

### Where can we look for suitable readings?

From the public library, maybe. Look among the poetry anthologies. *The Oxford Book of Marriage* has a section on parenthood (Oxford paperback). Children's anthologies are useful. You, a relative or friend, might write something especially. We can help with suggestions.

### Where can we find a musician to play for us?

There are musician's organisations in the area that'll gladly put you in touch with someone. The public library will have some on its database, or you might find a musician you like busking in town.

### Does it matter if we're not married?

It doesn't matter to us if you're married or not, but you should each make a separate will to ensure that if either or both of you died before your child came of age everything would be taken care of as you'd want it to be. You should appoint a guardian or guardians for your child; the same person or people as the supporting adult or adults at the naming ceremony. It's advisable to ask a solicitor to prepare a will. It's easy to overlook important things if you attempt to do it yourself. The CAB should be able to tell you where to go for inexpensive help. It's especially important that you make a will as a single parent, to ensure your child will be cared for as you'd wish if anything happened to you.

### How much will it cost to have a Humanist Celebrant?

The celebrant's fee will depend on the time and travelling involved, but is usually at least £120 (from January 2006). Please ask for an estimate.

Please get in touch if you have any more questions—01473 658828, or [ceremonies@suffolkhumanists.org.uk](mailto:ceremonies@suffolkhumanists.org.uk)



## Welcoming your baby with a Humanist ceremony

Secular naming ceremonies  
by Suffolk Humanist Celebrants

"A name, once given, will be associated forever with a face, a voice, a walk, a laugh, and all the other idiosyncrasies our family and friends recognise. This child's name will be spoken, whispered, shouted, cried, sung, and written, thousands of times..."

*From a Humanist naming ceremony*

Suffolk Humanist Celebrants are members of  
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## A Humanist Welcome to the World

It's natural to express your commitment to a loved child by welcoming him or her into the family and the wider human community with a simple ceremony. The parents and mentors (otherwise known as supporting adults or special friends) can make a formal commitment to his or her welfare, and it will be a celebration of new life.

The deeply felt need for a rite of passage ritual at this time is something that goes back thousands of years; the religious have no special claim to them. Children from Christian families are baptised or 'christened' in a ritual that signifies purification from 'original sin' and admission into the church, as well as a name-giving, but there is no original sin and there are no Christian babies, any more than there are Muslim babies or Jewish babies, there are only babies. No one has a right to claim them in the name of any religion.

Humanists provide secular ceremonies that simply celebrate a baby's arrival and welcome him or her to the world, nothing more. Our ceremonies are entirely non-religious; they shouldn't be confused with ceremonies offered by any organisation that uses religious symbolism in a pick-'n-mix formula.

These are the sort of questions we're asked about welcoming or naming ceremonies.

### Who can conduct a secular welcoming ceremony?

Anyone. It can be done by a relative or friend of the family. A British Humanist Association book, 'New Arrivals', provides guidelines for those who want to do it themselves. We're happy to give advice to those who want to do it themselves, in exchange for a small donation to our organisation. If you'd like one of us to conduct the ceremony we need as much notice as possible.



### Are welcoming ceremonies only for babies?

No; they can welcome adopted or step-children children into a new family.

### How long does it take?

It depends; perhaps about twenty minutes, depending on who and what you want to include.

### What form does it take?

It's up to you; there are no rules. We usually start by explaining why we're there; to welcome a child into the family and the wider community, and to make a commitment to their future well-being. There are usually readings and music. The parents state their aspirations, and the 'supporting adults', 'mentors', or whatever you choose to call them, will do the same. You may incorporate a symbol of new life by lighting a candle, offering a flower or some other token.

### Where can a welcoming ceremony take place?

Most are intimate family occasions, in the family home or garden, or perhaps in the grandparents' home. You might want to share a welcoming ceremony with other parents who are close friends, from the same extended family. You might hire a function room. Or, in summer, you could have the ceremony in a natural open space, to be followed by a picnic.

In my mind I see you clear  
Changing with each day and year  
My, we're glad you're finally here  
Welcome to the world.  
May you grow up proud and strong  
May your life be rich and long  
May your nights be filled with song  
Welcome to the world.

*Adapted from a song — Si Kahn*

### Do we need a supporting adult, or mentor, for our child?

It's not essential but it's good to have someone, or more than one person, who's willing to make a commitment to your child's welfare. Their role will be to provide support for you, as parents, but more importantly, support for your child; a refuge in times of trouble; a sympathetic ear; a reliable friend. The same person who's appointed your child's mentor may also be named in your will as his or her guardian in the event of your death. No one should accept this sort of responsibility unless they're fully aware of the implications. They should be in your age group; you'll want them to be around until your child is an adult.