



Becoming an Accredited Family Mediator

Working as a family mediator can be a rewarding career, but training and achieving accreditation is hard work. The purpose of this document is to give people who are thinking about training as family mediators a realistic understanding of the portfolio process, and the time, cost and effort involved.

Becoming an accredited family mediator is a process that lasts about three years but can vary depending on the amount of mediation work that you undertake. This starts with attending a foundation course, is followed by practical experience, and ends with the submission of a portfolio which shows how the mediator meets specified competencies.

For many people, it is difficult to start out in mediation after completing training. Mediators who are trained and registered with the FMC are known as mediators who are 'working towards accreditation'. They can mediate on their own, and are supported in this work by a Professional Practice Consultant (PPC) who they can consult before and after a mediation, and who checks documentation, but it is the mediator's responsibility to go out and find the work that will enable them to get the experience they need to complete their portfolio. Mediators who are working towards accreditation must represent themselves appropriately to the public. They cannot sign court forms following MIAMs or following a mediation that has broken down, but PPCs can sign court forms on their consultee's behalf under specified circumstances.

If you are considering becoming a family mediator, you should therefore consider - before you embark on a foundation course - how you will obtain work after passing the course and registering with the FMC. It is advisable to consider how you will work (e.g. for yourself as a sole trader or through a limited company you set up; for an existing or new employer), where will you work (a mediator doesn't need permanent offices but does need suitable offices in which to conduct mediation), and where you will market yourself. A very small number of mediation firms offer supported placements for new mediators, and some PPCs will be able to offer you opportunities to co-mediate with them, but not all PPCs are able to do so. You should also research the rate at which you will be able to charge for mediation when you are working towards accreditation, and once you are accredited. Some mediators who are working towards accreditation work on a pro bono basis, or charge lower rates, in order to gain the experience needed to become accredited.

Once you are trained and registered with the FMC, and set up as a mediator who is ready to work, you should start to build your portfolio. The process from training to accreditation is one in which you will continue to learn and to develop your skills as a mediator. The FMC's Standards Framework sets out the skills and knowledge you should acquire as competencies; the work as specified in the Standards Framework should enable you to demonstrate that you have met these competencies. Once you can do so, you should submit your portfolio for assessment. It is recommended that you read through the portfolio requirements as soon as possible in your mediation career, so that you become familiar with the requirements before you start pulling your portfolio together.

The portfolio can be assessed by either the Family Mediation Council or the Law Society; both routes lead to Family Mediation Council Accreditation (FMCA) if the portfolio is assessed as being 'proven' – i.e. that you have demonstrated you meet the required competencies.

In common with most professions, family mediators have ongoing obligations which come with associated costs. These start whilst mediators are working towards accreditation (membership of an FMC Member Organisation, Registration with the FMC, engaging a PPC, carrying out CPD) and continue once mediators are accredited (with the additional ongoing requirement of mediating for 15 hours per year).