



## A GUIDE TO FAMILY MEDIATION

**What is Family Mediation?** Family Mediation is a way of reaching agreements about arrangements for the future of you and your family, without going to court.

- Mediation provides a safe, confidential environment to have what can be difficult conversations.
- The mediator helps to make sure that you are both heard and they do not take sides or make judgements about your situation, or tell you what to do.
- People decide on realistic, fair solutions that will work for their families.
- Agreements are not legally binding and can be reviewed and changed as your situation changes.
- Mediation is quicker, cheaper and less stressful than going to court.

### Mediation is voluntary and is taken one step at a time

**1 MIAM** – Mediation Information and Assessment Meeting. This meeting lasts up to 45mins and is between you and the mediator. The mediator will explain the mediation process and costs, and can assess for Legal Aid. You can discuss your situation and explore options. After this meeting, you decide whether or not you wish to proceed to the next step of a joint meeting.

**2 JOINT MEETINGS** If you both agree, we will arrange your first joint meeting. This lasts up to 90 minutes. Meetings can be face to face, or by 'shuttle', depending on what is appropriate. In shuttle mediation, the mediator speaks to each person separately.

**3 AGREEMENTS** After the meeting the mediator will write a Mediation Session Summary, which will be sent to you both as an overview of what was discussed and agreed at the meeting. Please note that this is the only record of the meeting. Sometimes more than one meeting may be needed to come to an agreement.

**4 AFTER MEDIATION** You may return to mediation in the future if your arrangements need to be amended, if you both wish to do so.

**COURT** Sometimes people decide to make an application to court after mediation, for example if they would like their agreement made into a court order. Signed pages of the court forms can be provided to a client wishing to make a court application, but please note that they are only valid for 4 months after the date of issue.

**LEGAL AID** Our service has a contract with the Legal Aid Agency, who will fund mediation for those eligible for Legal Aid. If you are on certain benefits or on a low income you may be eligible for Legal Aid. If one person is eligible and the other isn't, the LAA will fund both clients' MIAMs and your first joint meeting. The non-eligible person would then have to pay for further sessions.

**We understand that the idea of mediating may be daunting or confusing and we are here to answer any questions or concerns you might have.**

**CONTACTING US:** Email: [family@mediationeastsussex.co.uk](mailto:family@mediationeastsussex.co.uk)  
Telephone: 01424 446808  
Write to: Mediation East Sussex, Chichester Road,  
St Leonards on Sea, TN38 9BG