

WHAT IS MEDIATION?



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Mediation helps you and your former partner to agree on practical issues, including arrangements for children or financial matters. It is usually better than going to court, as it can help you find your own solution which works for both parents and children, rather than having a court make the decision. It is also usually much less stressful and emotionally taxing, quicker, and cheaper than court proceedings.

How Does It Work?

The first meeting will be just you and the mediator; they will also meet your former partner on their own. Then if your case is suitable, they will meet with both of you together to try and agree a way forward; if you don't feel comfortable being in the same room as your former partner, the mediator can 'shuttle' between you while you remain in separate spaces. The mediator is a professionally trained, neutral person, they will make sure you both have your say and are listened to, with the aim of helping you reach an agreement. You may have several mediation meetings and you can take legal advice in between. Mediation can be face to face or virtual (by telephone or video conference).

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What Will It Cost?

You have to give mediation a try before you can apply to the family court for child arrangements. IF you or your former partner are eligible for Legal Aid, then there is no charge for the initial assessment, known as a MIAM (Mediation Information Assessment Meeting), and mediation sessions are **FREE**. Legal Aid is available for people on very low incomes or in receipt of certain benefits. You can be assessed for Legal Aid eligibility at your MIAM or check at www.gov.uk/check-legal-aid. If you are not eligible, contact local mediators to ask how much they charge.

Why Mediate?

Arrangements which are agreed by both sides usually work better than orders imposed by the court. They can be more flexible and can be changed by agreement as time goes by. This means less conflict and better communication and adaptability moving forward, which is good for everyone and particularly for the children. At the end of the process the mediator will give you a formal copy of your agreement in writing. As well as sorting out child contact issues, mediation can be used to help sort out the finances, including property and pensions. Most people are able to reach an agreement via mediation. If mediation is not successful in your case, then you can apply to the court – but remember, court is a last resort.

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