

## Family Mediation

### What is mediation?

Mediation helps you and your ex 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, quicker and much cheaper than court proceedings.

### How does it work?

The first meeting will be just you and the mediator; they will also meet your ex on his/her own. Then if your case is suitable, they will meet with both of you together to try and agree a way forward. The mediator is a professionally trained, neutral person. They will make sure you both have your say and are listened to, and will help you both to come to an agreement. You may have several mediation meetings and you can take legal advice in between.

### 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](http://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 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.

## **How do I start?**

Just pick up the phone and contact a mediator, or enquire online.

The following firms in Norfolk offer legally aided mediation:

BBL Family Law, Norwich, tel 01603 679059

Norfolk Family Mediation, Norwich, tel 01603 620588

Lighthouse Mediation, various locations, tel 07711 527968

Norton Peskett, Great Yarmouth, tel 01502 718700

Mediated Dispute Solutions, Diss, tel 01379 773082

Other firms offer private mediation – search for a mediator near you at [www.familymediationcouncil.org.uk](http://www.familymediationcouncil.org.uk).

**TRY MEDIATION – IT'S BETTER FOR EVERYONE!**

## **Norfolk Community Law Service**

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