

## **FMC Newsletter**

**November 2020**



### **Recent FMC Developments**

#### **Family Mediation Week – 18 to 22 January 2021 - Save the Date!**

As you know, the aim of Family Mediation Week is to raise awareness of family mediation and its benefits for separating families. We are currently finalising our plans for the week and will provide you with the Family Mediation Week Guide in the next couple of weeks. In the meantime we wanted to let you know about a few things that will be happening so that you can get the dates in your diaries.

Join us for our online Zoom Family Mediation Week launch at 9.15am on Monday 18 January 2021. Hosted by the FMC and with special guests it will be an opportunity to kick the week off to a great start and hear up to date information about what will be happening. Look out for the registration link in due course.

On Tuesday 19 January, we'll be hosting a virtual Mock Mediation for solicitors and other professionals who want to understand more about how the mediation process works. Please be thinking about whether there's anyone you'd like to invite to attend this event. More details to follow shortly!

On Wednesday 20 January we'll be hosting a number of regional networking/coffee mornings - a chance for family mediators to meet other professionals working in their region for virtual coffee and to chat all things family mediation.

Our Sponsors, Our Family Wizard, will be hosting a free hour-long Webinar on Thursday 21 January - a great opportunity to hear from our sponsors about how they can support the families we work with.

In addition, we'll be running the usual social media campaign and providing you with loads of information/resources you can use to promote family mediation throughout the week.

Keep checking the website <http://www.familymediationweek.org.uk/> for more information and if you have any questions, please feel free to get in touch via [info@familymediationcouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@familymediationcouncil.org.uk)

## **Marketing Workshop**

The FMC commissioned marketing consultant Richard Wyatt to run a marketing workshop to help FMC registered family mediators raise their profiles, and therefore the profile of mediation, to the public. We had over 130 mediators participate in the workshop, and have received positive feedback.

The workshop was recorded and can be watched by all registered family mediators via the FMC website [here](#) as is password protected. If you are a registered mediator and do not know the password, please contact [info@familymediationcouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@familymediationcouncil.org.uk) to request this.

Please note the workshop includes a presentation by Our Family Wizard, as part of its arrangement with the FMC to sponsor Family Mediation Week in 2021.

## **Standards Review Update – Accreditation, from the Chair of the FMSB**

For most of this year it has not been possible to take forward activity on reviewing the accreditation process except in response to Covid, but we have recently resumed some activity so it's timely to provide an update on progress in the work of the Standards Review Accreditation Working Group (StRAWG).

Our objectives remain to reduce complexity, increase flexibility and minimise costs, while not compromising standards. As we continue the process of evolution we are mindful of the potential for confusion and recognise the importance of communicating clearly. We are pursuing six themes, each of which has different timescales for their potential impact.

### **Quick Fixes**

These cover both improvements to the process and the provision of “good practice” material to guide mediators working towards accreditation and their PPCs. The process improvements were introduced in late 2019 and are readily available on the FMC website. Although not many portfolios have been submitted during 2020 several of those submitted have used some of the flexibilities to good effect. We are keen to evaluate what has been useful and what may have worked less well, so would welcome any feedback to Helen Anthony ([executive@familymediationcouncil.org.uk](mailto:executive@familymediationcouncil.org.uk)) to help us build evidence.

The illustrative good practice materials have taken longer to put in place, for instance due to the requirements for anonymisation and the need to secure permissions, but are now available on the FMC website [here](#). Again, we are keen to evaluate their utility, so feedback and comment will always be valuable and welcomed.

## **A Modular Approach**

The Group has given support in principle to exploring the proposition that the accreditation requirements could be broken down into a series of modules that could be assessed step by step rather than in a single summative submission. An outline of a potential framework for this has been circulated, and the two Chief Assessors (Juliette Dalrymple for the FMC and Angela Lake-Carroll for The Law Society) are leading work to develop proposals. There are significant practical questions to be addressed, but during 2021 we may offer the means for mediators to make a graduated way through the accreditation process.

## **Online Mediation/Covid Response**

Recognising how much mediation has moved online in response to Covid the FMC rapidly amended some elements of its operational standards in May, and gave scope for the accreditation portfolio to reflect this. These changes can be found on the website [here](#) and will continue in place for the foreseeable future. The suspension of portfolio deadlines announced in March as being for the duration of the coronavirus crisis, but for at least four months, was reviewed by the FMSB in November after Helen wrote to mediators working towards accreditation and ascertained the majority are now mediating again. The FMSB has put a fixed end date on the coronavirus extension of 19.3.21 but mediators who need further extensions due to the pandemic will be able to apply for these. As always we will be glad to receive comments on these, and suggestions for other potentially valuable changes, via Helen. The FMSB is continuing to work on reviewing the long-term impact of online mediation and how that may affect both accreditation and training, and whether there needs to be more explicit preparation for mediating online.

## **PPCs**

PPCs play a critical role in supporting mediators through accreditation, but not all are equally familiar with the details of the process or clear about their role. We are seeking to encourage all PPCs and enable them to carry out their role more effectively by developing specific CPD training for accreditation support and by modifying the CPD cycle to offer greater flexibility and more incentive to take up the CPD offered. Proposals are being developed for consultation shortly. We also intend to strengthen engagement with PPCs, improving the PPC section of the website and introducing more dedicated communication.

## **Training**

Currently providers of foundation training do not have formal responsibilities after graduation, but many take steps to support graduates move forward in their practice (eg. by helping them find suitable PPCs). The Group considers that there may be potential for them to play a larger role in the accreditation process, particularly in the long term. As the FMSB's Training Panel is engaging directly with all providers over

online training and re-licencing, we will use this process to reinforce the importance of clarity about what graduates can expect, and then to explore how and with what conditions training providers may be incentivised to play more of a role in supporting their graduates through accreditation. Any significant changes arising will take some time to come into effect and will not affect the present generation of mediators.

### **Apprenticeships**

It has been suggested that it may possible to develop a route to accreditation through a form of apprenticeship or pupillage, as in other professions including the legal professions. This would entail an institutional model of employment, which is not widespread in family mediation. However, the Group has been made aware of a scheme there seems to be of this nature in Bristol so will follow this up and explore whether there would be wider opportunities for this in the long run. Any information about any similar schemes will be most welcome.

I hope this gives you a good sense of all the work that is under way, even while we continue to address the many immediate challenges – direct and indirect – imposed by Covid. It comes with the recognition of the many pressures on family mediation and the appreciation of the impressive adaptability and sheer hard work that the profession has demonstrated this year.

With good wishes,

Robert Creighton

Chair, FMSB and StRAWG

### **FMC Annual Report 2019**

The FMC has published its Annual Report for 2019, which includes a report from the FMSB, and the FMC's accounts for the year ending 31.12.19 which have been filed with Companies House. The Annual Report can be read [here](#).

### **Developments from Elsewhere**

#### **'What About Me? Reframing Support for Families Following Parental Separation'**

The Family Mediation Council welcomed the recent publication of the Family Solutions Group report '[What About Me? Reframing Support for Families Following Parental Separation](#)'.

Since the inception of family mediation, mediators have been working with parents to consider the needs of the children first in their post-separation arrangements. This

report highlights how vital that focus is for a child's long-term welfare, mental health – and even future life chances.

A key element of the report is the change in emphasis: to reach out to parents before they turn to the law. Mediation is always at the heart of this endeavour and mediators are ideally placed to offer early support to separating parents, through information and assessment meetings (sometimes known as "MIAMs") – as well as through mediation itself.

The FMC also welcomes the focus on hearing the voice of the child. There is a presumption in family mediation that children over the age of 10 will be able to express their views as part of the mediation process, and the number of cases in which qualified, Family Mediation Council Accredited mediators are speaking directly to children is increasing significantly.

The FMC looks forward to considering the report, and all of its recommendations, in detail.

### **Opportunities for Mediators**

Please see the FMC website [here](#) for information about opportunities for mediators.

### **Upcoming Events & Training**

The FMC aims to bring you information about training, courses and workshops related to family mediation, to aid professional development. Courses are listed on our [website](#), where you will find more details about submitting events to be included.

Course listings are currently being updated in light of the coronavirus crisis, and we intend to show courses that will be run online as well as in person. Please do therefore check this page regularly.

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*Family Mediation Council*  
*International Dispute Resolution Centre*  
*70 Fleet Street*  
*London EC4Y 1EU*  
[www.familymediationcouncil.org.uk](http://www.familymediationcouncil.org.uk)  
01707 594055  
Company reg no: 9560220