



MEDIATORS CONFERENCE

Hearing the voice of the child

Proud to be sponsored and supported by



We want to see
that each child
and young person
has a VOICE in
their family's
mediation.





PUT A FINGER DOWN

CHESS PIECE



CHESS PIECE

“He loves you. Your father does love you, you know.”

I was told this a lot growing up. This same statement circled round and round in my mind. Love? A concept that seemed so far away from what I was experiencing. This, this is love? For a child, it was hard to understand when your world was being flipped upside down. Why was a man who supposedly loved me, doing the things he was doing? Why did a man who loved me vow to destroy my family's life?

I wanted to scream. Scream at the professionals for making assumptions. How could they possibly know? Scream at myself, maybe I was to blame? Perhaps they were right, and I just didn't understand? I felt guilty, as if it was my fault these things were happening. I wanted to scream at him too. If he loved me like everyone seemed to claim, why couldn't he show it? Confused and frustrated, I just wanted to scream.

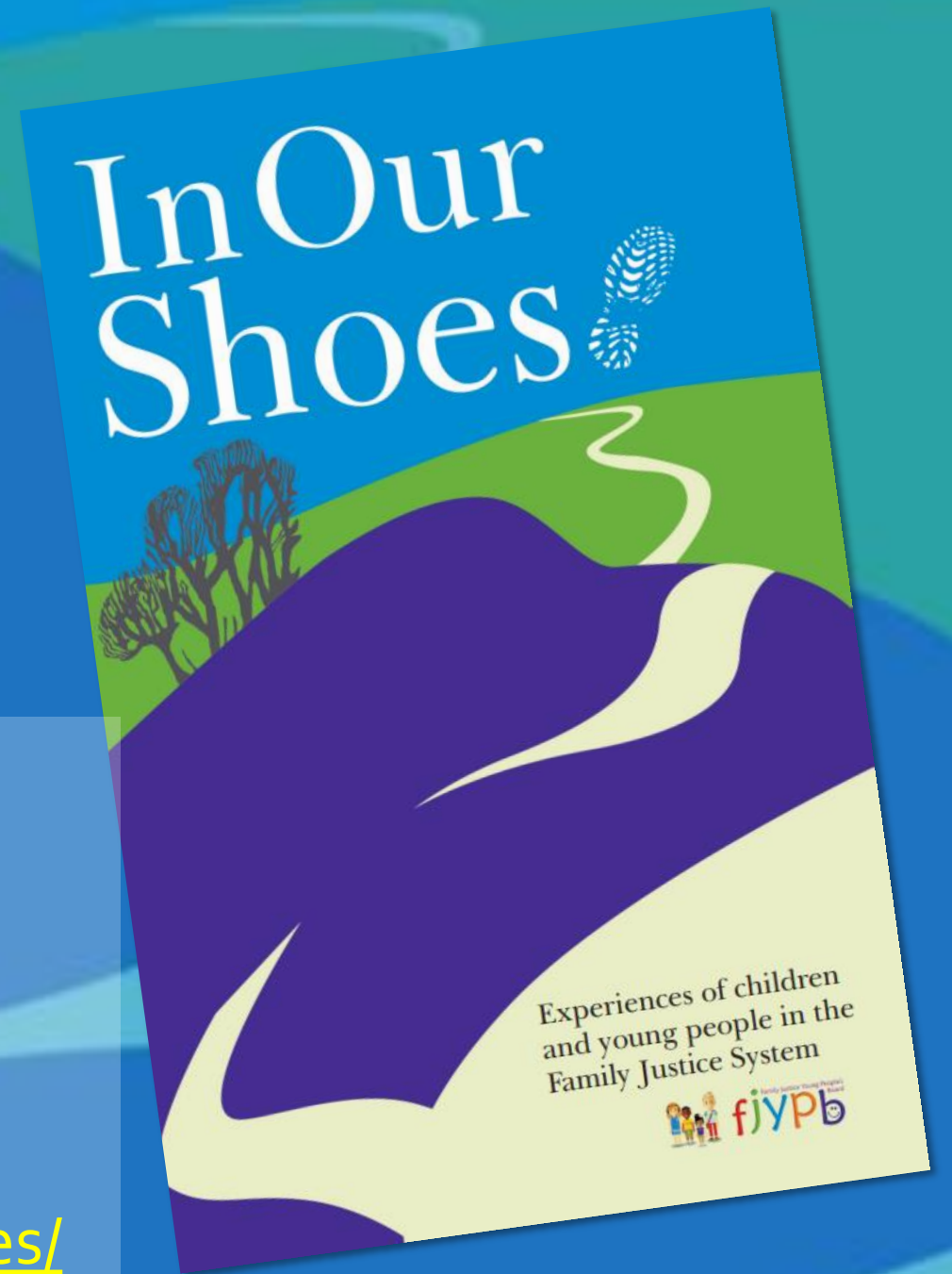


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<https://www.cafcass.gov.uk/family-justice-young-peoples-board/fjypb-book-in-our-shoes/>



INVOLVING THE VOICE OF THE CHILD

Whatever the reason for the mediation, you SHOULD consider involving the **VOICE OF THE CHILD**.



“During my court case mediation did take place between my parents, however in order to have children involved in the mediation sessions, both parents must consent to child inclusivity.

My father did consent, however my mother (who knew we wanted to live with our father but ignored this) did not and so neither myself nor my sister were included in mediation despite the fact we wanted to be. In my opinion the only way, pre any court proceedings, for a child to fully have their voice heard and listened to is to be included in mediation, thus I believe it is categorically incorrect for this to be solely dependent on the consent of their parent or guardian.

Not only does the "requirement" of parental consent completely cut the child off from any real say in their life, it also removes any means of preventing the need to go to court (which is a heavy burden financially and emotionally and, in my opinion, an overall extremely demeaning process) and, in my case, I believe it acted as yet another way in which my mother could alienate my father. In my case I believe child inclusive mediation had the potential to avoid court proceedings which were heavily detrimental to almost every single aspect of our lives.”

WHAT IS MEDIATION?

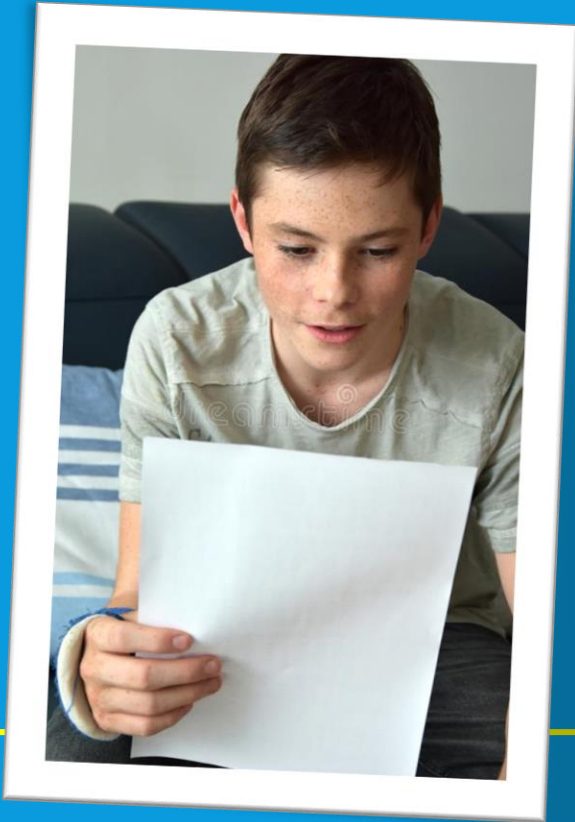


Things to consider:

- What information do you share with children and young people about Mediation is and how it works.
- What information do you have online that is aimed at children and young people, including child inclusive mediation.
- Do your research.... Look for engaging videos, blogs and articles that help explain about mediation and share the links to these on your websites.
- Do you know how your referring partners promote mediation; do they advocate for child inclusive mediation – what can you do to improve this?

INTRODUCTIONS

It is important to introduce yourself to a child. Sharing your name, contact details, setting out your role and what they can expect from you.



Why not write them a letter, maybe include a photo of yourself. A letter is something that they can later refer to and even keep as part of their records.

Make the letter personal to them and ensure it meets their communication needs.

FEEDBACK



Feedback is very important to children and young people, our voice matters and it can help inform your practice.

- Do you capture feedback from children and young people?
- What do you do with it?
- How has it informed on your practice?

CLOSURE

It is just as important for you to let a child know that your support with them has ended.

Writing to them and detailing the time you spent with them, the work you completed together.

You should also remind children about who they can speak to after and also signpost them to useful websites or highlight any good resources that you think they may like.



OUTCOMES

It is important to ask the child who they would like to have share with them the outcome of the mediation.



"I found the process useful because it was a way of communication between me and my parents, that didn't just go through my parents. It also meant that we were all aware of the current plans.

I did feel valued and included, however it became difficult because my mum decided she was not happy doing so and because she wasn't happy, we all had to stop, even though I had found it useful. Because of my mum disengaging the process it didn't end up being very useful, but I think it could have been if it carried on further.

I think there is great value in including children in mediation, if they feel comfortable, because it ensures they are involved, their opinions represented and stops their reliance on their parents for information (which could mean information is left out).

I would recommend child inclusive mediation, in the right scenario, and if all parties are happy to carry through with it, otherwise it could be disappointing."

WE CHALLENGE YOU...

Child friendly information and resources

- Think about what resources are being shared with children and young people.
- The information needs to explain what is mediation, how does it work, why does my family need it and what will happen.
- What information do you have on your website?
- Do you understand how children and young people want to be communicated with?
- The language used is clear and understandable for children of all ages.

More involvement

- How can you overcome the challenges of parental consent?
- What needs to change to encourage more parents to give their consent?

Feedback

- Do you get feedback from the families that use your service, how often is it collated and what do you do with it?
- How does the feedback shape your practice?



CONTACT US



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