

How pre meetings help clients make good decisions at mediation

Each party having a separate pre meeting with the mediator allows:

- Each party to learn more about mediation, tell their story and establish trust and rapport with a mediator. The party can explain their concerns and perspectives – and perhaps say things that might be less useful to raise at the joint mediation.
- Check the dispute is suitable for mediation and. The pre meetings can identify ways in which the usual mediation process can be customised to best meet the needs of the particular parties.
- Preparation for joint mediation including effective negotiation and communication skills.
- Identification of documents and information which will help at joint mediation meeting.

The pre meetings assist the parties in preparing for and focusing at the joint mediation, and making the best possible decisions about settlement. Pre meetings not only increase the likelihood of parties reaching agreement, but also improve the quality of agreements and their implementation. [ADRAC](#) advises that “careful preparation and thought put in at the early stage of a mediation process will yield dividends throughout the rest of the process”.

[The National Mediation Practice Standards](#) require a pre meeting to assess whether mediation is suitable and whether variations to the usual process are required; and to explain the process and assist parties in preparing. Similarly, the [Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner Regulations](#) require a family dispute resolution practitioner to assess whether mediation is appropriate.

Pre meetings are confidential. They take around one hour. Lawyers are welcome to participate, but generally do not do so.

If either party chooses to not proceed to a joint meeting or if mediation is not appropriate, then the parties avoid the cost of a joint mediation session where there might be negligible chances of success.

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