

BETA

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LaunchWe cannot provide legal advice or issue MIAM certificates. [Find an FMC-accredited mediator](#)

Family Mediation UK: Complete Guide to Resolving Family Disputes

Family mediation helps separating couples resolve disputes about children and finances without going to court. Learn how it works, what it costs, and how to find an FMC-accredited mediator.

£100-£200

Per Session

3-6 Sessions

Typical Duration

70%+

Success Rate

2-4 Months

Average Time



Important Disclaimer

This guide is provided by **Miam Certificate Quest**, an AI-powered preparation tool. We help you understand the MIAM process but **cannot provide legal advice** and **cannot issue MIAM certificates**.

Only **FMC-accredited mediators** can issue valid MIAM certificates required for court applications. Find an accredited mediator at: familymediationcouncil.org.uk/find-local-mediator

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Disclaimer: Miam Certificate Quest is a beta AI preparation tool launching Q1 2026. We help you prepare for mediation but cannot provide legal advice. For legally binding agreements and MIAM certificates, you must use an **FMC-accredited mediator**. Always seek professional advice for your specific situation.

[Download Family Mediation Guide \(PDF\)](#)

What is Family Mediation?

Family mediation is a voluntary process where a trained, neutral mediator helps separating couples or family members resolve disputes without going to court. It covers issues such as:

- ✓ **Child arrangements** - Where children will live, when they see each parent, holiday schedules
- ✓ **Financial matters** - Division of assets, property, pensions, and maintenance
- ✓ **Communication** - Helping parents work together effectively for their children
- ✓ **Property** - What happens to the family home and other assets

The mediator does not take sides, make decisions for you, or give legal advice. Instead, they facilitate constructive conversations and help you find your own solutions.

According to the [Family Mediation Council](#), mediation has a high success rate and is significantly faster and cheaper than court proceedings.

How Does Family Mediation Work?

The family mediation process typically follows these stages:

- 1 MIAM (Mediation Information Assessment Meeting)**
Each party attends a separate **MIAM** to learn about mediation and assess whether it is suitable. This is a legal requirement before court applications.
- 2 Joint Mediation Sessions**
If both parties agree to proceed, you attend joint sessions with the mediator. Most cases need 3-6 sessions of 60-90 minutes each.
- 3 Identifying Issues**
The mediator helps you identify all the issues that need to be resolved, from practical child arrangements to financial matters.

4

Exploring Options

You discuss possible solutions in a structured way. The mediator ensures both parties can express their views and feel heard.

5

Reaching Agreement

If you reach agreement, the mediator prepares a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Parenting Plan documenting what you've decided.

6

Making It Legal

For financial agreements, you can have a solicitor draft a **consent order** to make the agreement legally binding.

Types of Family Mediation

Child-Focused Mediation

This addresses all matters relating to children:

- ✓ **Living arrangements** - Where children will primarily live
- ✓ **Contact schedules** - When children spend time with each parent
- ✓ **Holiday arrangements** - How school holidays and special occasions are shared
- ✓ **Schooling decisions** - Education choices and school events
- ✓ **Health decisions** - Medical and dental care arrangements
- ✓ **Communication** - How parents will share information about children

A key output is often a **parenting plan** - a detailed document setting out how you will co-parent.

Financial Mediation

Covers division of assets during separation or divorce:

- ✓ **Property** - What happens to the family home
- ✓ **Savings and investments** - How bank accounts and investments are split
- ✓ **Pensions** - Division of pension assets
- ✓ **Debts** - Responsibility for mortgages, loans, credit cards
- ✓ **Maintenance** - Child maintenance and spousal support arrangements

All-Issues Mediation

Many couples use mediation to address both children and finances together. This can be more efficient and ensures decisions are coordinated.

Family Mediation Costs

Family mediation costs vary but are typically:

Item	Typical Cost
MIAM	£90-£150 per person
Mediation sessions	£100-£200 per person per session
Full mediation (3-6 sessions)	£600-£1,200 per person
With legal aid	Free

Compare this to court costs which can easily reach £10,000-£30,000+ per person with solicitor fees.

See our detailed [mediation costs guide](#) for a full breakdown.

Funding Options

- ✓ **Legal Aid** - If you qualify (low income, benefits, or domestic abuse), family mediation is **free**
- ✓ **Family Mediation Voucher Scheme** - Up to **£500 contribution** from the government for child-related mediation
- ✓ **Self-funded** - Pay privately, typically £100-£200 per session per person

Benefits of Family Mediation

Why choose family mediation over court?

1. Faster Resolution

Mediation typically takes **2-4 months** to complete. Court cases for child arrangements can take **12-18 months** or longer.

2. Lower Cost

Even paying privately, mediation costs a fraction of court proceedings. With legal aid or the voucher scheme, it can be free or heavily subsidised.

3. You Stay in Control

In mediation, you make the decisions together. In court, a judge who doesn't know your family decides for you.

4. Better for Children

Research consistently shows that children benefit when parents can cooperate. Mediation reduces conflict and models positive problem-solving.

5. More Flexible

Court orders can be rigid. Mediated agreements can be tailored to your family's specific needs and can evolve as circumstances change.

6. Confidential

Mediation is confidential. Court proceedings are not - they become public record.

7. Preserves Relationships

You will need to co-parent for years to come. Mediation helps maintain a workable relationship; court often destroys it.

For more on this topic, see our guide on [benefits of mediation](#).

Is Family Mediation Compulsory?

Mediation itself is **voluntary** - no one can force you to mediate or reach an agreement.

However, attending a **MIAM** (Mediation Information Assessment Meeting) **is compulsory** before you can apply to family court for child arrangements in England and Wales. This requirement was introduced by the [Children and Families Act 2014](#).

At the MIAM, the mediator explains how mediation works and assesses whether it is suitable for your case. If you both agree, you can proceed to mediation. If not, or if mediation is unsuitable, you receive a **MIAM certificate** allowing you to apply to court.

MIAM Exemptions

You do not need a MIAM if you have a valid [exemption](#), including:

- ✓ Evidence of domestic abuse
- ✓ Child protection concerns
- ✓ Urgency (risk of harm)
- ✓ The other party is in prison
- ✓ You cannot locate the other party

When Family Mediation Is Not Suitable

Family mediation is not appropriate in all cases. It may not be suitable if:

- ✓ **Domestic abuse** - Where there is a history of domestic violence, coercion, or controlling behaviour
- ✓ **Significant power imbalance** - Where one party cannot negotiate freely
- ✓ **Safeguarding concerns** - Where children are at risk
- ✓ **One party refuses** - Mediation is voluntary; both must participate
- ✓ **Mental health or addiction issues** - Where these significantly impair someone's capacity

If domestic abuse is a factor, you may qualify for a **MIAM exemption** and can proceed directly to court. Some mediators offer **shuttle mediation** where parties never meet face-to-face.

Finding a Family Mediator

All family mediators who conduct MIAMs must be accredited by the **Family Mediation Council**. This ensures they meet professional standards and are properly trained.

To find a mediator:

- ✓ **FMC Directory** - Search the **Family Mediation Council's Find a Mediator tool**
- ✓ **National Family Mediation** - Use **NFM's service finder** for local non-profit mediation services
- ✓ **Resolution** - Search **Resolution's member directory** for mediator-lawyers
- ✓ **Ask your solicitor** - If you have a family lawyer, they can recommend accredited mediators

When choosing a mediator, consider:

- ✓ Are they FMC accredited?
- ✓ Do they offer legal aid (if relevant)?
- ✓ What are their fees?
- ✓ Can they do online or in-person sessions?
- ✓ What is their availability?

Family Mediation vs Going to Court

| Factor | Family Mediation | Family Court | |-----|-----|-----| | **Time** | 2-4 months | 12-18+ months | | **Cost** | £600-£1,200 per person | £10,000-£30,000+ per person | | **Control** | You decide together | Judge decides | | **Flexibility** | Tailored solutions | Standard orders | | **Confidentiality** | Private | Public record | | **Relationship** | Preserves cooperation | Often damages it | | **Children** | Child-focused approach | Adversarial process | | **Enforcement** | Via consent order | Court orders |

For a detailed comparison, see our guide on [mediation vs court](#).

Family Mediation for Divorce

If you're going through a divorce, family mediation can help resolve:

- ✓ **Financial settlement** - Division of property, pensions, savings
- ✓ **Child arrangements** - Residence, contact, holidays
- ✓ **The family home** - Who stays, who leaves, or whether to sell
- ✓ **Spousal maintenance** - Ongoing financial support between spouses

Mediation can run alongside the legal divorce process. While mediation sorts out the practical arrangements, a solicitor handles the divorce petition.

See our [divorce mediation guide](#) for more information.

What to Expect in Your First Mediation Session

Your first joint session typically includes:

- ✓ **Introductions** - The mediator explains their role and ground rules

- ✓ **Confidentiality** - Understanding that discussions are confidential
- ✓ **Agenda setting** - Identifying what issues need to be addressed
- ✓ **Initial discussion** - Each party shares their perspective
- ✓ **Next steps** - Planning what to cover in future sessions

The mediator will ensure both parties have equal opportunity to speak and will manage the conversation to keep it constructive.

How to Prepare for Family Mediation

To get the most from mediation:

- ✓ **Gather documents** - Financial statements, property valuations, pension details if discussing finances
- ✓ **List your priorities** - Know what matters most to you and where you might be flexible
- ✓ **Think about the children** - Focus on their needs and best interests
- ✓ **Consider options** - Come with ideas, not just demands
- ✓ **Manage emotions** - Mediation works best when you can discuss issues calmly
- ✓ **Get legal advice** - Consider seeing a solicitor for independent advice alongside mediation

Our AI assistant **Miam** can help you prepare for mediation by clarifying your thoughts and priorities.

Making Mediation Agreements Legally Binding

Mediation agreements are not automatically enforceable. To make them legally binding:

For Financial Agreements

- ✓ The mediator produces a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
- ✓ Each party takes the MOU to their own solicitor
- ✓ A solicitor drafts a **consent order**
- ✓ Both parties sign the consent order
- ✓ The order is submitted to court for a judge to approve

- ✓ Once sealed by the court, it becomes legally enforceable

For Child Arrangements

Child arrangement agreements don't legally need to be made into court orders. However, if you want enforceability:

- ✓ The mediator produces a **Parenting Plan**
- ✓ You can apply for a Child Arrangements Order based on your agreement
- ✓ This is usually straightforward if both parties agree

Frequently Asked Questions

Next Steps

Ready to explore family mediation?

- ✓ **Learn about MIAMs** - Understand the **MIAM process**
- ✓ **Check funding options** - See if you qualify for **free mediation** or the **voucher scheme**
- ✓ **Find a mediator** - Search the **FMC directory**
- ✓ **Prepare with Miam** - Our **AI assistant** helps you clarify priorities and prepare for mediation

Official Resources

For authoritative information, visit these official sources:

- ✓ **Cafcass - Children and Family Court Advisory**



AI Preparation Tool: Miam helps you prepare for your MIAM but cannot provide legal advice or issue certificates. Only FMC-accredited mediators can do that.

Related Guides

Family Mediation Near Me: Find Local Family Mediators UK

Find family mediation near me in the UK. Search for local family mediators for child arrangements and divorce. FMC-accredited mediators with legal aid options available.

Find a Mediator UK: How to Choose an FMC-Accredited Family Mediator

How to find a mediator in the UK. Complete guide to choosing an FMC-accredited family mediator, what to look for, questions to ask, and where to search. Find the right mediator for your situation.

Child Custody Mediation UK: Resolving Child Arrangements

Child custody mediation helps parents agree on where children live and contact arrangements. Learn how child custody mediation works in the UK, costs, and how to find a mediator.

What Happens After C100: The Family Court Process Explained

What happens after submitting a C100 form? Complete guide to the family court process - Cafcass, first hearing, FHDRA, and what to expect. UK family court timeline explained.

How to Prepare for Mediation: Tips for Successful Family Mediation

How to prepare for mediation - practical tips for successful family mediation. Learn what to do before, during, and after mediation sessions for the best outcomes.

Mediation Glossary: Family Mediation Terms Explained UK

Glossary of mediation terms and family law terminology UK. Understand MIAM, C100, Cafcass, consent orders, and other mediation and family court terms explained simply.

What is a MIAM?

What is a MIAM? Learn what a Mediation Information Assessment Meeting is, what MIAM stands for, whether it is compulsory, what happens during the meeting, how to arrange one, costs, and how to...

Grandparents Rights Scotland: Complete Legal Guide (2026)

What are grandparents rights in Scotland? Complete guide to Scottish law on grandparent contact, how to apply for a contact order, costs, and the court process for grandparents in Scotland.

Consent Order

Complete guide to Consent Orders in family law. Learn what they are, how they make agreements legally binding, the process of getting one approved by a judge, costs, and templates for financial an...

What is Mediation? Definition, Meaning & Complete UK Guide

Understand what mediation means in the UK. Complete guide to mediation definition, how it works, types of mediation, and when to use it. Free expert guidance.

Divorce Mediation

Complete guide to divorce mediation in the UK. Learn how mediation works for financial settlements, property division, pensions, and child arrangements. Covers costs, the process, and how it compares...

Mediation Costs UK: How Much Does Mediation Cost?

Complete guide to mediation costs in the UK. Learn how much MIAM and family mediation cost, who pays, and how to get free mediation through legal aid or the voucher scheme.

How Long Does Mediation Take?

How long does family mediation take in the UK? Learn about timelines for child arrangements, financial mediation, and divorce mediation. Covers number of sessions, factors affecting duration, an...

Parenting Plan

How to create a parenting plan after separation. Includes what to cover (living arrangements, holidays, education, communication), a free checklist, and how to make it work. Guidance for UK parents.

Family Mediation Voucher Scheme

Everything you need to know about the UK Government Family Mediation Voucher Scheme. Get up to £500 towards mediation costs. Learn about eligibility, how to apply, what it covers, and how to find a...



Sources & References

Authoritative Sources

The information in this guide is sourced from official UK government bodies, regulatory organisations, and established family law resources:

Family Mediation Council (FMC) - Official accreditation body for family mediators

<https://www.familymediationcouncil.org.uk/>

Gov.uk - Family Mediation - UK Government guidance on family mediation

<https://www.gov.uk/looking-after-children-divorce/mediation>

National Family Mediation (NFM) - Established family mediation charity

<https://www.nfm.org.uk/>

Cafcass - Children and Family Court Advisory Service

<https://www.cafcass.gov.uk/>

HMCTS - HM Courts & Tribunals Service

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-courts-and-tribunals-service>

Legal Aid Agency - Government legal aid information

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/legal-aid-agency>

Links Referenced in This Guide

Find an FMC-accredited mediator - <https://www.familymediationcouncil.org.uk/family-mediation/assessment-meeting-miam/>

FMC-accredited mediator - <https://www.familymediationcouncil.org.uk/>

Children and Families Act 2014 - <https://www.gov.uk/looking-after-children-divorce/mediation>

Family Mediation Council's Find a Mediator tool - <https://www.familymediationcouncil.org.uk/find-local-mediator/>

NFM's service finder - <https://www.nfm.org.uk/>

Resolution's member directory - <https://resolution.org.uk/>

Cafcass - Children and Family Court Advisory - <https://www.cafcass.gov.uk/>

Citizens Advice - <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/family/>

DA Helpline - <https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/>

Legal Notice: This document is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. For specific legal guidance about your situation, please consult a qualified family law solicitor or an FMC-accredited mediator.