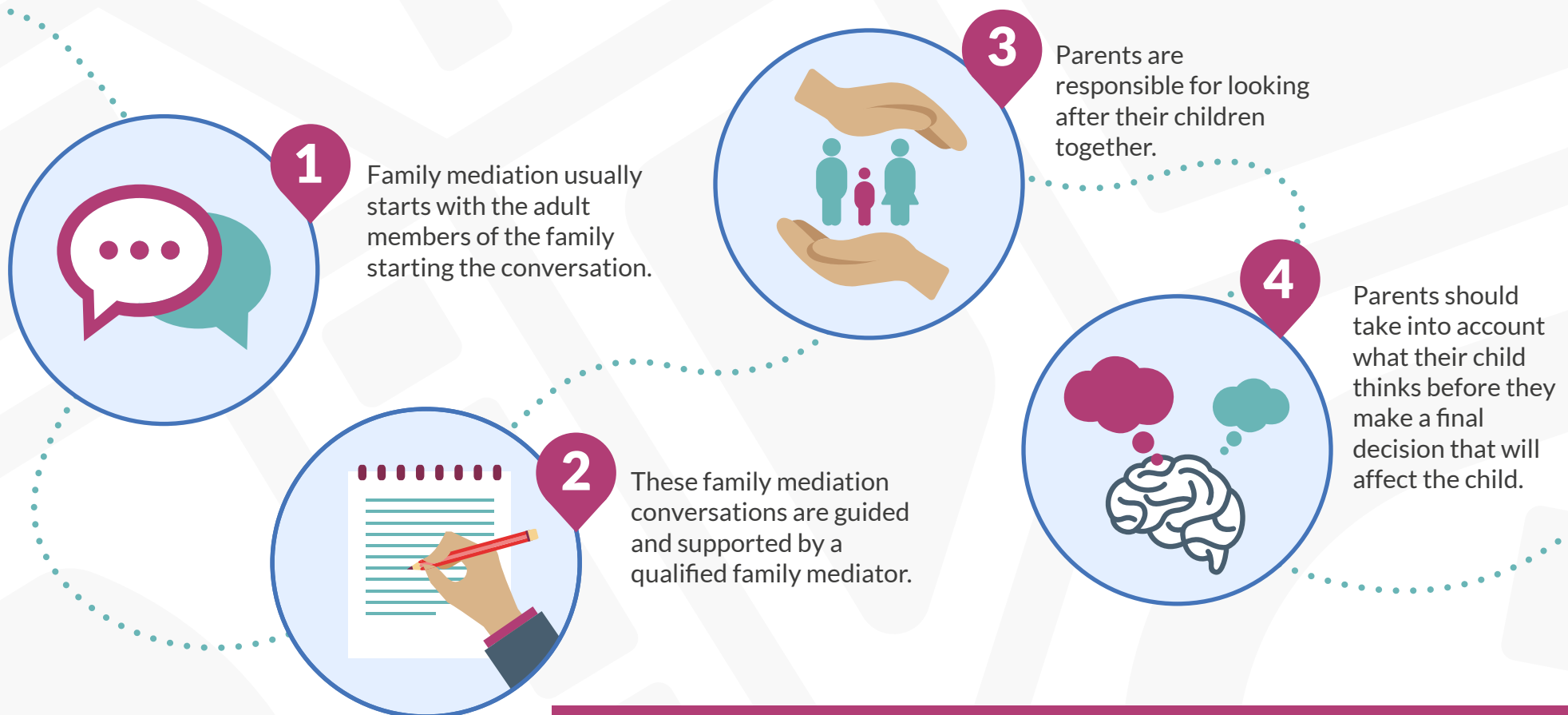


Family Mediation – what about me?

A young person's guide

Family mediation is a way of working out what should happen when parents split up or when there are other family problems where the decisions are made by the people who are actually going to be affected by those decisions.



Here is an explanation of how mediation works, created by and for young people





1

Family mediation allows the members of the family to make the decisions that need to be made about the future by having conversations with each other. Usually this starts with the adult members of the family – parents or grandparents or whoever else wants to find a safe place to talk.

In family mediation children are able to join in the conversation in a number of ways, including talking directly to a family mediator. Sometimes children even start the conversation off by persuading their parents to try family mediation.

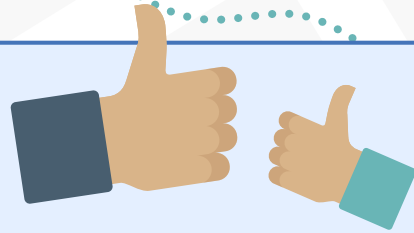
2



These conversations are guided and supported by a qualified family mediator. The mediator doesn't make the decisions for the family. The mediator is there to help all the family members talk to each other; this can be difficult in some family situations. The mediator will encourage everyone to talk honestly about what they are feeling.



3



Parents are responsible for looking after their children together. They have to work out between themselves what arrangements should be made for their child, if they possibly can. If parents can't agree between themselves, they might have to ask someone else to decide. This usually involves finding out what a court thinks.

If you want to know more about what happens when families ask the court to make a decision, you might find [this website](#) useful. It has been created by the people who help to take care of children whose futures are being decided by the family court and has information for teenagers and for younger children.

4



Parents should take into account what their child thinks before they make a final decision that will affect the child, although sometimes they may think the right decision includes something that the child doesn't like. Some parents work things out by talking with their child and agreeing things together, but that can be very difficult when parents disagree strongly with each other or can't speak to each other.

If you feel that you are stuck in the middle and want a voice, you might find [this website](#) very useful; it has been created by young people for young people.

Many family mediators are trained and experienced in meeting with young people and children, as well as mediating between parents. [Use our search tool](#) to find mediators who belong to the Family Mediators Association who are qualified to work with young people and children.

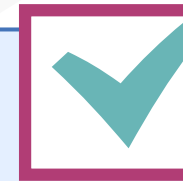


Talking with a family mediator – what is it like?

Usually the young person has a conversation on their own with the mediator, without parents present.

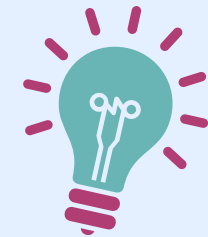


Young people are not asked to make choices or take responsibility for decisions and the conversation is confidential – the mediator does not make reports to the court and only passes on the messages, wishes or suggestions to parents that the young person asks them to pass on.



The parents will already be taking part in mediation and they need to give their consent to the mediator having a separate, private conversation with their child or young people concerned. The child has to agree as well!

Feedback from young people shows they found it very helpful to meet with the mediator, who is often already working with their parents and who can help explain things to their parents. Young people are in the middle and so is the mediator! Parents say they find these separate meetings with their child or children very helpful to understand better how their children feel and to find out what might make things work better for them. Often, parents take their children's ideas on board and things get settled by agreement without court proceedings, or if court proceedings are already going on, they may be brought to an end by consent.



If you are interested in knowing more, this video shows a mediation involving young people.



The two girls (who are actors, in fact) decide that they want to talk with their parents with the mediator's help. More often the child or young person prefers to ask the mediator to pass on their message or proposal to parents without being present when this happens. Before the meeting happens the parents will already have agreed that they will not ask the young person to tell them more about what they said to the mediator and will not get angry with them about whatever message is passed on. Usually, thankfully, it is the opposite – the whole family say they are communicating more easily and that everyone is feeling better about things.