
LUTON FAMILY MEDIATION

Children Arrangement Mediation Pack

Confidential · Without Prejudice · Family Mediation Council Registered

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Thank you for choosing Luton Family Mediation. We understand that separation is one of the most difficult experiences a family can go through – and that when children are involved, the stakes feel even higher. Our professional, impartial mediator is here to help you and the other parent reach workable, child-centred arrangements without the need for court proceedings.

We are registered with the **Family Mediation Council (FMC)**, ensuring the highest professional standards. Our services are provided online, and we serve clients nationwide.

Our Core Principles

- **Impartiality:** We do not take sides or express personal opinions.
- **Confidentiality:** Everything discussed in mediation is private.
- **Voluntary:** Mediation is a voluntary process – either party may withdraw at any time.
- **Child Focus:** The welfare and best interests of your children are always central.
- **Empowerment:** You remain in control of any decisions made.

This pack sets out everything you need to know before your first appointment. Please read it carefully.

What is Family Mediation?

Family mediation is a structured, voluntary process in which a trained mediator helps separating parents to communicate and reach their own agreements about their children, without going to court.

The mediator does not represent either parent's interests, give legal advice, or make decisions for you. Instead, they create a safe, constructive environment in which **you** can resolve matters together.

Mediation vs Court: A Comparison

Feature	Mediation	Court
Cost	Significantly lower	Can be very high
Speed	Weeks to months	Months to years
Control	Parents decide	Judge decides
Privacy	Fully confidential	Fully confidential
Relationships	Preserves co-parenting	Often adversarial
Flexibility	Tailored to your children	Rigid legal process

Mediation is not counselling or therapy. It is a practical, solution-focused process. You are free – and encouraged – to take independent legal advice at any stage.

How Mediation Works – Step by Step

Step 1 Enquiry & Contact

You contact us by email or our website. We explain the process, answer your questions and arrange a MIAM appointment.

Step 2 MIAM – Mediation Information & Assessment Meeting

You attend a confidential one-to-one meeting (approximately 45–60 minutes) with your mediator. We assess suitability, listen to your situation and explain your options. The other parent will be invited to their own separate MIAM.

Step 3 Joint Mediation Sessions

If both parties agree to proceed, we arrange joint sessions (60–90 minutes each). Most children's cases are resolved within 2–5 sessions, though this will depend on the complexity of your situation.

Step 4 Reaching Agreement

As you reach agreements, the mediator records these in a written **Parenting Plan** – a clear, practical document setting out arrangements for your children.

Step 5 Making It Legal (Optional)

A Parenting Plan is not automatically legally binding. If you wish to make your agreement enforceable, your solicitor can apply to the court for a **Child Arrangements Order** based on the Plan.

When parents separate, decisions about children are often the most important and emotionally challenging to get right. Mediation provides a child-focused, non-adversarial setting in which parents can work together to create arrangements that genuinely serve their children's needs.

Areas we typically discuss include:

- **Where the children will live** – primary residence and shared care arrangements
- **Contact and visits** – regular time with each parent, including weekday and weekend schedules
- **Holiday and special occasion arrangements** – school holidays, Christmas, birthdays and bank holidays
- **Schooling and education** – choice of school, attendance at events and parents' evenings, communications with teachers
- **Healthcare decisions** – GP, dentist, medical treatment and any ongoing health needs
- **Religion and cultural upbringing**
- **Extended family contact** – grandparents and other significant relatives
- **Travel and holidays abroad** – passports and consent to travel
- **Communication between parents** – how you will exchange information and co-parent day to day
- **Child maintenance** – where not already addressed through the Child Maintenance Service

The Welfare Checklist – What Courts Consider

Keeping these principles in mind helps parents make genuinely child-centred decisions:

- The child's ascertainable wishes and feelings (in light of their age and understanding)
- The child's physical, emotional and educational needs
- The likely effect of any change in circumstances on the child
- The child's age, sex, background and any relevant characteristics
- Any harm the child has suffered or is at risk of suffering
- How capable each parent is of meeting the child's needs

The Parenting Plan

Once parents reach an agreement, we produce a written Parenting Plan that clearly sets out the arrangements you have agreed on for your children. While not automatically a court order, it provides clarity, helps reduce future conflict, and can be converted into a Child Arrangements Order by your solicitor if required. We encourage parents to review the Plan periodically as children grow and their needs change.

Mediation Information & Assessment Meeting (MIAM)

Before starting mediation and in most cases before making a family court application, you are legally required to attend a MIAM. This is a confidential one-to-one meeting with our mediator, usually lasting 45–60 minutes.

During your MIAM, we will:

- Explain what family mediation is and how the process works
- Listen carefully to your situation and concerns
- Assess whether mediation is suitable and safe in your particular circumstances
- Discuss alternative options if mediation is not appropriate
- Issue a signed MIAM certificate – which you will need if you still need to apply to court

Exemptions from MIAM

You may be exempt from attending a MIAM in certain circumstances, including where:

- There is evidence of domestic abuse or violence
- The matter is urgent (e.g. an immediate child protection concern)
- You have attended a MIAM within the past four months
- A disability makes attendance impractical

Even where an exemption applies, we welcome you to contact us. Many parents who initially feel court is inevitable find that mediation opens a more constructive path forward.

Confidentiality is a cornerstone of mediation. Everything said in sessions – and in any written communications with your mediator – is strictly confidential and **without prejudice**, meaning it cannot be used in court proceedings.

What confidentiality means in practice:

- Nothing said in mediation will be shared with the other parent without your consent (except in shuttle mediation, where we carry agreed messages between rooms)
- The content of sessions cannot be disclosed to solicitors, courts or third parties without both parties' agreement
- Notes and records are stored securely in line with UK GDPR
- The Parenting Plan is the only document produced for use beyond the mediation room

Exceptions to Confidentiality

Confidentiality may only be broken in exceptional circumstances, specifically where:

- A child is at risk of serious harm
- There is a serious risk of harm to any person
- Money laundering or serious crime is suspected

In such cases, we have a legal and ethical duty to report to the appropriate authorities.

Your Rights Throughout the Process

- You may withdraw from mediation at any time and without giving a reason
- You have the right to take independent legal advice at any stage – we actively encourage this
- You have the right to request a different mediator if you feel uncomfortable
- You have the right to request a copy of your personal data held by us

Our Fees

We aim to keep mediation accessible and affordable. Our fees for children mediation are as follows:

Service	Duration	Fee
MIAM (individual)	45–60 mins	£95 per person
Joint Mediation Session	60–90 mins	£185 per person, per session
Parenting Plan (written document)	Prepared after sessions	£150 per couple

Fees are payable per session by bank transfer. Most children cases are resolved in 2–5 joint sessions. We will give you a realistic estimate of likely sessions at your MIAM appointment.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Do we have to be in the same room?

Not necessarily. We offer **shuttle mediation** using different breakout rooms and the mediator moves between you. If you have any concerns, please raise them at your MIAM so we can discuss suitable arrangements.

Q: What if the other parent refuses to attend?

Mediation is voluntary. If the other parent declines to attend a MIAM, we will provide you with a signed MIAM certificate, which you will need before making most types of family court application.

Q: Will the mediator tell us what is best for our children?

No. The mediator is impartial and does not give advice or make decisions. Our role is to help you communicate constructively and reach your own child-centred agreements. We may ask questions to help you consider your children's perspective, but we will not direct the outcome.

Q: Is mediation suitable where there has been domestic abuse?

Safety is our absolute priority. We carry out a thorough risk assessment at the MIAM stage. In some situations, mediation can proceed with appropriate safeguards such as shuttle mediation. In others, it will not be appropriate, and we will discuss alternatives with you.

Q: Can I bring a solicitor or support person?

Solicitors do not usually attend joint sessions; however, in complex cases, they are encouraged to attend mediation to provide on-the-spot legal advice and guidance. You are strongly encouraged to take independent legal advice between sessions. A support person may attend with both parties' agreement and at the mediator's discretion.

Q: What if we cannot agree on everything?

Mediation does not have to be all-or-nothing. Even partial agreements reached in mediation can reduce conflict and the number of issues that need to go to court. If agreement is not possible, we will confirm that mediation has been attempted.

Q: How long does the process take?

A MIAM can usually be arranged within a few days of your enquiry. Joint sessions are typically completed within 4–8 weeks, depending on availability and the number of issues to resolve.

Q: Is the Parenting Plan legally binding?

A Parenting Plan is not automatically a court order. If you want it to be legally enforceable, your solicitor can apply for a Child Arrangements Order based on the agreed Plan. Many families find the Plan alone provides sufficient clarity and structure.

Q: What about grandparents and extended family?

We can also assist with mediation involving grandparents or other family members seeking contact with children, as well as separating parents.

Q: What if our circumstances change?

Children's needs change as they grow. We encourage parents to review the Parenting Plan periodically and we are happy to assist with further mediation if circumstances change significantly.

Checklist for Your First Session

To help your mediation run smoothly, please bring or have ready the following information. Tick each item as you prepare:

Information About Your Children

- ☐ Children's full names, dates of birth and current ages
- ☐ Name(s) and address(es) of current school(s)
- ☐ Details of any existing court orders relating to the children
- ☐ Any relevant CAFCASS reports or social services involvement
- ☐ Notes on your children's current routines and preferences (if known)
- ☐ Details of any health needs, disabilities or special educational requirements
- ☐ Details of any significant upcoming events (holidays booked, school transitions etc.)

General

- ☐ Photo ID (passport or driving licence)
- ☐ Any existing legal correspondence relating to the children
- ☐ Your diary or calendar for scheduling further sessions
- ☐ Notes on what you hope to achieve from mediation

Agreement to Mediate & Key Declarations

Agreement to Mediate

Before your first joint session, both parties will be asked to sign an **Agreement to Mediate**. This sets out the terms of the mediation, including confidentiality, the mediator's role, fees and each party's right to withdraw at any time.

Agreement to Mediate – Client Confirmation

I confirm that I have read and understood this information pack and agree to participate in mediation on the terms set out by Luton Family Mediation.

Party 1 Full Name:

Signature:

Date:

Party 2 Full Name:

Signature:

Date:

GDPR & Data Protection Notice

Luton Family Mediation processes personal data in accordance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. Your data is held securely, used solely for the purposes of providing mediation services, and is not shared with third parties without your consent (except as required by law). You have the right to access, correct or request deletion of your data. Full details are in our Privacy Policy at www.lutonfamilymediation.co.uk/privacy

Our Mediators & Accreditations

All mediators at Luton Family Mediation hold the **FMC Accreditation (FMCA)** and are registered members of the **Family Mediation Council**. We comply fully with the FMC Code of Practice and engage in regular professional development and supervision.

Our Accreditations Include:

- **Family Mediation Council (FMC)** – FMCA qualified mediators
- **Resolution** – members committed to constructive, non-adversarial family law
- **College of Mediators** – upholding professional standards in practice
- **DBS checked** – all staff and mediators hold current DBS clearance

We are proud to serve the diverse communities of Luton and Bedfordshire. Our mediators have experience in cross-cultural family matters, domestic abuse-informed practice, and a wide range of parenting and contact situations.

Complaints Procedure

If you are dissatisfied with any aspect of our service, please write to our Practice Manager at complaints@lutonfamilymediation.co.uk. We will acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days and respond in full within 28 days. If you remain dissatisfied, you may escalate to the Family Mediation Council at www.familymediationcouncil.org.uk

Next Steps & Contact Information

We hope this pack has given you a clear understanding of how children mediation works and how we can help. Here is how to take the next step:

Call us	01582 000 000	Mon–Fri, 9am–5:30pm
Email us	info@lutonfamilymediation.co.uk	We respond within 1 working day
Book online	www.lutonfamilymediation.co.uk/book	24/7 self-service booking
Visit us	Bedford Road, Luton, LU1 1XX	By appointment only

Useful Resources

- **Family Mediation Council** – www.familymediationcouncil.org.uk
- **CAFCASS** – www.cafcass.gov.uk
- **Child Maintenance Service (CMS)** – www.gov.uk/child-maintenance
- **Resolution** – www.resolution.org.uk
- **Gingerbread (single parent support)** – www.gingerbread.org.uk
- **Citizens Advice Bureau** – www.citizensadvice.org.uk
- **National Family Mediation** – www.nfm.org.uk

Luton Family Mediation is registered with the Family Mediation Council.
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This pack is correct as at January 2025. Luton Family Mediation reserves the right to update information at any time. This document does not constitute legal advice.