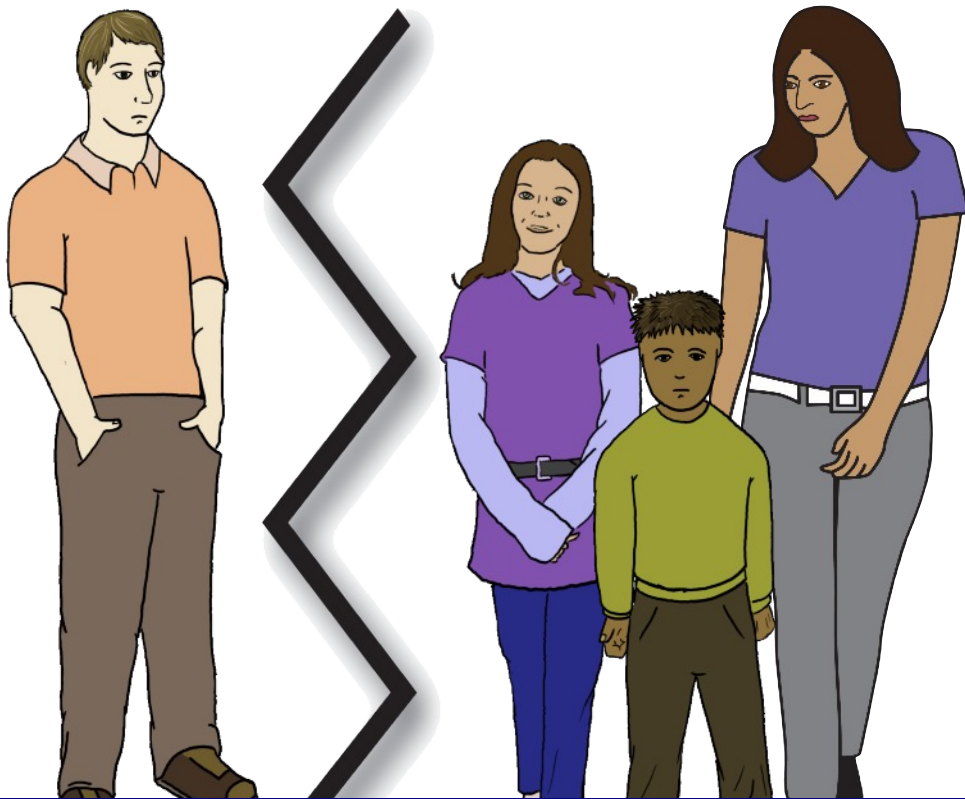




Ministry
of Justice



Asking people about how to settle family disagreements more quickly

Please tell us what you think by: 15 June 2023

Part 2: Help for families who are splitting up

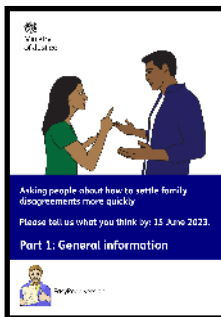


EasyRead version

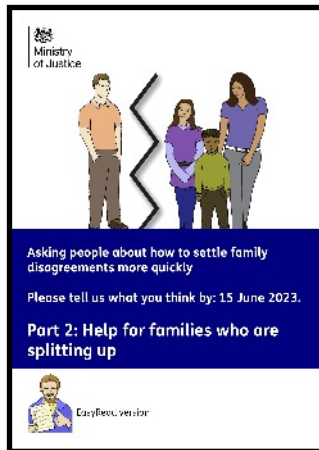
The different parts of this paper



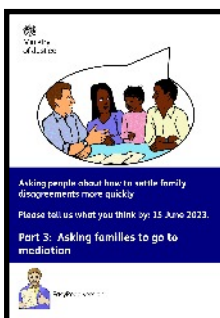
There are different parts of this paper explaining different things and asking you different questions.



Part 1 is about general information about what we are talking about.



This is Part 2. It is about help for families who are splitting up.



Part 3 is about asking families to go to mediation.



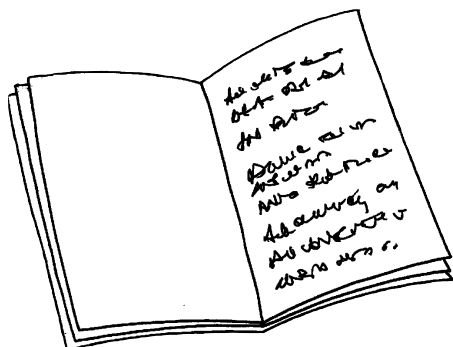
Part 4 is about ways to encourage people to go to mediation.



Part 5 is on the Impact Assessment, Equalities and Welsh Language.



Please read the parts you are interested in or know about and tell us what you think about our ideas.



Some of the difficult words in this easy read paper are in **Bold**.

They are explained in the section at the end called What the Words Mean.

Working together to help families who are splitting up



There are lots of ways we can help families agree on money and child care matters instead of going to the court.



We want to make it easier for families to get this help.

Where we are now



We want to help families sort out disagreements as soon as possible.



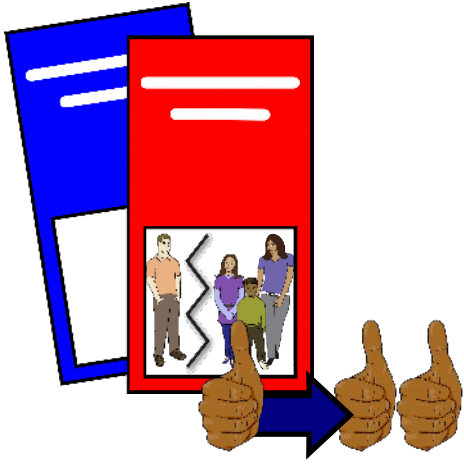
Parents may not have information about other help they can ask for before they go to court.



We think we can use technology and online processes more.



But we also know we must still offer telephone and face-to-face services to give everyone access to our services.

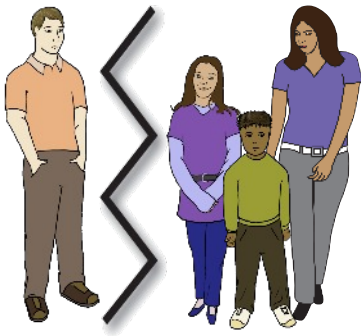


We want to know how to improve the information for separating families to help them address their disagreement earlier.



We also want to know how we can use local services to reach families who do not use online resources.

What families can use now



There are several schemes and resources for parents and couples without children who split up:



Co-parenting programmes

Co-parenting programmes are courses where you learn ways to both be parents when you have separated.



Co-parenting means you and your ex-partner talk about how you will bring up your children.



The courses show parents:

- how to take steps for themselves such as making their own agreements without going to court



- ways to get help outside of court.



The programmes help parents understand how separation and parental conflict affects children.



In England we have the **Separated Parents Information Programme (SPIP)**. Cafcass (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service) provides this service.



In Wales we have **Working Together for Children (WT4C)**. Cafcass Cymru provides this service.



Planning Together for Children

This is a new programme that will start in April 2023. It is called the Planning Together for Children course.

It replaces the Separated Parents Information Programme (SPIP).



We made Planning Together for Children with the help of children and parents.



Parents can do an online course followed by a facilitated group workshop.



Parents will have more time to study the information and materials and think about how separation and conflict can affect children.



Best time to do a course

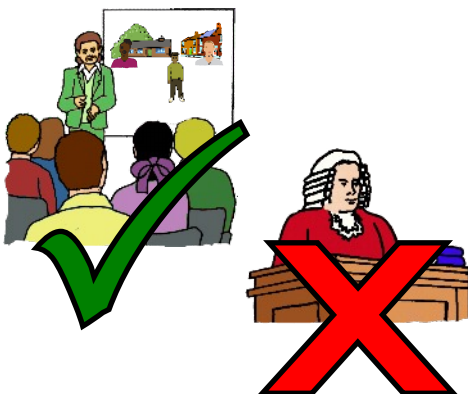
The court orders parents to do a course at the final hearing.



We believe that this is too late.



We think the courses help parents understand that the court is not the only way to sort out their child arrangements.

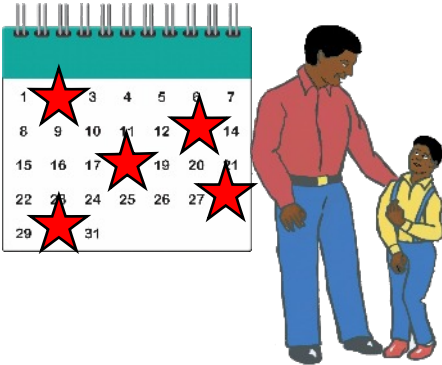


When parents did both the programme and mediation, 8 out of 10 agreed to a **consent order** or did not go to court.



A **consent order** is a paper issued by the court about how you'll look after your children, such as:

- where they live



- when they spend time with each parent



- other types of contact such as phone call



One couple said doing the programme and mediation helped them understand and listen to each other better, to reach an agreement on their child and financial arrangements.



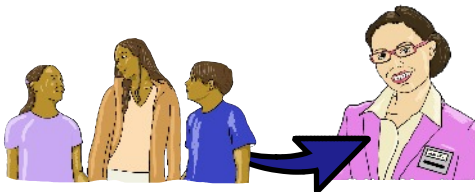
Family hubs

Family Hubs bring services together for children.



Family hubs:

- help people find services



- link families, professionals, services, and providers



- help you build relationships that carry you all through life.



We are funding Start for Life and family support services in more than 80 places in England.



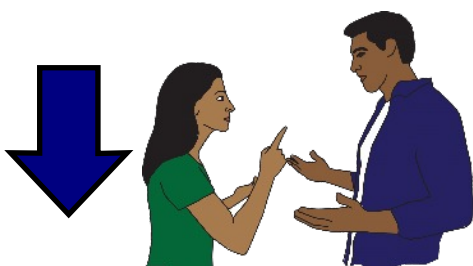
The Department for Education and the Department of Health and Social Care have written guides. The guides tell local authorities how family hubs can help families.



This could include ways parents can access to mediation.

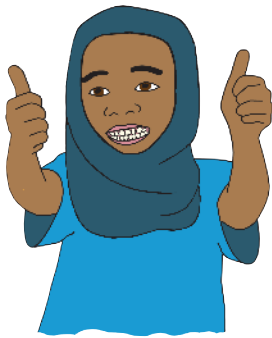


The **Reducing Parental Conflict Programme** is run by the Department for Work and Pensions (or DWP).



The programme is for parents where there is no domestic abuse.

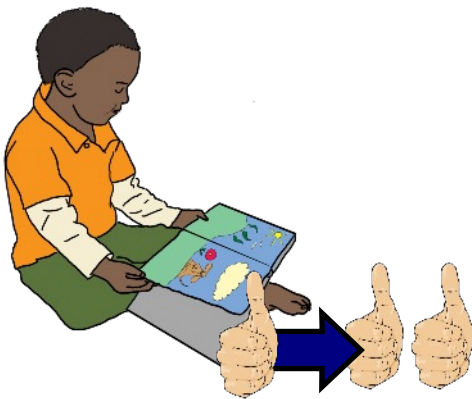
- reducing parental conflict: teaches families how to argue less



- shows how to make life better for children

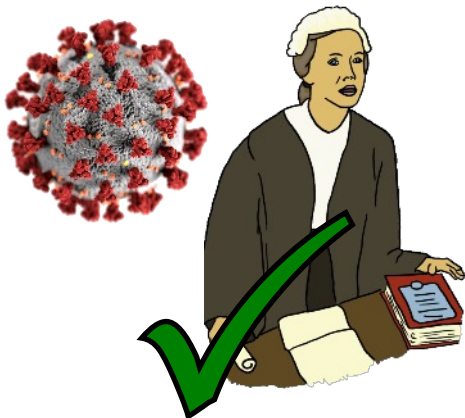


- is for disadvantaged families.



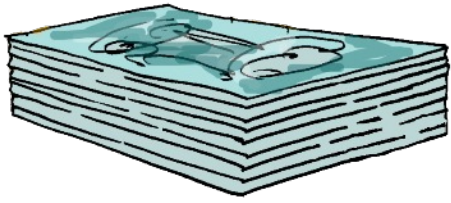
It has helped more than 4,000 parents since 2019.

In April 2022 parents said they had seen improvement in their children's behaviour.



The **Ministry of Justice** helps other services give early legal advice about what happens to your child arrangements after you split up:

- funding helped legal advice services keep working during the pandemic

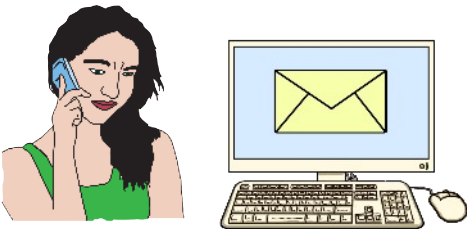


- funding helps **FLAWS** which is short for Finding Legal Options for Women Survivors.

FLAWS:



- gives free legal advice to victims of domestic abuse who need an urgent protective order from the courts



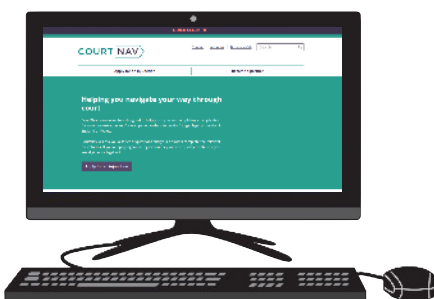
- provides a helpline and email service for domestic abuse victims



- helps domestic abuse victims find a legal aid solicitor

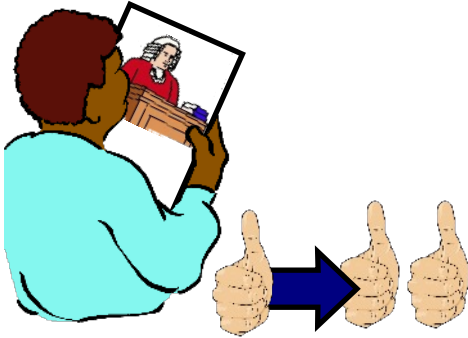


- gives free legal advice for people who cannot get legal aid



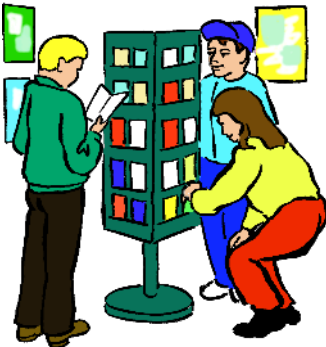
- made the CourtNav tool which helps victims with no lawyer to apply for an order to protect them.

Other things we could do



We want to get better at the way we support and give information to parents when considering going to court.

Information



Before court we want parents to:

- find information easily



- understand the information on their options to solve their family issues.

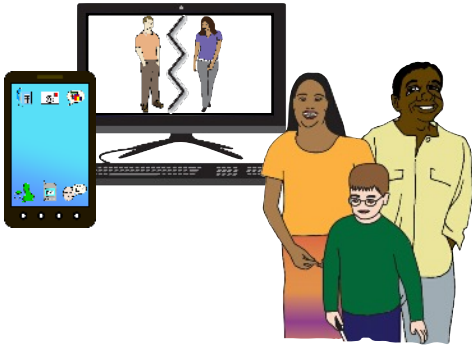
So we will make an **online tool** about:



- how to find information about sorting out your problems before going to court



- how to make agreements that protect your child.



We will make a separate tool for children to help them understand what their parents or carers are going through.

We want **family hubs** to help parents and carers with:



- how to find support and services when splitting up

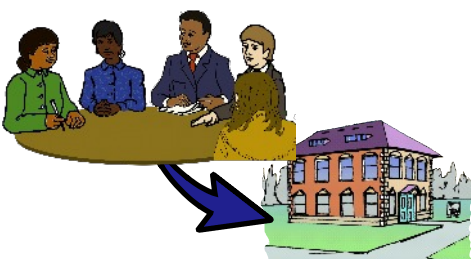


- how to find mediation and co-parenting programmes.



We want the **Department for Education and National Centre for Family Hubs** to:

- work out how to reach parents and carers early before conflict grows



- help family hubs to develop strong links with local family courts and mediation providers.



We are working with Cafcass and Cafcass Cymru on ways to use more co-parenting programmes before court.



Before you apply to the court

A mediator will say if a co-parenting programme will suit the parents/carerer.

After you have applied to court but before the first hearing



We hope to see more referrals to SPIP/Planning Together for Children and WT4C made by Cafcass and Cafcass Cymru before the first court hearing.



We hope this will mean more parents agree on how to co-parent well.

This will help their children.

During court proceedings



We will let Cafcass and Cafcass Cymru refer parents to a SPIP/Planning Together for Children or a WT4C at all stages in the court process.

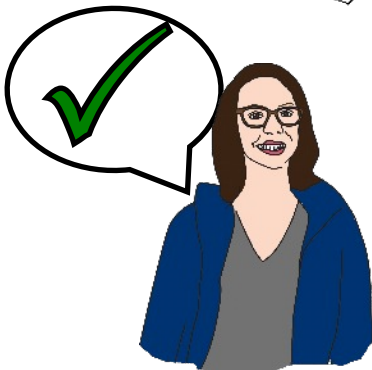


We will encourage judges to send parents to SPIP/Planning Together for Children or WT4C earlier in the court process.



Before mediation

We want parents to attend a SPIP/Planning Together for Children or WT4C before mandatory mediation.



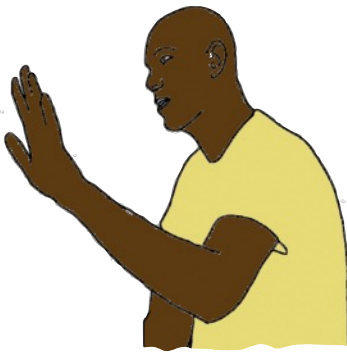
A mediator will say which parents this will work for.



We want to know what you think about parents having to do a co-parenting programme before mediation starts.



We know doing a programme will take longer to reach agreements or to make a court application.



The holdup may be because:

- one parent does not want to do the programme

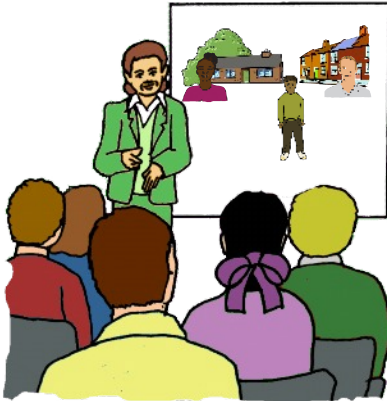


- or lots of families are waiting for the course.



We will think about this so we can balance how quickly people get to court and the benefits of attending parenting programmes.

Questions



Question 1: Parenting programmes

Do you think separating parents should have to go to a shared parenting programme if a mediator thinks it is a good idea?

Yes

No

Don't know



Would you like to tell us more?



Question 2: If you said yes to the above

Do you think parents should do this programme before mediation can start?



Yes

No

Don't know

Would you like to tell us more?





Question 3: Going to court

When do you think people need information about the court process?

at the mediation information and assessment meeting (MIAM)

at the parenting programme

through an online resource
any other way



Would you like to tell us more?

Question 4: Online information



Do you think an online tool to help parents, carers and children will be helpful?



What do families need to know to help sort out their arguments?



Question 5: This question is about mediators

Do you think mediators should be allowed say if a co-parenting programme will suit parents?

Yes

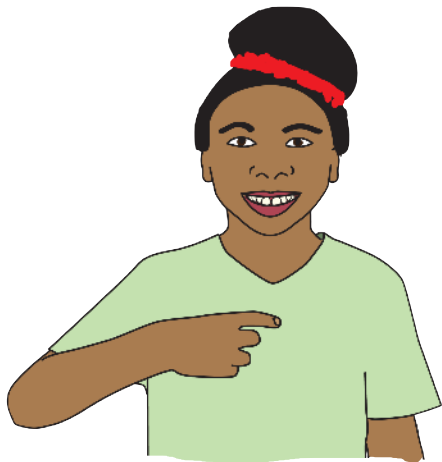
No

Don't know



Would you like to tell us more?

More information



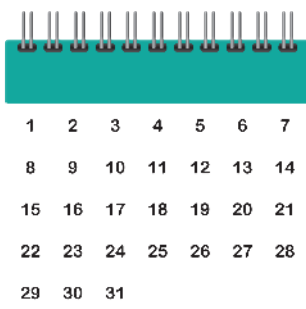
About you

Please use this section to tell us about yourself

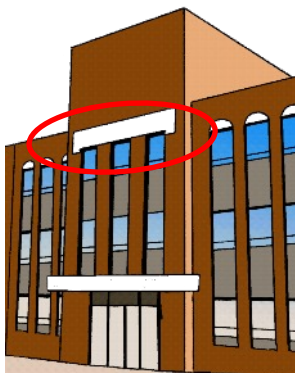
Full name



Job title or capacity in which you are responding to this consultation exercise (e.g. member of the public etc.)



Date



Company name/organisation (if applicable):



Address



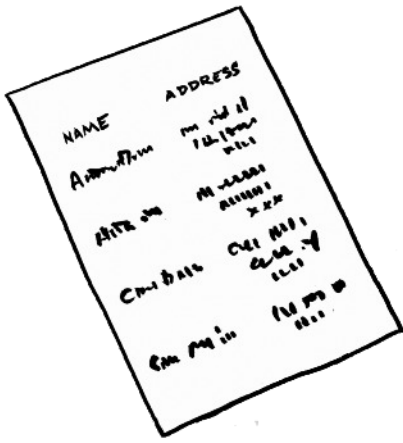
Postcode



If you would like us to acknowledge receipt of your response, please tick this box



Address to which the acknowledgement should be sent, if different from above.



Are you content for the Ministry of Justice to include your affiliated organisation in a public list of respondents to the consultation exercise?



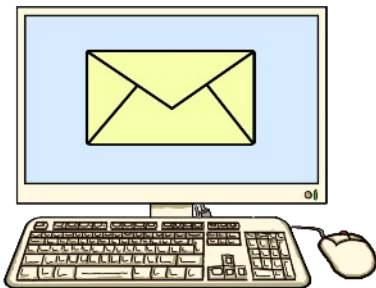
If you are a representative of a group, please tell us the name of the group and give a summary of the people or organisations that you represent.



Please send your response by **15 June 2023**.



Address:
**Family Justice Policy Team
Ministry of Justice
102 Petty France
London. SW1H 9AJ**

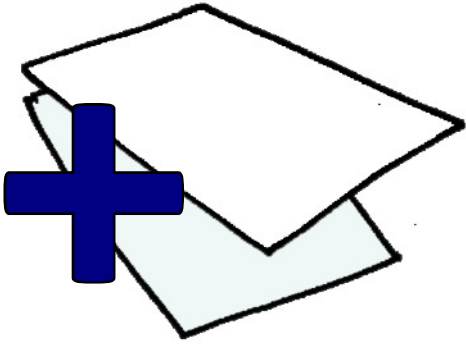


Email:
privatefamilylawconsultation@justice.gov.uk



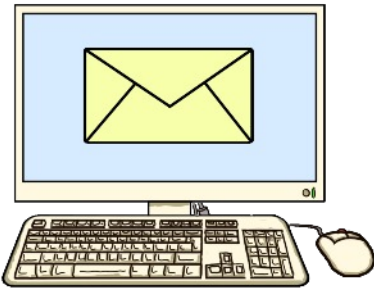
Complaints or comments

If you have any complaints or comments about this paper please contact the Ministry of Justice.



Extra copies

You can get more paper copies from the Ministry of Justice or on-line at: consult.justice.gov.uk/



You can ask for this paper in other forms from privatefamilylawconsultation@justice.gov.uk.



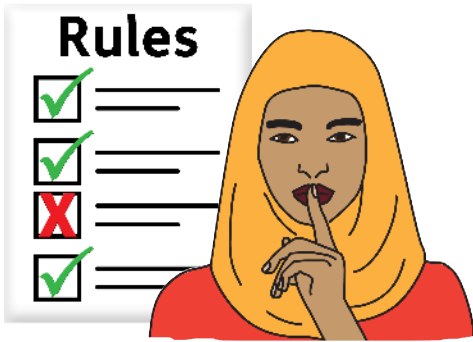
The next step

We will put a report on-line about what people told us at: consult.justice.gov.uk/



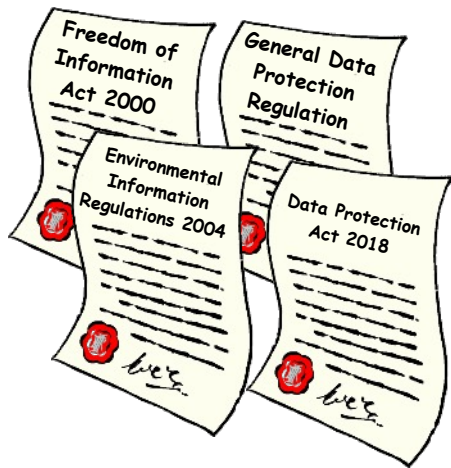
Representative groups

Representative groups are asked to give a summary of the people and organisations they represent when they respond.



Privacy

We follow rules about keeping your information private.



The rules are the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA), the General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.



We follow the rules of a Code of Practice.



If you want us to keep your information private tell us why.



We will listen to you but we cannot promise to keep your information private.



We will not give your personal information to others.

What the words mean

Accreditation means trained. For example, the Family Mediation Council makes sure mediators are properly trained.

Co-parenting means you and your ex-partner talk about how you will bring up your children.

Co-parenting programmes are courses where you learn ways to co-parent to have a positive impact on any children involved.

Compulsory means you have to do something, unless there are reasons that this would be harmful.

Consent order is a paper issued by the court about how you'll look after your children such as:

- where they live
- when they spend time with each parent and other relatives
- when and what other types of contact take place (phone calls, for example)

Dispute resolution is the process of finding an agreed solution to a disagreement. Mediation is a form of dispute resolution.

Disputes or conflicts are when people disagree or argue about something.

Family mediation is where a trained professional called a mediator helps separating people work through plans for their children, finance or property.

Means test is checking if you have a low income and savings.

Mediation information assessment meeting is called a **MIAM** for short. A MIAM is a short meeting with a trained professional called a mediator where you will be provided with information about mediation as a way of resolving your issues. The mediator will assess whether mediation is an appropriate option based on your individual circumstances.

Mediation means you talk to an independent person called a **mediator** who helps you sort out a problem without going to court.

Party. People involved in a court case are called parties.

Reasonable adjustments means making our service accessible to people with disabilities.

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