

## What is a MIAM?

MIAM stands for 'Mediation Information and Assessment Meeting'. Put simply it's a chance for you to find out about all of the options available to you both. It's the time for your mediator to find out about the background to your situation, so that they can assess whether mediation might be able to help your case, or whether there may be a better alternative.

## How do they work?

They last around 45-60 minutes and take place by video conferencing (usually Zoom), although we also offer in person appointments at our Havant, Fareham or Southampton offices.

You will come to a MIAM with us without the other person, rather than together. This gives each person a chance to speak freely about what they are hoping to achieve through mediation and to raise any concerns they may have. It helps us in helping you to work out which option will suit you best. Mediation is not the only resolution process; it might be that something like arbitration or a hybrid version of mediation with solicitors present could work better. MIAMs are treated confidentially and we do not pass any information to the other person that you have disclosed during your MIAM – we have a duty to keep everyone safe if they come to mediation with us.

As mediators we do not give you legal advice, although the majority of our mediators are specialist family law solicitors, former solicitors or legal academics. Our aim is to give you lots of information about divorce, separation, co-parenting, better communication or financial arrangements and the like. If necessary, we can recommend solicitors who will give sensible and economical legal advice.

It is compulsory to have a MIAM before you use the courts to try and resolve your differences. It is **not** compulsory to attend mediation. It is also compulsory for MIAM providers to contact both of you, so that you can both make informed decisions, so we will expect you to provide the other persons contact details when we meet.

## What do they cost?

Our MIAM appointments currently cost £99 (including VAT), unless you are eligible for legal aid in which case they are free. If you think you might be eligible for legal aid we will carry out an assessment at your MIAM. You may be eligible for legal aid if you are on a low income, working part time, or receiving certain benefits (for example Universal Credit, Income Support and ESA). You must provide proof of your income and capital prior to the MIAM appointment so that we can tell you whether you need to pay, and in order to qualify for legal aid. A checklist of what you need to bring with you is available upon request.

We are often asked by people if they need to prepare anything for a MIAM. The answer is 'no', other than legal aid evidence. We just need you.

The Mediation Voucher scheme does not cover the cost of a MIAM.

## Is mediation suitable for everyone?

If you and the other person decide to come to mediation all your conversations will be open and transparent; your mediator will not be able to keep anything confidential from the other person unless you have specifically agreed any exceptions to that. So, the MIAM is a good opportunity for you to ask any questions which are nagging you or to express any doubts or concerns you may have about it. If there has been any form of abuse in your relationship, or if you are worried about the welfare of your children, it would be a good time to talk about this.

We can offer mediation by shuttle, where each person is in a different room. We will talk to you about how we can keep you as safe as possible.