

## Family Mediation

A service for separated families

### What is family mediation?

When a couple separate, they often have lots of practical problems to sort out. If they have children, they will need to work out how to live as a separated family. Family mediation is a free service we offer in Orkney to help separated or separating couples to sort out these issues.

If you are in this situation, you may need to talk about living arrangements for you, your children, child maintenance payments, perhaps other financial issues like savings, pensions and debts.

Often it can be difficult and painful to discuss these practical issues when a relationship has broken down, but it's important to sort things out so you can both move on. Mediation can help you to come together and talk in a safe environment with someone else there who is trained to manage conflict.

Mediation is not a type of counselling - it's not about helping a couple to get back together; or helping individuals to deal with the breakdown of a relationship (these are also services we offer - please ask if you would like to know more).

Mediation is about helping separated parents and their children to adapt to their changed circumstances.

### How does mediation work?

Mediation is voluntary. If you think it might help you and your ex-partner to work together to sort out problems, get in touch with us and we will arrange an appointment with each of you separately.

At this first session, we will find out about your situation, explain more about mediation, and discuss whether it may work for you. If you both want to try mediation, an appointment with a trained professional mediator will be set up.

Mediation sessions usually last 1 - 1.5 hours. You both arrive separately and what you talk about is up to you. The mediator is impartial and is not there to give advice or to make decisions on your behalf, but to help you and your ex-partner to have a conversation.

People often talk about detailed practical arrangements: how long the children spend with each parent, which days of the week, how much time they spend with other members of the family e.g. grandparents, who picks them up, where and when etc. They may talk about money e.g. their house, rent, savings, pensions, debts. Having a trained mediator in the room can help you to have these difficult conversations with your ex-partner.

The number of sessions you have is up to you. Sometimes people find after one or two sessions they are able to agree a way forward. People often reach agreement in mediation and then come back later to talk about how it worked.

### Why choose mediation?

When separating parents cannot agree, they may go to solicitors for advice, and they may end up asking a court to make decisions for them. This is costly and stressful.

With mediation, you remain in control of the decisions. What happens is up to you: the mediator is there to help you have a conversation, and to help to manage the inevitable conflict. It's about helping you find a way forward that works for you and your family.

People who have taken part in mediation say:

- it gives you more say over what happens
- it's less stressful than going to court and

- agreements reached can be changed if your circumstances change
- it helped us to find ways of managing our children's lives with less conflict

## Can mediation help children?

Lots of children experience their parents splitting up, and most can adapt well to their changed circumstances. However, parents can help to make it easier by listening to what their children want and need.

Children consistently say:

- they don't like witnessing arguments and conflict between their parents
- they want their parents to be able to talk about things that affect their daily lives
- they want a chance to say what they think and to be listened to.

If you think mediation could help you and your ex-partner to talk about the things that matter to your children, please get in touch.

## Who is mediation for?

Any two people who have been in a relationship which has broken down can come to mediation. It can help them resolve problems they need to sort out before they can move on. It can particularly help people to form a new relationship as separated parents. As their children grow up, different issues will arise and parents need to work together to support their children: mediation can help you to do this.

Family mediation can be really helpful, but it isn't for everyone. It may not work if:

- one of the people cannot be contacted or is not willing to take part
- someone's safety is at risk
- after meeting both people individually, we think mediation is not for you.

## What does it cost?

Relationships Scotland Orkney provides a free mediation service locally. There is no charge for using this service, although we are a charity and always welcome donations.

## Contact us

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The office is staffed Monday - Friday 10.00 - 2.00. Appointments outwith this time available by arrangement.

Relationships Scotland Orkney is committed to the promotion of equal opportunities in all its work.

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