



## Sorting out family disputes without going to court

This leaflet is for you if your relationship has broken down and you need some help sorting out the practical issues like:

- living and contact arrangements for any children
- what happens to your family home and any other assets or debts
- housing, income and pensions.

Mediation can also be used to resolve other types of family issues, such as disputes between parents and children, or between members of extended families.

Family Mediation Helpline

**0845 60 26 627**

(Monday - Friday 9am to 6pm)

[www.FamilyMediationHelpline.co.uk](http://www.FamilyMediationHelpline.co.uk)

## **What is Family Mediation?**

Family mediation is a way of resolving disputes after your relationship has broken down.

It can be an effective alternative to expensive, lengthy, and stressful court proceedings.

Both parties explain their concerns and needs to each other in the presence of an impartial mediator who helps them to reach an agreement.

It can also help improve communication and reduce ongoing conflict. This may make the breakup less traumatic for you, the other party, and most importantly any children involved.

Mediation is a process that can work to your benefit at all stages. Even if your case is in the court, if you both agree to mediate, you can apply to take it out of court.

The mediation process is confidential.

## **What does the Family Mediation Helpline do?**

The Family Mediation Helpline is a government-sponsored service. The person that you speak to when you call is not a mediator but is able to tell you:

- about family mediation
- if your case is suitable for mediation
- if you can get mediation for free
- about mediators that are local to you.

Call us on 0845 60 26 627 (Monday to Friday – 9am to 6pm) to have a chat about how mediation can help you, or visit our website at [www.FamilyMediationHelpline.co.uk](http://www.FamilyMediationHelpline.co.uk) for more information.

All calls are charged at local rate.

## **What is a 'Family Mediator' and what do they do?**

Family mediators come from a wide range of backgrounds, including law, healthcare, and other professions working with families and children. They are trained to work with people whose relationships have broken down.

A mediator can help you and the other party reach an agreement. Mediators will not take sides or tell parties what to do. Unlike going to court, you stay in control – no one imposes a solution on you.

Some mediators are also trained to include children in the process but only if both parties and the child agree - you can ask your mediator about this.

## How much will mediation cost?

Charges are per session and will vary according to individual mediation services.

For a list of local mediators you can call the Family Mediation Helpline on 0845 60 26 627 or visit the website at: [www.FamilyMediationHelpline.co.uk](http://www.FamilyMediationHelpline.co.uk).

If you qualify for legal aid, you may be able to get mediation for free. Call the Community Legal Advice service on 0845 345 4 345 to check whether you qualify.

## Are agreements legally binding?

No. Any agreement made through mediation is not legally binding. If both parties agree, a legal agreement can be prepared based on the outcome of mediation. An application can be made to the court to have the agreement made into a court order which would be legally binding.

## I need legal advice – should I call the Family Mediation Helpline?

No. The Family Mediation Helpline cannot help you with any questions you may have about the law, or give you legal advice.

If you need legal advice, you can contact:

- Community Legal Advice - 0845 345 4 345
- your local law centre
- a family solicitor; or
- for general advice you can contact your local Citizen's Advice Bureau - [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

**Ministry of  
JUSTICE**

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