HM Courts & Tribunals Service

SEND Appeal Resolution Meeting (SARM)

How to prepare for your SARM

What is a SEND Appeal Resolution Meeting	A SEND Appeal Resolution Meeting (SARM) is an early, facilitated discussion that takes place after a Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) appeal has been lodged with the Tribunal and the local authority has submitted its response. As part of our internal case management for Special Educational Needs (SEN) appeals, both parties are encouraged to take part in the appeal resolution meeting. This is an early opportunity in the appeal process for everyone involved to discuss the issues, share information, and explore practical ways to resolve the appeal sooner. The process is free of charge and is designed to help achieve earlier, more constructive outcomes, reduce stress for families and local authorities, and focus on what will best support the child or young person. It aims to narrow the issues in dispute and, where possible, reach an agreement without the need for a full hearing.
What is the SARM format	Your appeal resolution meeting will be conducted via telephone and has been booked for the date and time shown on your appointment confirmation email. Your appointment will last for around one hour from the point at which the mediator calls. The mediator will call both parties separately – you will not talk directly to the other side. They will try to help you come to an agreement with the other party. If an agreement is reached at the appeal resolution meeting, the appeal will not need to progress to an appeal hearing.
What do you need to do to prepare for your telephone appointment?	The mediator will require a contact number to conduct the appeal resolution meeting appointment. Failure to provide contact details will result in your SARM appointment not taking place. **You must make sure you have provided us with, or confirmed, the name and number of the person who will be conducting the SARM appointment.** **If you have not done this, or need to update your telephone number, you should contact us by email (SEND-ARM@justice.gov.uk) no less than 5 working days before your SARM appointment. You must ensure you always provide your appeal number (Starting EH) when making contact with the tribunal.**
Re-booking or cancelling your appointment	If you need to rebook/cancel your appointment you must provide your reasons to **SEND-ARM@justice.gov.uk** If you are looking to rebook please provide us with dates and times to avoid for the appointment to be re-booked. Any request to re-book must be done as soon as possible to ensure the request can be considered and actioned where required.

Steps to help you prepare for your appointment

- ❑ The mediator will call from a withheld number. Make sure that withheld numbers are not blocked on your phone.
- ❑ Make sure you are in a suitable location for the appointment that is free from distractions.
- ❑ If the mediator cannot contact you within 15 minutes of the appointment start, the appointment will be marked as not conducted and may either be re-scheduled for another date or progress towards the Tribunal hearing date.
- ❑ If you would like to alter the date or time of your appointment, or cancel the appointment, you must make contact with the Tribunal no less than 5 days before your scheduled appointment.
- ❑ For the parent/carer – It may help to make a bullet point list of your appeal to refer to and help keep you focused during the appeal resolution meeting. Review the reasons for the local authority's decision and write down any questions you have around how they reached their decision. Highlight any section of any report you are bringing, to help you evidence your points. Gather any new information about your child that you would like to share.
- ❑ For the local authority – The person attending should have full knowledge about the appeal and have the authority to come to an agreement during the appointment.

What happens during a SARM?

Introduction from the mediator - The mediator will introduce themself and verify that you have read and understand the appeal resolution process.

Explaining your position - Both parties should have an up-to-date knowledge of the issues. It is vital that you have prepared for the appeal resolution meeting by putting together a brief summary of your reasons for your appeal/response. Further questions may be asked for clarification to help both parties understand each other's point of view.

Negotiating options - You should have attended the appeal resolution meeting with a view to taking steps to settle your appeal without the need of a Tribunal hearing. This will mean both parties working to explore common ground or joint interest and working to overcome disputed issues. The mediator, whilst remaining impartial, will help each party to explore options, discuss risks that are common to all appeals and help parties to move forwards rather than remain in an entrenched position. The strength of the appeal resolution process is in the hands of the parties and their willingness to listen to what each side has to say and to act accordingly in trying to reach an agreement.

Building agreement- If an agreement is reached, a document is written up setting out what has been agreed. This is called a 'draft' or 'proposed' consent order. This is then sent to a Tribunal judge to approve, sign and issue the consent order.

Closing the appointment - The mediator will confirm the agreement by reading the terms to each party and by asking each if they fully agree to all the terms. A copy of the consent order will be sent to both parties.

Ending the appeal resolution process - The mediator can end the appointment if, at any time:

- ❑ there is no prospect that the appeal resolution will end in an agreement
- ❑ either party asks to end the SARM meeting
- ❑ there are safeguarding or vulnerability concerns for those taking part
- ❑ there is any abusive behaviour towards the mediator

SARM team contact details

If you have any queries, complaints or issues to raise about the SEND Appeal Resolution Meeting, contact us by email or telephone:

- **Email:** SEND-ARM@justice.gov.uk
- **Telephone:** 0300 303 5857
- Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

We may record our calls for monitoring and training as it helps improve the service we deliver. If you want to know more about how we handle your personal data, visit https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/your-data-and-how-we-use-it

If you want to make a complaint by email, clearly title your message as 'complaint' in the subject field.