

**This section is designed for young people aged 12 to 18 who may be attending a mediation session. It answers some commonly asked questions.**

### **What is mediation?**

Mediation is a way of helping people when they have a disagreement. It involves an independent person (the mediator) who meets with the people who have a disagreement to help them talk things through in a calm and informal manner.

### **What will happen at the mediation meeting?**

If your parents are having a mediation meeting it means they will be meeting with one of our mediators and someone from the local education authority and / or your school.

The mediator will first of all give everyone a chance to say why they are in disagreement and how they want the situation to change.

For example, your parents might want you to go to a particular school and someone from the local education authority (the council) might say that that school isn't right for you. So, at the mediation meeting your mum and dad and the person from the local authority would talk about your needs and give their opinions on which school is right for you.

It's great if you feel you can give your views on the situation, so that everyone knows what you think.

### **If I come to the mediation meeting what will I be asked to do or say?**

If you come along, and if you want to speak, you can say what you think about the situation which has brought your parents to mediation.

For example, if the local authority has said that they feel you are coping well at school and don't need any help, and you think that you do need some help, you can say this at the mediation meeting.

### **Can I prepare beforehand what I want to say?**

Yes, definitely- if you feel more comfortable doing that.

You can prepare a few sentences and read them out at the meeting. This might be useful, for example if you think you might forget what you want to say.

### **What if I don't want to give my views, or don't feel comfortable speaking in front of my teacher?**

Mediation is a calm and non-threatening process. But if you don't want to give your views, or don't feel comfortable speaking in front of anyone, you won't be forced to.

Even some adults feel nervous speaking in front of people, so don't worry if you do feel a little bit nervous! You could give your views to the mediator rather than in front of everyone, if you don't feel totally comfortable.

### **Will they listen to what I have to say?**

Yes! Mediation is designed to make sure that everyone's views are heard and that people are listened to. Your views are important.

### **Will they make me go to a school I don't want to go to?**

If you can, give your views on the situation, and explain why you don't want to go to the school and what you're worried about.

You might get the chance to learn something new which will mean you're not so worried.

### **What if my views aren't the same as my parents' views?**

If you have different views to your parents, you should explain this to the mediator. He or she will want to make sure that everyone's voice is heard, and that includes yours.

The mediator will be in charge of the meeting, so will make sure that everyone stays calm and focused. If people don't remain calm, then the mediator might suggest they take some time out to relax a bit.

You can also ask for time out any time you feel you need it.

### **What if someone says something about me which isn't true?**

If someone says something about you which you think isn't true, you should explain this to the mediator as soon as you can.

Try not to shout out even if you are upset – you will have a time to speak. This is true for everyone, not just you.

If you are upset, you can ask the mediator for time out at any time.

### **How long do mediation meetings last?**

Mediations usually last around 4 hours. This includes time for short breaks.

### **What if I can't sit still for 4 hours? What if I'm bored? Can I leave half way through?**

It is unlikely that you will be asked to be at the meeting for the full 4 hours. Usually young people are just at mediations for some of the time. The mediation service will have explained this to your parents and will suggest that perhaps another relative can come and collect you from the meeting, after an hour or so.

If you think you are going to get bored in the hour or so you are going to be there, why not bring a book or magazine to read quietly. But you won't be allowed to listen to music or play on a computer game, in case it distracts other people.

You will only be able to leave halfway through if your parents say this is ok and if someone has come to collect you.

### **What will happen at the end of the mediation?**

At the end of the mediation, the mediator will write up an agreement about anything your parents and the person from the local authority and / or your school have agreed.

For example, sometimes, after talking things through, people find out things they didn't know before so they can change their minds on what they thought or they decide they think something new.

If nothing has been agreed, the mediator will record this on paper instead.