**FAMILY MEDIATION LOTHIAN**

**BACKGROUND**

Family Mediation Lothian (FML) is a registered Scottish charity (SC12815) and company limited by guarantee (No.110356). Our main office is in Edinburgh city centre with our child contact services being based in the community. We have been serving the communities of Edinburgh, East, Mid and West Lothian by supporting families through break up, separation and divorce, for over 30 years. What began as a small organisation with staff and volunteers is now one of the biggest providers of family mediation and contact centre services in Scotland.

Family Mediation Lothian’s purpose is to help and support families who are experiencing family break up. In particular, through family mediation, we aim to help parents to agree and sustain arrangements that are designed to promote well-being and health for their children after divorce or separation.

We give further family support through providing safe, secure, friendly child contact services (with staff and volunteers on hand) where children and parents can meet after separation, and through support services for children and young people affected by family break up and separation.

FML provides services for families, including parents, children and young people who are experiencing difficulties around separation, divorce and family break up. Extended family members, for example grandparents, step parents, new partners, siblings may also be included. At least one parent should live in Edinburgh, East, West or Mid Lothian.

Family Mediation Lothian is a member of the Scottish network of charities working under the title of Relationships Scotland, which includes Family Mediation, Couple Counselling and Child Contact services.

 Family Mediation Lothian provides: -

* A **telephone/ email based information and signposting service for parents** and the wider community of the Lothian’s on all issues relating to separation/divorce
* An **intake service** designed to enable separating/divorced parents to make an informed choice as to whether to use our services and/or those provided by others.
* **Child focussed mediation services** designed to allow parents to come together, reduce conflict, resolve difficulties and negotiate on issues connected with the physical and emotional health and well-being of their children.
* **Contact Centre services,** offering supported contact in a neutral and welcoming venue where children can meet and spend time with their non-resident parent and/or extended family members. These Centres can also be used as a beginning and ending point for contact that takes place outside the centre. Contact Centres are seen as providing a relatively short-term solution, the aim being to work towards families making their own contact arrangements when safe to do so. The Contact Centres operate at the weekends in Leith, Granton, Viewforth, Musselburgh and Livingston.
* **Supervised Contact Services** designed to facilitate contact between children and a non-resident parent in circumstances where (for child protection and/or other reasons) this needs to take place in the presence of a supervisor.
* **Children’s Groups** which offer children from separating/divorced families an opportunity to share their experiences, learn from each other about managing difficult situations and to discuss any worries or concerns they may have about their natural/step parents
* **Parenting Apart Groups** which are 3 hour workshops for parents who are separating, for them to meet together and find out how to make the separation less stressful for children

***Supported Contact is defined as: -*** *In–centre supervision of the venue, while supporting the handover of the child from one parent to the other and supporting the contact within the centre when appropriate. Information on interactions before, during or after the contact is not recorded, unless a child protection or health and safety issue is observed. A record of attendance is kept and an attendance report can be provided upon request.*

***Supervised Contact is defined as:*** *- a service where contact takes place in the constant presence of a trained person with the direct responsibility to observe and ensure the safety of those involved. Factual reports can be provided upon request. There is a cost for this service and for reports.*

Our values are exemplified in all the work that we do:

* **Child and Client Centred:** parents and children deserve respect – they know their own situation best. FML services harness people’s innate resourcefulness, resilience and ability to solve problems.

* **Fairness and Accessibility**: FML services are given regardless of people’s social or economic circumstances, location, ethnic or religious background, sexual orientation, marital status, language, family circumstances or disability.

* **Quality**: FML aims to achieve excellence in all aspects of the service provided to families. Advice, Support, Mediation and Contact Centres are provided by well-trained, accredited professionals.
* **Understanding Conflict**: FML believes that conflict is a fact of life for families under stress or in transition. Conflict can provide an opportunity for growth, change and learning. FML helps people to acquire the skills needed to handle conflict effectively; thereby laying the foundation for more stable families and a more stable society.
* FML Services are **confidential, impartial, non-judgemental** and **independent.**