


(continued from previous page)

quickly, particularly at the weekends. When you book, find out exactly what is included in the price so that you don't end up having two lots of party bags for example, but no venue!

If you have the party at home, you will still need a focal point whether it is games that you organise, a football party in the garden, a bouncy castle, or you may decide to take the stress off yourself and hire a children's entertainer. There are all sorts of entertainers that will come to your house or chosen venue and ensure the children have lots of fun. There are magicians, pamper parties, discos and even reptile or science parties.

Hopefully, as it is summer you will have the option of having the party in the garden if you wish - but make sure there is some shade for children and that they have sun cream on. When you book an entertainer, check what is included; some may do 60 or 90 minutes of entertainment and then leave whilst others will be there from the start to welcome guests and help out with food as well.

Finally, if the thought of organising a children's party fills you with dread, don't be embarrassed about asking others to help out or to hand the whole thing over to the professionals. Your child will prefer happy, relaxed parents that can join in the fun, rather than parents that are in the kitchen worrying about the food or trying to find the right playlist! 



by Alexandra Harrison
Celebrant

What is a celebrant and what do they do?

You might ask, "A what-a-brant?" A celebrant is someone who writes and leads personalised ceremonies. An example is a naming ceremony, which is a special way to celebrate the birth of a baby or officially welcome your child/children into your family. It is a secular (non-religious) event, and an opportunity to gather friends and family for a beautiful and memorable gathering.

A celebrant can lead a ceremony anywhere, any time. It does not have to be at a licenced venue (but it can be!)

In the 21st century, many people are moving away from traditional christenings or baptisms and are choosing a naming or welcoming ceremony instead - sometimes known as a civil ceremony. These are led by an independent celebrant.

When your child is born you may have already chosen their name, but for some parents it may take a while. The name you choose may have personal meaning but whatever the

reason it is one of the first gifts you will give your child - after life itself!

What makes up a ceremony?

Well, it is really up to you and what you want. During a naming ceremony, there is no set script or structure. You can include many different elements or options to make it personal to you and

your family. With a celebrant, the ceremony is designed around what is important to your family - and what you

want to say to your baby/child/

children. You may have different beliefs or faiths and wish to incorporate something from both.

A celebrant will guide you through all the different options.

Ceremony ideas:

- Sand ceremony
- Unity candles
- Memory box
- Tree planting
- Dove release

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Where
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Can I have my own vows or promises?

Yes, of course. A celebrant can help you write these.

Can I include other people in the ceremony?

Definitely. It is a lovely idea to include other people. These could be grandparents, aunts, uncles or other guiding adults (known as guardians or supporting adults). Or it could be brothers and sisters who want to welcome their new sibling. In fact, involving them can play a really important part in giving them their own sense of importance and responsibility for their new sibling. Giving other children a role in the ceremony can even help with jealousy issues.

Can I have symbolic elements or rituals?

Yes definitely! For instance, a 'sand ceremony' is a powerful

way to represent the joining of a family, where different coloured grains of sand are poured into a single vase representing the blending of a family never to be separated. The ideas are endless.

But it is important to remember that a naming ceremony is not just for babies. It can happen at any age.

Your celebrant will guide you through and help create both an order of service and the ceremony itself, linking together all the different elements you

have chosen. A service will normally contain (but not necessarily in this order):

- Introduction and welcome
- Information about the child
- Readings, music, poems
- Words about the importance of parenting
- Parental vows/promises (a celebrant can help with these)
- Words around the importance of wider friends and family
- Appointment of Guide Parents
- Reason for the name(s) and the naming itself
- Concluding words.

But it is important to remember that a naming ceremony is not just for babies. It can happen at any age. It could also be a wonderful way to welcome a child that you are adopting - creating a special bond as you acknowledge and welcome them into your family.

Some celebrants can even help with organising the whole event from finding your ideal location, creating the invitations to organising the catering. This really helps, taking the stress and strain away - especially when you will have your hands full already!

And did you know a celebrant is not just for naming ceremonies? A qualified celebrant can write a completely tailored wedding or commitment ceremony, renewal of vows or celebration of life ceremony. And, like a naming ceremony, these can be held anywhere - they do not have to be at a licenced venue.

Alexandra Harrison is a qualified independent celebrant. Contact Alex for a friendly informal chat about your ceremony on 07983 415 784 or visit her website for more information www.alexandra-harrison.com Alexandra also runs a baby naming facebook page see www.facebook.com/BabyNamingWithAlexandra



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Independent Celebrant

Your Ceremony, Your way.

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Do mums have a favourite child?

According to the survey of 1,000 UK mothers of one or more children, carried out by One4all, the Post Office gift card, one in five mums say their children believe they actually favour one of their children more than the others.

And interestingly, youngest children are the most likely to believe they are their mum's favourite. As many as 20% of mums say their children will go as far as to tease one another over who is the favourite.

While the research proved that the vast majority of British mums love their children equally, it did reveal how the relationship between a mother and her children varies according to the order in which they were born.

The survey revealed that firstborns really do stick close to their mums, and even in adulthood are most

likely to socialise with their mum, inviting them out with their friends and turning to them for advice. Mums also report believing that they have the most in common with their oldest child.

Meanwhile, it appears that there is some truth in 'middle children syndrome' - the idea that middle children receive the least attention - however, it could be that this is actually being driven by the children themselves. The research shows that they are the least reliant on mum, even in adulthood. They are the least likely to bring home their dirty laundry, to move back home after moving out, and go

to the bank of mum for handouts when money is tight.

Despite youngest children being in some ways the worst behaved - for example, they are least likely to listen to their mum - they are the most physically affectionate.

Aoife Davey, group marketing manager at One4all Gift Cards, commented: "The research revealed some really interesting findings around how mums and their children's relationships vary depending on whether they were born first, last or in the middle and even more so, around how so many children think their mum has a

favourite. It's not so surprising to see that the baby of the family believes they are the favourite and while there's no denying the relationship varies between a mother and her first born, middle children and last born, our research shows a mother's love for her child remains the same, no matter when they were born. Mums will worry about everything with their first-born child, but by the time the other children come along, it's likely they have experienced the good, the bad and the ugly of motherhood and will be able to relax a lot more. Also, younger siblings will learn from the mistakes their older brothers or sisters will make, and so are likely to be less of a worry to mums."