

Child Inclusive Mediation

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Divorce and separation can be a confusing time for children and they don't always have a way to freely express their wishes and feelings.

People can often be worried that including children in Mediation is 'putting them in the middle' or 'dragging them in to things', but it has been found to have a hugely positive effect on a child. Child inclusive mediation gives young people the opportunity to speak to an independent and impartial person so they can have their voice heard.

The Family Mediators Council says the below:

"The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the UK has signed up to, says that all children who are capable of forming their own views have the right to express those in relation to matters affecting them.

They have a right to be consulted if they wish, but are always free to say no if they don't want to meet the mediator.

In practice, mediators find that few children say no; many welcome the chance to talk to someone neutral about what is happening in their family and what is important to them."

What actually happens through the Mediation process?

If you and your former partner agree during a joint session of Mediation that you would like your child to have the opportunity to express their wishes and feelings, then the Mediator will ask you a few questions about the child and about arrangements to meet with them.

Step 1. We will email you for formal consent to meet with your child.

Step 2. We will arrange a date and time for your child to meet with the Mediator on their own. We will also arrange a date and time for a further session between you and your former partner to receive feedback from the child inclusive session.

Step 3. We write to your child and ask if they'd like to come and chat with a Mediator. If they respond 'no' there are no further steps.

Step 4. Your Mediator will meet with your child as arranged.

Step 5. Your Mediator will meet with you for you to receive feedback from this. You will not receive a written record of the discussion that took place with your child.

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Things to note

Mediators would never ask children to choose between parents but offer a safe space to talk about what is happening in their family and what is important to them.

If children do decide to meet with the mediator, they will agree what is to be fed back to the parents at the next session. This will hopefully give parents some valuable information when making decisions around arrangements for their children.

The feedback session with you as parents should take place as soon as possible after the meeting with your child, we usually arrange this to be the next day.

Some children attend and choose to talk a great deal, whereas some come to see us and just draw a few pictures or write a letter to their parents. It's nice to give them a space to express themselves in a way that they feel comfortable.

It is key not to try to influence what children may say to the Mediator, this puts a great deal of additional stress on a child and can be anxiety inducing. Furthermore, it is usually clear when a child is speaking if they are repeating something they feel they should be saying or have been told to say.