

# family mediation



Mediation is a process to support couples who may be thinking about separation, or who may already have separated, to reach agreement about important issues such as family finances and children. Couples discuss these issues in the presence of a trained, independent third party – the Family Mediator. Mediation is a voluntary process; no one can be forced to mediate.

Mediators do not make decisions. Their role is to help couples:

- Co-operate
- Resolve conflict
- Reach joint solutions
- Focus on the needs and feelings of the children.

## The Benefits of Mediation

Mediation:

- Allows couples to remain in control of major decisions affecting their lives
- Helps separating couples to communicate and co-operate to reach agreement
- Is typically less costly than litigation
- Takes less time than going to Court, allowing couples to move on with their lives sooner
- Benefits children by resolving conflict
- Is usually less stressful than going through the Court
- Is completely confidential.

You may be referred to a Mediator by your solicitor or by an advice agency or other organisation. You may have already had some legal advice. If not, we may encourage you to seek advice from a solicitor at some stage during the mediation process.

## The stages of Mediation

- We receive a referral from you or you telephone us to speak about the possibility of mediation.

- The Mediator will arrange to speak to each person separately to discuss the mediation process and to answer any queries you have about the process.
- If both you and your partner wish to proceed and the Mediator feels your situation is suitable for mediation, we will arrange a first joint meeting with you both. During this meeting, you will sign an agreement to mediate. Mediation sessions tend to last for around an hour and a half. The number of sessions which might be needed depends entirely on the couple and the issues you are discussing. Usually however two to six sessions take place.
- If a set of proposals is reached between you about how issues are to be resolved, the Mediator will summarise the proposals and any financial disclosure into written documents which will be sent to you both. We will always encourage each party to seek legal advice at this stage and to ask their lawyers to make the proposals they have reached legally binding.

## How much does it cost

Charges for mediation are payable at the end of each session and can be shared in any way you and your partner may agree between you. Details of costs will be discussed with you and we will also discuss with you possible eligibility for Legal Aid Funding.

An average session lasts for an hour and a half. The total time spent in mediation, is usually between 3 and 9 hours.

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## Who Mediates?

Our Mediators are all members of Resolution. One of the aims of Resolution is to encourage its members to deal with family issues sensitively, efficiently and economically. Another objective is to promote and encourage the use of mediation. All our Mediators have undergone an extensive Mediation Training Programme with Resolution to Codes of Practice which follow international accepted principles.

Resolution Mediators have all been practicing lawyers. As such they can apply their legal knowledge and experience of family law in their mediation work and can help couples to reach an agreement that will be upheld by the Court. When working as Mediators they may give legal information to couples even-handedly, but do not give legal advice jointly or individually.

## Why come to Ashtons Legal?

We can offer you:

- Strength in depth and breadth of service
- A comprehensive range of skills
- Personal local service
- Active communication
- A fresh innovative approach
- Informal and approachable staff
- Good value.

## What do I do next?

To arrange an appointment or to find out more information about mediation, please contact either Tina Inniss or Brenda Head.

**Tina Inniss** (Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds, Felixstowe)

Tina is a Chartered Legal Executive specialising in family law. She is a Family Mediator and a member of Resolution. Tina has many years of experience in all aspects of family law.

**Brenda Head** (Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds, Felixstowe)

Brenda Head is a Family Mediator with more than 17 years experience. She is a member of Resolution and is qualified as a supervisor for other mediators.

Brenda has a wide experience in mediating all aspects of family disputes, including divorce, separation, financial and children matters. She also mediates issues relating to disputes between parents and grandparents.

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