


MEDIATION CASE STUDY



“At the start there was little to no contact. It was really hard for both of us. Now everything is more civilised and calm, it’s so much easier to talk about the kids.”

A self-referral was made by Mum to the Family Mediation West mediation service. Mum and Dad were together during the birth of their first child but separated soon after due to disagreements about parenting responsibilities and commitment. Disagreements between Mum and Dad about parenting approaches led to significant conflict.

After their initial separation, Mum and Dad managed to co-parent effectively for a time. Their success in co-parenting prompted them to reconsider their relationship and give things another go. But recurring issues, particularly related to trust, led to another separation.

Following this second split, Mum informed Dad that she was pregnant with their second child. Dad expressed his desire to be involved in the new baby’s life despite the end of their romantic relationship. However, over time, communication dwindled, and Dad lost contact with Mum and the children. As a result, Dad had not seen his first child in several months and had not met his new baby. Dad stated he was unhappy with these circumstances and wanted to be in his children’s lives, but Mum described his efforts as sporadic and unreliable.

Since their separation, Dad has had another child with a new partner, and at the time of intake, both Mum and Dad were expecting children with their respective new partners. Mum and Dad agreed to try mediation to improve their communication and establish clear boundaries to facilitate consistent contact moving forward. Their goal was to facilitate a blended family environment where the children could have relationships with their half-siblings. Mum and Dad would participate in six mediation sessions with Family Mediation West.

At the first mediation appointment, the mediator highlighted the importance of their children having healthy and positive relationships with both parents and explored ways to achieve this. Mum and Dad agreed to be open to each other’s needs, taking the opportunity to ask each other questions and listen to each other, an area of communication they had not been able to address before on their own. Additionally, they agreed to consider and address the influence of extended family members and new partners on their communication as they move

forward. Recognising the strong bond between Dad and their first child, both parents expressed a desire for this relationship to continue, and hoped their second baby could have a similar experience. However, the priority was to reestablish Dad's relationship with their first child before attempting contact with their baby. With the mediator's assistance, they arranged a visit of a few hours with Dad and their first child, agreeing on a neutral environment to ease the transition for the child and minimise stress for themselves.

Over the next few mediation sessions communication and contact improved, with the child expressing happiness at seeing Dad more regularly. Dad also had contact with their second baby and looked forward to continuing this in the future. Mediation paused for several months when Dad's new partner gave birth, although the mediator encouraged efforts to continue scheduling time for visitations where possible, and make sure that their eldest child understood this big change.

When mediation resumed, it became evident that communication had declined again and conflicts had arisen, and Dad had not seen the children in the months since his new baby had been born. The mediator encouraged Mum and Dad to reflect on the changes that had occurred since starting mediation, both personally and in their relationship, as well as in their children's lives. They were urged to consider the conflict resolution strategies they had worked on to prioritise the children's well-being, and how these strategies could be reintegrated.

Moving forward, Mum and Dad agreed to focus on getting their communication back on track. They established clear boundaries, committing to communicate strictly about their children and avoid other topics. They discussed how to introduce the topic of a new sibling to their child and facilitate their meeting, aiming to foster a positive sibling relationship.



They began rebuilding their communication slowly, initially agreeing to communicate via text about the children only, with specific times for texting and responses. They worked with the mediator to facilitate a plan for fortnightly visitation between Dad and the children, taking into account his responsibilities with the new baby. They agreed that everyone now felt comfortable enough for pick-ups and drop-offs to occur at Mum's home.

As time progressed, communication significantly improved. By the end of their mediation sessions, Mum and Dad were able to have civil phone calls to arrange child contacts, and visitation has remained regular. Both parents are happy for the children to be spending time with Dad, his new partner, and their new baby. They also welcomed increased interaction between the children and Mum's new partner, with Mum's due date approaching. With Family Mediation, Mum and Dad have cooperated to create a more harmonious blended family environment, creating a better situation for all involved, especially their children.

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