



A Guide to SEN Mediation

Mediation is a process designed to help people come to an agreement, in this case, about the arrangements that should be made to meet a child's **special educational needs**. Using a panel of trained and independent facilitators (mediators), we work to bring together all of the parties in a disagreement. We help them, through discussion and negotiation, to achieve practical educational solutions, acceptable to all parties, based on the needs of the child. We aim to resolve disagreements as quickly as possible, ensuring minimum disruption to the child's education.

About SEN Mediation

Mediation Works, SEN Mediation Service, is a specialist service that is being offered as part of the arrangements to help resolve disagreements that parents may have with either Local Authorities (LAs), or schools, about any aspect of Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision for their child. There is no charge to parents for using the service.

To contact the service please ring 01952-275038 e-mail sen@mediation-works.co.uk or write to us at Mediation Works, SEN Mediation Service, 16 Queen Street, Wellington, Telford, Shropshire TF1 1EH.

Mediation Works, SEN Mediation Service is an independent and impartial service. It can be accessed at any time during the SEN process, following the breakdown of local disagreement procedures (such as meetings with the school, the LA or assistance from the local Parent Partnership Service).

Participation in mediation is voluntary. Mediation can only take place if all parties agree to take part. Parents' rights to appeal to the SEN Tribunal are not affected and mediation can run alongside a tribunal appeal.

What to expect in Mediation

The referral may come from the parent/carer, the school, or the Local Authority.

Once one of you has made the referral, we will contact you to explain the process in more detail and answer any questions that you may have.

If you decide that mediation is the appropriate way forward we will, with your permission, contact the other parties involved in the dispute and explain that mediation is being considered.

The case will then be allocated to a member of our mediation team who will contact each of you to arrange an initial visit. There will be an individual meeting with each party involved in the disagreement; to give you a chance to discuss the issues that you think need to be resolved. We will also talk about who else should be involved in the discussions.

We offer a confidential service. Nothing you say in mediation should be used elsewhere, without your agreement, with the understandable exception of serious child protection issues. The mediator will explain this fully at the initial visit.

Parents may wish to involve a friend or Independent Parental Supporter (IPS) at this meeting. Your Parent Partnership Officer can help with providing an IPS, often, another parent. You can then discuss with the mediator whether it will also be helpful for your friend or IPS to be present to support you during the joint meeting.

Once we have collected everyone's views, we will invite them all to a joint meeting. The meeting will take place at a neutral venue, at a time and place to suit everyone.

At the meeting you will be asked to share your views with everyone. The mediator will ensure that you are given every opportunity to say the things that you feel are important and to be heard. At the same time you will be required to listen carefully to the views of others. We encourage people to ask as many questions as they need. It is important to ensure that everyone understands the situation as fully as possible.

From there, we will move on to thinking about the future and what might be possible to achieve, taking into account the views that have been expressed and the child's wishes and feelings. We encourage everyone involved to contribute possible solutions, before deciding which one is the best for their particular situation.

Mediation has a particular focus on improving communication and understanding between the parties, whilst achieving practicable realistic solutions that meet everyone's needs.

Once an agreement has been reached on a particular solution we will record your agreement for you, and everyone present will receive a copy of it.

About our Mediators

We employ a team of carefully selected mediators. Mediators are independent trained facilitators whose job it is to assist the parties in a dispute to work together to resolve the issues that divide them. Their job is to help you to find the right solution for you – not to decide the rights and wrongs of a particular position.

All of our mediators have been trained with, and are practising members of a recognised professional body. In addition, all have received training in Special Educational Needs legislation and framework, the requirements of the SEN Code of Practice and other educational issues.

Whichever mediator is assigned to your case, you will benefit from the combined experience of the team as we work closely together through regular team supervision and training.