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Child Inclusive Mediation

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Fact Sheet: What is Child Inclusive Mediation (CIM)?

CIM allows children the opportunity to have their voices heard within the context of a mediation. The child(ren) will independently speak with an independent third party, often a mediator. The child(ren) will be given the opportunity to share their views, wishes and feelings with the option of this information being shared with their parents. The child(ren) can decide which information will be shared and which will remain private between them and the mediator.

Although the parents will not be present in any sessions with the child(ren), very soon after the CIM, the mediator will feed back the agreed information to the parents either together or individually depending on the sensitivity and content of the information, which is to be shared with the parents.

Benefits of Child Inclusive Mediation

The child(ren) may feel more open to voicing their views to an independent third party, especially where they may feel that there is conflict between parents.

Any decisions made by the parents following mediation will have a big impact on the child(ren)'s lives. They should have an opportunity to express their preference.

An independent mediator may be able to convey the child(ren)'s views to each parent better than each parent could to each other.

Mediation can be a more relaxed and less stressful process for the child(ren) to express their views, as opposed to alternative measures such as interviews by Cafcass officers, which will be required if there are court proceedings.

The Child Inclusive Mediation Process**(1) Preparation**

If both parents agree for their children to participate in CIM, the mediator will invite the child(ren) to a private discussion, without the parents. There is no obligation on the child(ren), and it is up to them to decide if they wish to attend the discussion.

(3) Feedback

Any decisions made will always lie with the parents or carers. Whilst the child(ren)'s views will be informative and influential, they will never be given the role of decision maker.

As with any form of mediation, the mediator will remain impartial throughout the whole process.

(2) Child Consultation

If there is more than one child, the siblings can meet together, or separately, with the mediator, depending on what the parents and the mediator believe to be in the best interests of the children.

Within the discussion, the mediator will listen to the child(ren)'s views and agree on what the child(ren) wishes to be communicated to the parents through the mediator. Any discussions that the child(ren) do not wish to be shared with the parents will be kept confidential, unless there are safeguarding concerns.

Following this, the feedback will be passed on to the parents in a separate meeting.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

My child is currently in therapy can they still participate?

It is usually considered best for children who are in therapy not to participate in CIM because it can be confusing for them to be speaking to numerous different professionals.

How old does my child have to be to be involved in mediation?

It is recommended that all children aged 10 and above should be offered an opportunity to be involved in the mediation discussion, providing both parents agree.

However, there may be circumstances where both parents wish to provide a voice to a younger child, for example if the child is part of a sibling group.

What happens if the children say something that one of us will be upset about?

When parents agree to involve children in the mediation process, it must be on the basis that they have to be ready to hear something that may make them feel uncomfortable. The mediator will always remain sensitive and depending on the information they have to relay, they may decide that separate feedback sessions would be more appropriate.

Isn't this cost prohibitive?

Although extra sessions with the child(ren) may incur more costs than would be incurred if the child(ren) were not included, it is important to recognise that CIM is still significantly less costly than court proceedings, often saving £000's and many months of time.

CIM often results in more constructive discussions and mutually beneficial outcomes for all those involved, which in turn, reduces the likelihood of any costly court proceedings.



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