

## Child Consultation (Child Inclusive Mediation) – Information for Parents

The role of mediation is to help you as parents make arrangements for your children following separation or divorce. It is important that decisions about future parenting are made by you both, as you are the ones who know your children best. As parents, we encourage you to consider all the implications of the arrangements you propose. The perspective of the children is crucial in helping you in your decision making as parents.

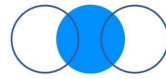
As part of the mediation process, the mediator will offer to see your child/children, which will give them the opportunity to talk to someone independent. This is what we call *Child Consultation*. This will allow your child to give their views on the proposals and arrangements you are talking about in mediation. Your child should not feel they need to take sides, especially if there is a difference of opinion between you as the parents.

If you are disagreeing about how to share your parenting, the voice of the child is sometimes not heard very clearly, as everyone is preoccupied. This is an independent way of getting the voice of your child into the room.

The mediator will not be asking your child to make decisions about what they want or who they may wish to live with. This is for you as the parents to decide. However, it does give your child the opportunity to voice any worries, views or thoughts they might have on the proposals you as parents are making.

The process for Child Inclusive Mediation is as follows:

1. The mediator will first send a **Parental Consent Form**, which will need to be signed by **both** parents if a Child Consultation is to go ahead. The mediator will also send this sheet to inform both parents about the Child Consultation process.
2. If both parents sign the Parental Consent Form, the mediator will write or email the child/children to offer an appointment. If the child does not wish to see the mediator, they can say no, and the Child Consultation will not go ahead.
3. If the child/children agreed to attend a Child Consultation, both parents will be made aware of the date and time of the appointment. The mediator will have talked to both parents about ways to prepare the child for this meeting.
4. The meeting with the child is confidential and at the end of the meeting, the child and the mediator will agree what can be feedback to the parents. The mediator will talk to the child about the limits of confidentiality, which are the same for the parents in mediation. If there are brothers and sisters, they can be seen together or separately. It is to be accepted that despite taking part in the session, the child or children may wish to say nothing.
5. After the Child Consultation, the mediator will give oral feedback to the parents at the beginning of their next mediation session about what the child wishes to feedback to their parents. This will give the parents the opportunity to take account of the comments and



views of their child, and help them make decision which best suit everyone. If the child wishes, they can choose to give the feedback themselves at this meeting.

6. A confidential record for the Child Consultation will be produced, but won't be shared with the parents in any case.

Sometimes the information that the mediator feeds back is difficult to hear and sometimes it is unexpected. It might be that you are given feedback separately. As parents, you need to prepare for this and the mediator will talk to you about it beforehand.

Mediators do not deliver counselling to children in the child consultation session. If you and the mediator want to explore counselling for your child(ren), they will discuss it with you instead of a consultation.

