

FMC Newsletter

April 2021



Recent FMC Developments

Mediation Voucher Scheme

The FMC is delighted to welcome the government's additional £1m investment in family mediation, which is being offered to families through the Ministry of Justice's Voucher Scheme. Vouchers, which provide up to £500 towards the costs of mediation sessions, are available to families who are seeking to resolve issues relating to children.

As you are aware, the FMC is administering the scheme on behalf of the MoJ.

Full details can be found on the FMC website here:

<https://www.familymediationcouncil.org.uk/mediation-voucher-scheme/>. Queries about the scheme can be sent to vouchers@familymediationcouncil.org.uk but we do urge you to read the full scheme information and Q&A available on the website first, as answers to many questions now being asked can be found there.

Please note that if you or your service has created a log in and registered your details with the FMC in order to take part in the scheme, you do not need to wait to hear further from the FMC before you can submit requests for voucher to be allocated. We aim to respond to all voucher allocation requests within 7 days.

Good Standing Consultation

Thank you to those mediators who responded to the FMC's consultation about the new Good Standing Requirement for family mediators. Responses were extremely positive, and useful questions raised which have enabled the FMSB to refine the scheme. Mediators already on the FMC Register are being asked to complete the Good Standing process as part of annual registration. Any concerns or queries about this process can be sent to register@familymediationcouncil.org.uk.

Annual Registration 2021

The FMC's annual registration process has now started. As reported in the previous newsletter, the FMC has moved this process online, in order to improve efficiency. All mediators (except those who have registered for the first time in 2021) should now have received an invitation to renew their registration. If this e-mail has not reached you, you can access the new system via this page

<https://www.familymediationcouncil.org.uk/register-with-the-fmc-for-2021/>, and by clicking on the link to log in to the new system. If you have any questions about the new system, please e-mail register@familymediationcouncil.org.uk or telephone the FMC Office on 01707 594055.

MIAMs Standards – An update from the FMSB

This note reports on the work being undertaken by the Family Mediation Standards Board (FMSB) to review the standards for mediation information and assessment meetings (MIAMs). This is going forward in line with the Family Mediation Council (FMC) response to a recommendation from the President's Private Law Working Group and the Family Solutions Group that "the quality of the delivery of MIAMs should be more rigorously monitored and consistently maintained". A Working Group, including representatives from all FMC Member Organisations (MOs), has developed draft recommendations which will be issued shortly for consultation.

The specific work on MIAMs is taking place in the context of wider consideration of the FMC's standards to reflect several interconnected themes:

- Understanding how family mediation defines itself as a profession;
- The way in which standards are defined in light of this;
- The consequential approach to assuring performance against the standards.

The essence of professionalism is that the practitioner has internalised the relevant standards of performance and behaviour, thereby consistently delivering ethical and principled practice. This leads to defining standards in a way that permits the exercise of professional judgement – rigorous statements of objectives and required outcomes, with appropriate flexibility about the manner of achievement. Assurance, therefore, is primarily a matter of demonstrating the attitudes, behaviours, skills and knowledge that give a rounded account of professional practice, rather than adherence to rigid protocols (eg. through checklists or tickboxes).

The development work on MIAMs has pioneered this approach in family mediation. The result is a presentation in the form of Standards and Expectations, specifying a rigorous framework of well-defined mandatory outcomes (the "whats") backed up by normative statements about excellent delivery (the "hows"), and guidance on good practice. Mediators will conduct MIAMs informed by their understanding and internalisation of standards compliance, achieved through considered application of the expectations.

In summary, therefore, the output from the Group will include the following:

- Aims and Objectives of a MIAM – Fundamental Standards are defined which state what must be achieved in a MIAM. These are mandatory requirements for MIAM outcomes, and any non-compliance by a mediator would be a professional breach.

- Delivery of a MIAM – For each Standard, the Expectations are defined describing how a MIAM is delivered, detailing specific content and conduct which are sufficient to meet the Standard. ‘Expectations’ state excellent practice for achieving Standards, and so would normally give compelling direction for mediation practice. Alternative ways of delivering MIAMs would need to be fully justified and demonstrated to be at least as effective as the defined Expectations in achieving the fundamental Standards.
- Guidance for a MIAM – best-practice guidance to support mediators in delivering effective MIAMs
- Quality Assurance of MIAMs – to ensure that there is sufficiently rigorous monitoring and maintenance of MIAMs delivery and quality, the following measures are proposed:
 - Demonstration of compliance with the profession’s rigorous regulatory code and standards for all practice, including MIAMs
 - Regular mediator confirmation of Compliance with MIAMs Standards and PPC confirmation of this, following annual review
 - Structured acquisition and review of feedback from MIAMs attendees
 - Assembly and Review of key MIAMs statistics

It is clearly vital that the mediation profession supports the introduction of these Standards and Expectations, and the approach to quality assurance that backs them up. The FMSB will therefore engage with mediators to ensure that the proposals are well understood and endorsed, with the intention then to recommend them to the FMC for adoption.

There will also be communication and liaison with other bodies that have an interest in MIAMs standards and the quality of their delivery, including the Ministry of Justice and its agencies, the judiciary, and organisations which support victims of domestic violence.

It is proposed to have undertaken consultation of the proposals in the Spring, with a view to finalising and introducing them as soon as practicable thereafter.

Volunteers

The FMSB was delighted to welcome one new member to each of its PPC and Accreditation Panels following the call in its last newsletter, and is continuing to look for further members to join these teams. We are enormously grateful to all the mediators who are members of the FMSB’s panels, which are critical to ensuring the self-regulatory system works. FMSB panels meet about once a quarter. They consider issues of policy, on which they make recommendations to the full FMSB, and also make decisions on delegated matters such as return to practice applications or non-standard extension requests (in the case of the Accreditation Panel), and support for PPCs (in the case of the PPC panel). Please contact Helen Anthony at executive@familymediationcouncil.org.uk for more details.

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.

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