

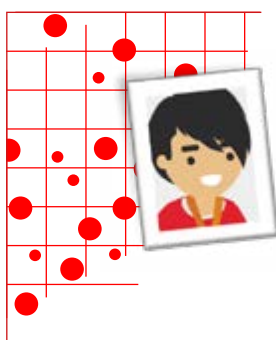


Arranging Family Time In Mediation

The Family Justice Young People's Board (FJYPB) have created this Arranging Family Time guide, reflecting on their personal experiences and sharing with you what helps children and young people to feel safe and secure, and things they would like to be consider when helping parents with planning their time with their child as part of the mediation process.

PRINCIPLES

- > The safety and welfare of children and young people should **always** be your priority when considering Family Time. The views of parents and wider family members are important, especially as they hold parental responsibility for their children, but the law requires that the safety and welfare of the child is paramount, and you must make sure this is the loudest consideration in your support to parents.
- > We need to feel confident that our family time arrangements are **safe** and that you will refer any safeguarding concern you may have in line with your organisations safeguarding policy.
- > Family time that feels **safe** and **beneficial** is important to help us build or maintain relationships with significant people in our lives. When we have previously experienced challenges in these relationships, family time can help us to overcome these and develop a more positive relationship.
- > We **expect and need to be involved** in the planning and decision-making around our family time arrangements. Child Inclusive Mediation is a great way for us to be included and have our voices heard. We have an independent life outside of our family, such as school, hobbies, friends and **we want and need** to be able to still enjoy these things.
- > We might not feel comfortable talking to our parents about how their separation and the family arrangements make us feel. We might have worries or want to change things. It is important that we know who we can talk to if we are worried, this might be someone in our family, at school or one of our friends.
- > Helping us and our family members **prepare** for Family Time is important. We may have worries that we need to talk to you about and reducing these will help us to look forward to and better enjoy our time together. Talk to our parents about how they will communicate the arrangements for "Safe Family Time" with us. A letter or document setting out the arrangements in language we understand would help us.
- > Talk to our parents about how they will communicate the arrangements for "Safe Family Time" with us. A letter or a written plan setting out the arrangements in a way that we will understand.
- > To make any arrangements work it is important that our parents can communicate so that they can each feel included in the key parts of our lives. We do not want to feel responsible for sharing messages between our parents.



“I won't always be this age and what worked now might not be right for me later. I will grow up and want to spend more time with my friends, go on school trips, join clubs or take up new hobbies. I need my parents to know this and change the arrangements so that I can do all these things without worrying about upsetting them.”



PREPARING

- > We need to be clear in what our family time arrangement will look like. Can you help us or our parents to plan out our weekly/monthly schedule and **don't forget** about the things we want to do such as seeing friends, after school clubs, sport matches etc. It will help us to have a copy of the plan so that we can understand which days and times we are with each of our parents or family. It will also help us plan special events or occasions around this.
- > Our needs will change as we grow, and this might affect our family time arrangements. Our parents will need to understand this and be flexible in making changes when needed. Reach out to parents to check all is working when mediation has concluded.
- > Brothers and sisters may have different views about Family Time so please don't assume that we will want our arrangements to be the same. There will be differences in our relationships and experiences with our parents and it's therefore important that you explore this separately with each of us so that arrangements can be tailored to our individual needs.
- > Don't forget to ask us about other family members, including brother and sisters who don't live with us and may not be attending family time, and about our pets. They are important and being away from them might be upsetting and stressful for us. Ask us what would help to minimise this.
- > The FJYPB members reflecting on their personal experiences have created our **Top Tips for Separated Parents** to help parents think about making arrangements for their children. We would ask that you share these with the parents you are working with.

CHILD INCLUSIVE MEDIATION

If you are a Child Inclusive Mediator and undertaking a meeting with a child or young person we would like to share with you our Top Tip's for Child Inclusive Mediation.

- > Make sure that all families are aware of the benefits of Child Inclusive Mediation and how involving their child can enable them to feel listened to, respected and valued.
- > Have age-appropriate child friendly information about mediation, how it works and how it can help their family. This information should be available online, in the parent's introduction packs and in your centre.
- > Check with the parents how best to engage and meet with the child. Some may prefer to meet in-person or virtually. Think about how you introduce yourself to the child before they meet with you, do you have an invitation letter, are you able to speak with them on the phone, message or virtually to introduce yourself, let them ask questions about their upcoming meeting etc.
- > Think about what useful websites, video and online resources you can direct a child to online that might help explain about mediation and what they can expect.
- > Have age-appropriate toys and resources available for children and young people to use during their session with you.
- > **Remember** that a child or young person may feel nervous about meeting you and they have probably spent a long-time planning what they want to say.
- > Think about what you say and how you say it. Use clear and understandable language with no jargon.
- > Have paper and pens available should the child or young person want to use these.
- > To empower the child and help them feel included in their family arrangements you could engage them in developing their weekly schedule identifying their hobbies, sport matches meeting with friends etc.
- > **Thank them** for their time and explain how this information is going to be used. Consider even writing a short note to send to the child to thank them for helping you in your work, especially if it does not go the way the young person wants.
- > Once the family time arrangements have been agreed, can you support the parents to create their schedule so that their child can have their own copy, helping them understand when they will be spending time with each parent and when they can enjoy their sport, hobbies and spending time with friends.



KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- > Family Time can be challenging for us, consider the experiences we've had and what actions need to be taken to reassure us and to help us be ready to spend time with a family member. We may have experienced feeling fearful, confused, resentful, and hurt towards the family member, so please think about this when speaking to our parents to help us to manage and overcome these emotions.

“ Easing into it would be the best-case scenario for me. You can't expect a child to be okay with consistent 50/50 time straight away especially in the context of domestic abuse. Children and young people can be extremely influenced from what they see, memories can come back and then having to see that parent can cause concerns.



- > Really think about what our parents say they want in terms of time with us and 'hand over' days. Is this practical and realistic and does it meet our needs rather than theirs? How do you know that? Family Time should primarily be for our benefit and the quality of this, rather than quantity, is what is important to us. We are not a bartering tool for our parents

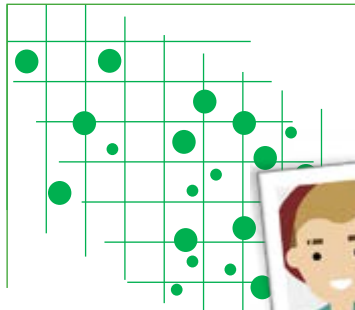
“ My change over day was midweek and if I had a choice when it was first initiated, I would have chosen a day that was easier, so I didn't have to take all my stuff to and from school.



“ I think for me instantly I think about the pressure to say you want split time equally between parents or carers when you're asked what you want. The guilt is so prominent, not wanting to disappoint someone or make someone upset by speaking the truth. Sometimes split time is good, but a child should have the right to change that if it is not working for them.

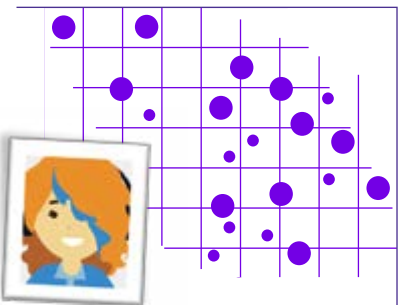
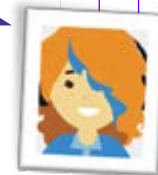


- > Family Time needs to consider the relationship between our parents and with extended family members who are important to us. There might be conflict in our families which can be very hard for us to manage so make sure there is a clear plan for how, where and when we will spend time with each of them. Remind our parents that arrangements are for our benefit and that their language and words and those used by extended family members needs to be kind about the arrangements and about others in our family.



“ I should not feel that there is a divide in my family or hear bad things said about my other parent.

“ I don't want to be seen as on a parent's time and hear the phrase 'you're on Mums time now/Dad's time now' as I am the one having to move in between homes.



- > Don't forget that we might need your help to make sure we have all the things we need to spend time with each of our parents.

INDIRECT CONTACT

- > We don't recognise any form of contact as 'indirect' because it still has a **direct impact** for us. Whilst 'indirect' would usually mean no face-to-face contact with a parent, in this increasingly digital world our experience is that other forms of communication are also referred to as indirect, such as through mobile phones, WhatsApp, Skype, FaceTime etc.
- > **Please remember** these types of digital contact are very much 'direct' and the reasons for this being part of my family time needs to be carefully considered. With the right support, digital contact can be beneficial in helping us maintain a connection and relationship with a parent and for our sense of identity. However, telephone and video contact may not always be appropriate. Please encourage our parents to think about what is hoped to be achieved for us when recommending these types of contact and how we, and our parent, can be supported with this.
- > We also want you to be clear with us about the purpose and benefit of letters and emails. Is it to help with our identity needs or is it a means of opening the door and / or keeping this open for contact in the future? How can we and our parents be supported to ensure this is meaningful for us?
- > **Be clear with us** what you mean by 'indirect' contact, and, if you are thinking about recommending this, be specific about how this will take place and ask whether this feels okay for us.



Parents Guide

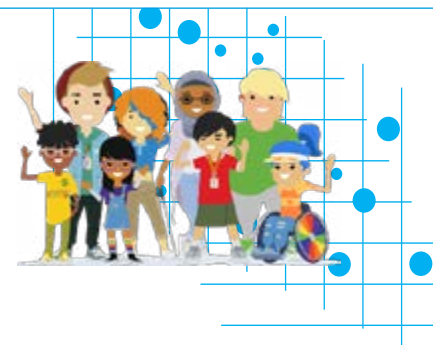
The FJYPB have created some Top Tips for spending time together online to help parents and children spend quality time together online

- 1 Why not video call at a mealtime and eat together? Maybe you could both make the same meal and enjoy it together.
- 2 Think about doing some exercise together. You could: Video call each other whilst doing some exercising. You could check out some classes on YouTube; or try to call each other during a short walk near your homes; Set each other fun challenges such as dance routines, exercise or something artistic and then film it and share with each other.
- 3 Why not help with homework? You could help with specific activities, set some quizzes, spelling tests, maths, help with revision or help find useful websites and resources.
- 4 Watch the same TV programme or movie before you see each other and then challenge each other with quiz questions about it. Or simply sit back and watch together.
- 5 There are loads of games you could play together. Get interested in the online games they like to play, create your own avatar or character and join in. Or when off line you could both play the same game together; simple paper and pen games like hangman, I-spy or noughts and crosses; board games; Lego - you could build something and ask the other person to guess what it is; quizzes either online or one you make yourself.
- 6 You could read together or to each other. Either a schoolbook, a favourite book or even a bedtime story.
- 7 You could both complete a jigsaw or puzzle. Work on it separately or together, and then chat about it during your video calls.
- 8 Try baking your favourite treats. You could watch your child bake or even try to bake at the same time and see whose is best.
- 9 Could you draw a picture together? See who does the best picture.
- 10 Could you create music together or sing together? If you play an instrument then use it and if not then use pots, pans and anything else you can find.

Remember the most important thing IS TO HAVE FUN!

- > Try to make it as interactive as possible.
- > If your child loses interest, don't be upset, try to think of something else to do or bring the session to an end.
- > Don't feel like you must always talk, something it's better to just enjoy the time together.
- > Remember to keep questions focussed on your child and keep them!





Examples of family time schedules

Here are some examples of family time schedule that parents and their children could create that is unique to their family.



Younger Child

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
24 Mum	25 Mum	26 Dad	27 Dad 6pm Football training	28 Dad	29 Dad	01 Mum 5pm Xbox with dad
02 Mum	03 Mum	04 Dad	05 Dad 6pm Football training	06 Dad	07 Mum Ryan's birthday party	08 Mum
09 Mum	10 Mum 6:30 Tennis	11 Dad	12 Dad 6pm Football training	13 Dad	14 Dad	15 Mum
16 Mum	17 Mum 5pm Xbox with dad	18 Dad	19 Dad 6pm Football training	20 Dad	21 Mum	22 Mum 3:00 Tennis match
23 School Holidays Grandma's	24 School Holidays Grandma's	25 School Holidays Dad's	26 School Holidays Football club	27 School Holidays Cinema with Jamie	28 Dad	29 Mum
30 Mum	31 Mum	01 Dad	02 Dad 6pm Football training	03 Dad 6:30 Tennis with mum	04 Mum	05 Mum



Older Child

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
01 Revision	02 Revision	03 Revision Mum's for dinner	04 Revision	05 Revision	06	07 Mum's for Grannys birthday
08 Revision	09 Revision	10 Maths exams	11 History exam Chemistry exam	12 English lit exam Drama exam	13	14 Father's day
15 Maths exam	16 English lang exam Art exam	17 Geography exam Physics exam Zoom with mum French revision	18 Maths exam French exam	19 PE exam Biology exam	20 Lunch with Mum, Jake and Granny	21
22 French exam History exam	23 English lit exam Geography exam	24 Art exam	25 English lang exam	26	27 Rugby with mates	28
29 No school Cinema with Chelsea	30 In school	01 In school	02 In school	03 School Leavers Day!!!	04 Wales with Mum, David and Jake	05
06 Wales with Mum, David and Jake	07	08 Rover's V United with Dad 7pm	09 Sofa day!!!!	10 Mate's night Finished exams	11 Aunty Sue 60th	12