

A NOTE FROM THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

Dear Family Court User,

You are receiving this note because you have made a private family law application to the family court but have not yet had your first hearing. Court proceedings can take many months to conclude, so you may want to know of other ways of reaching an agreement for your child(ren), and some financial support that is available to help for a limited time.

Did you know that the separating parents of 9 in 10 children choose to come to an arrangement outside court? Working with a specialist family mediator can help you reach a unique agreement tailored to your circumstances. Mediated agreements can be reached much more quickly than court proceedings, and evidence shows that they last longer, too.

You may not be familiar with family mediation. Three important things to know are:

1. Mediation is not relationship counselling. It is there to help you agree specific financial arrangements or arrangements in relation to your child(ren)
2. Mediators are trained to bring parties together to reach an agreement, even if one of the parties is sceptical or resistant to mediating.
3. If you are concerned about the enforcement of an agreement made at mediation, it is possible to apply to have them formalised through the court through a process called a 'consent order'. You can ask your local court about this process.

Right now, for a limited time, you can apply for a voucher to cover all or part of your mediation costs. You can find out if mediation is right for you and your family by contacting a mediator who can guide you through the next steps. Contact details for family mediators across the country are here: [Find your local mediator - Family Mediation Council](#). Many mediators now work remotely so they do not even need to be local to you to be able to help.

If you choose to go ahead, the **Ministry of Justice's Family Mediation Voucher Scheme can offer a contribution of up to £500 towards the mediation costs.**

You can contact your local court to pause your proceedings and then withdraw them if you reach an agreement through mediation. On average, users of the voucher scheme only make a claim for £436 and therefore don't need to make any contribution at all.

Simply go to the Family Mediation Council website - www.gov.uk/guidance/family-mediation-voucher-scheme - and enter a few of your basic details to get a list of specialist family mediators who can help with your case.

Mediation is unlikely to be suitable for you if your application involves child protection concerns or allegations of abuse. If this is the case for you, simply continue with your court application.

If you are unsure about whether your case is suitable for mediation, family mediators are able to discuss this with you and help you find the right way to reach an agreement for you and your child(ren). If you are a solicitor receiving this letter on behalf of your client, please share this information with them.