

# START AFRESH MEDIATION

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## What Is Child-Inclusive Mediation?

Children are naturally concerned about the changes taking place in their families when parents separate. Among their worries are:

- Where will they live?
- Will they stay in the same house?
- How will they see both of their parents?
- What about their friends, clubs, school, activities?
- How about family pets ... will they see their dog?
- What about Grandma and Grandad?

In Child-Inclusive Mediation, children have a voice and the opportunity to share their concerns and worries with their parents without feeling pressured to take sides or take on responsibility. During this period of uncertainty, children value the opportunity to share their worries and concerns and contribute to future plans.

I can arrange for a **specialist mediator** to meet with your children separately from your sessions if **you and your child agree**. Children's meetings can take place at a convenient time for everyone, in a neutral location, such as an office, a school building after school hours, or online.

The specialist mediator will discuss with your children the **topics you agree are important**, such as: if you are thinking of selling the family home, how will it impact them? Now that you are separated, how will they see both parents? Mediation gives your children the chance to express any concerns they may have. In many cases, children's concerns differ from yours, so you may find it helpful to know what they think.

The meeting with the children is **confidential**, and they can decide how their views and opinions are relayed to you. Parents may use this information when negotiating their agreements.

[Please watch this video of Tom's experience of being included in mediation.](#)

## Having a Voice

Research findings show that more than anything else children want you, as their parents, to reassure them that life will go on and will be fine, that they are not to blame for your split, and that you are going to work together for them.

**But most importantly, they want to have a say.**

### **What Are The Benefits of Child-Inclusive Mediation?**

- You can develop ideas and try out arrangements to see if they work for the whole family, without being constrained by court orders or statutory involvement, such as local authority or Cafcass
- It's voluntary – everybody agrees to try it
- It helps you develop new methods of communication and prevents the children from becoming messengers

It's a difficult time for everyone, but your children can have a happy childhood if you communicate about their needs today and in the future.

### **In Child-Inclusive Mediation, parents are assured that**

- Children will not be asked to make choices or decisions
- Parental authority is respected
- Children can only be seen only with the agreement of both parents and their own
- We will discuss fully the process and purpose of a "listening meeting" before involving children.

### **When are children involved?**

Children can be involved in the mediation process at different stages, for example:

- Children can be invited to meet with the mediator at an early stage, to ensure that their issues are included in the parental agenda
- Once options have been identified and explored, in order to hear their views and take them into account
- At the end, to communicate and explain proposed future arrangements and to "fine-tune" them in light of children's response
- Children can have more than one meeting

### **Comments from children who have experienced child-inclusive mediation**

*"It helped me to say how I felt about my Dad"*

*"It helped me to see things a bit differently. I thought about solutions rather than just seeing problems"*

*"I felt it was a good experience because it made it clear as to what would happen"*

### **Comments from parents who have experienced child-inclusive mediation**

*"Without this service my children would not be seeing their dad. Now they are happy, and we communicate better"*

*"It was helpful to find out what my daughter liked and didn't like about our separation. I don't think I would have ever known about these otherwise"*

**If you think it would be helpful for your family, I will schedule appointments for your children to participate in mediation. Get in touch with me to learn more about Child-Inclusive Mediation:**

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