

**FMC Board Meeting**  
**Tuesday 25 March 2025**  
**Approved Minutes**

**Present:** Stephen Burke (Chair), Allan Blake, Dr Rachael Blakey, Caroline Bowden,  
Jan Coulton, Beverley Sayers

**Apologies:** Alison Bull, Sarah Hawkins

**Also Present:** Robert Creighton (FMSB Chair), Ruth Hay (FJC Representative),  
Helen Anthony (Executive Officer)

Open Session – FMC Board Members and observers		
	Item	Actions
<b>1.</b>	<b>STANDING ITEMS</b>	
<b>1.1</b>	Welcome, introductions, apologies	
	The Chair welcomed everyone.	
<b>1.2</b>	Approval of draft minutes, matters arising	
	<p>The minutes of the meeting held on 4.2.25 were approved subject to a minor amendment.</p> <p>The board reviewed the action log, noting the items were either complete or in progress.</p>	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Items for Decision</b>	
<b>2.1</b>	Bringing Staff In-house	
	<p>The board noted that the consultation with contractors' staff had been carried out clearly and comprehensively, and that everybody was content to move to FMC employment if the board decided to bring operations in-house.</p> <p>The board considered the additional responsibilities that the FMC would take on as employer, including the additional demands that this would place on volunteer board members. The board noted that the Chair was willing to take on the additional work including meeting the team online regularly and to liaise with the CEO, as happened at present between the Chair and the contracted EO.</p> <p>The board noted that the practicalities of taking staff in house had been carefully considered and costed, following guidance from ACAS and with the costings checked by an accountant.</p> <p>HA left the meeting due to a conflict of interests.</p> <p>The board agreed to take currently contracted staff in-house and to appoint Helen Anthony to a new role as Chief Executive Officer from 1 April.</p>	HA, SB & AB to implement decision

	<p>HA returned to the meeting.</p> <p>The board thanked SB, AB &amp; HA for carrying out the consultation and preparation ahead of the meeting, in order that this decision could be made.</p> <p>The board agreed that it would consider items relating to staff employment in a confidential part of future board meetings, for which minutes would not be published.</p> <p>The board asked HA to work with RW to announce the board's decision, and to inform the Ministry of Justice of this.</p>	HA/RW to announce decision and inform MoJ
<b>3.</b>	<b>Governance</b>	
<b>3.1</b>	Progress re Strategic Plan	
	<p>The board noted that good progress was being made the on areas of focus in the strategic plan.</p> <p>One area of focus was the conference, and the board suggested this could include a session on business models.</p> <p>The board noted that the FMC's online coffee mornings attracted a small number of regular attendees, and suggested that a separate e-mail inviting mediators to join the coffee mornings may attract more people.</p>	HA to send coffee morning emails
<b>3.2</b>	Succession Planning	
	<p>AB left the meeting due to a conflict of interests.</p> <p>The board extended AB's his Term of Office to June 2026.</p> <p>AB returned to the room and the board thanked AB for all his work as an independent director.</p> <p>The board welcomed the fact that Lesley Allport and Lorraine Bramwell had accepted invitations to remain on the FMSB for a second three-year term, as per the FMSB's Terms of Reference.</p> <p>BS left the meeting due to a conflict of interest.</p> <p>The board noted that John Hobson had reached the end of his second term of office as a non-mediator member of the FMSB. The board noted that JH had played an important role in strengthening assurance processes and in reviewing the structure of the standards framework, and that these two pieces of work are key areas of focus for the FMSB in the second half of 2026. The FMC invited JH to extend his term of office until</p>	RC to confirm with JH

	<p>April 2026, and thanked JH for volunteering to continue to help with those specific areas of work after his term ended.</p> <p>BS returned to the room.</p> <p>The board noted that there was a need to start recruitment for the independent FMC and FMSB member roles early.</p>	HA to plan recruitment for mid-2025
<b>3.3</b>	<b>Risk Register</b>	
	<p>The board welcomed the reformatted and updated risk register.</p> <p>The board considered the risk levels, and agreed that there remained three key areas of risk: financial, the loss of key personnel, and IT and data security. HA to amend the register to reflect these areas of concern and consider mitigating actions.</p>	HA to amend risk register & consider mitigating actions
<b>4.</b>	<b>Items for Information</b>	
<b>4.1</b>	<b>FMSB Report</b>	
	<p>The board noted that the FMSB's PPC Report had been sent to directors in February and then published. The board welcomed the report and thanked the FMSB and its PPC Panel for their work on this, which included extensive consultation of mediators. The board noted that the PPC panel would now propose to the FMSB the steps needed to implement the recommendations in the report, and that any potential changes to the Standards and Codes of Practice required as a result would come to the FMC for approval.</p> <p>The board welcomed the news that the FMC had been awarded a grant by The Family Mediation Trust to develop a resource to screen and assess for domestic abuse, which would help mediators decide on suitability of mediation and assist in determining next steps for MIAM/mediation participants. The board noted that the grant also included a sum to train the trainers in the use of the resource.</p> <p>The board noted that it was proposed that, once developed and training was available, the FMSB would expect mediators to use the resource or be able to demonstrate that they are using a resource that was equivalent or better than this. The board also noted that the FMSB would consider whether to require mediators to carry out training specifically on domestic abuse and the use of the resource, as part of their CPD by a certain date (which is yet to be specified) in order to ensure that mediators had up to date training on the issue of domestic abuse in relation to mediation. The board noted that the FMSB would consider these proposals at its meeting in July. The board also noted that the FMSB's DCA Panel, which was overseeing the development of the resource, had invited Resolution to join</p>	

	its panel in order to ensure its work was informed by and could inform that of other NDCR sectors.	
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Legal Aid</b>	
	The board welcomed the FMC's response to the Ministry of Justice's consultation on Civil Legal Aid: Towards A Sustainable Future. The board noted that the FMC had asked the MoJ for an update on the review of family mediation legal aid rates and the decision to remove universal credit as a passporting benefit.	
<b>4.3</b>	<b>Family Mediation Week Report</b>	
	The board welcomed the Family Mediation Week report as a useful digest of events and the impact of these. The board agreed that Family Mediation Week would take place from 26 – 30 January 2026.	
<b>4.4</b>	<b>Executive Officer's Report</b>	
	<p>The board noted the Executive Officer's report.</p> <p>The board noted that the number of mediators on the FMC Register had been increasing slowly since 2022, though numbers of accredited mediators remained constant. The board noted that although the number of accredited mediators had remained constant, anecdotally a much higher proportion of mediators were now working in that capacity full time which suggested more mediation was now taking place; the board recognised the challenge of ascertaining whether these anecdotal reports could be supported by data.</p> <p>The board noted that the number of PPCs on the FMC Register continued to decrease, but it agreed the focus must be on whether mediators could access good quality professional practice consultancy (which could be delivered by a relatively small number of better trained PPCs), rather than just numbers. The board noted there was a particular concern that mediators working towards accreditation may not be able to access PPCs, but that this was something the FMSB's PPC panel was looking to address as it implemented the recommendations in its report.</p>	
<b>5.</b>	<b>AOB</b>	
	The board noted that DWP was looking to create a single approach for gathering information from all information holders about potential benefit fraud, which would require the disclosure of certain information to the DWP. The board noted that there would be exemptions to this requirement which would include legal privilege but there was no proposal to specifically list information obtained in mediation as exempt. The board agreed to contact the DWP to request that the policy was clear, and that family mediation was exempt.	HA to raise with DWP

	<p>On a related matter, the board noted that the FMC Code of Practice did not make the position with regard to disclosure under the Proceeds of Crime Act clear. The board agreed to review this when it reviewed the Code of Practice in late 2025.</p> <p>The board noted that the early working group, a sub-committee of the Family Procedure Rules Committee, had agreed to consider drafting standard orders regarding the referral to family mediation and child-inclusive mediation. The board welcomed this as a way to prevent orders that required mediators to report/disclose notes to the court. CB, BS, RH &amp; HA to work on proposed draft orders.</p>	<p>CB, BS, RH &amp; HA to work on proposed draft orders</p>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Next meeting dates</b>	
	<p>2025:  10 December – Online  Further FMC board meetings - summer (online) and autumn (in person) tbc</p> <p>Other 2025 dates:</p> <p>26 September 2025 – FMC Conference  TBC – MO meetings, October  TBC – FMC FMSB Joint Meeting, November</p>	