concern for the parents, who, when they are not a celebrity couple, will have spent years preparing their house, their life and proving their worth to adopt a child. What will happen if the picture they presented to the adoption agency is no longer the same?

Siobhan Rooney, Head of the Family Law department and a Partner at leading and award winning regional law firm Pictons says "The good news in these cases is that parents of adopted children still have the same rights as biological parents. Once you have adopted a child you gain Parental Responsibility or "PR" for that child and this cannot just be taken away because of divorce. Parental Responsibility means you are responsible for making decisions in respect of a child's welfare.

“Upon separation it can often be hard to concentrate on the children given the end of relationship and the emotional turmoil that comes with it. However, the Court’s first priority is always the Children of the family and their needs. The best thing for the parents to do is to try to agree arrangements for children in an amicable way and always bear in mind that the arrangements should be in the best interests of the child, which is not always in the best interest of the parents.

“If you struggle with making an amicable agreement, Mediation may be the way forward. This can help set out all the options available to parents and the mediator will work as a vessel to exchange ideas and options in a constructive way.”

Parents of adopted children should be aware of the following;

- 1.) The child won’t be taken away just because of separation.
- 2.) Child maintenance is payable as usual by the non-resident parent.
- 3.) The child has a right to have an ongoing relationship with each of their parents.

Siobhan concludes “At Pictons we always suggest Mediation as a first step in any family proceedings as we truly believe it is in each party’s favour to come to an arrangement that they have agreed upon rather than going through Court proceedings which can be a drawn out, expensive and emotionally draining on all parties. Children instinctively pick up the merest sign of tension and it’s not fair on them to make a family break up any worse than it already is.”

To speak to Siobhan or one of her team call them on 01582 870880 or email info@pictons.co.uk