

## Could you be a Family Mediator?

The continuing pandemic has made many rethink their life or career choices. If being a family mediator could be a way forward for you, here's what you need to know to get started.

### Can anyone set themselves up as a mediator?

In theory yes... - however, I could call myself a plumber but wouldn't recommend you call me to fix a bathroom leak. Family mediators go through substantive training pre-accreditation, then further follow up to demonstrate skill-acquisition and expertise.

### How does the initial training work?

'Foundation Training' is an eight-day training course, which covers the following and more:

- theories and principles of mediation
- understanding the mediation process in practice
- conflict management skills and strategies
- family dynamics especially those ending relationships
- the effect of separation and divorce on children
- assessing suitability for mediation
- domestic abuse and child protection issues

The training is very practical, making full use of role play, group discussion and resources to help develop future mediators. By the end, trainees will be familiar with theories and how to apply them in their future mediation practice. Trainees are assessed during the course and produce sample mediation documents for review by the trainers, as well written work on the theory and practice of family mediation.

### Once I've passed the 8-day Foundation Course, am I good to go?

Although eight days sounds a lot for training it is a small space of time in which to gain a new professional qualification. So, when you pass this foundation course, you will be a qualified trainee mediator.

**It's a bit like passing your driving *theory* test; you know the rules of the road, but you are not yet able to drive unaccompanied.**

Next steps:

Join one of the six member organisations, e.g. the FMA, plus the overarching regulator known as The Family Mediation Council (FMC).

Another requirement is that all family mediators must have a PPC (Professional Practice Consultant). The PPC is an experienced family mediator who supervises other mediators and provides practical support throughout each year. (More about PPCs in a future blog.)

You need practical experience after your Foundation Training. This is done by observations of accredited mediators in action and by co-mediations with your PPC or others. You must have observed at least one accredited mediator mediating with real clients and do at least ten hours co-working before you are able to sole mediate. You will also need your PPC's approval.

All of this can take a little while to complete but embrace the opportunity; you will learn lots and it will give you the necessary experience to go forward. As you would imagine there are other practical requirements like being insured and working to a level of professional expertise that the public is entitled to expect.

**So, 8 days Foundation Course + register with both member organisation and FMC + observe an accredited mediator + 10 hours co-working + PPC approval?**

Those are the minimum requirements for you to provide professional family mediation on your own.

**It's a bit like passing your driving *practical* test; you can now drive unaccompanied, but there is still lots to learn.**

The FMC has created an accreditation standard, called Family Mediation Council Accreditation (FMCA). All practising professional family mediators are required to work towards achieving FMCA status within 3 years of completing their foundation training.

Until then you will be on the FMC register as an *unaccredited* mediator and you will not be able to sign court forms.

**It's a bit like being a new driver; you put on P plates to show everyone you are at the start of your driving experience.**

**So, 8 days Foundation Course + register with both member organisation and FMC + observe an accredited mediator + 10 hours co-working + PPC approval + FMCA within 3 years?**

That's it in a nutshell – your route to being an accredited family mediator. And to maintain those standards, you are reaccredited every 3 years, to ensure everything remains in good order (the driving analogy stops here!!)

**Sounds like a lot of time, money and effort – is it worth it?**

Absolutely! It is one of the most rewarding careers you can have, making a real difference to people at the point of separation. And the training you undertake and the experience you gain will be useful in other areas of your life and career too. But it is a significant time and money commitment, so you should be sure it is for you and that you have the time and resources you need to get you through the journey.

Talk to other mediators. Talk to others you work with. Talk to your family, friends and other supporters.

If you're interested, the FMA's next **Foundation Course** begins **10 March 2021**, through to 23 April, with a mixture of online and in person tuition (depending on the prevailing guidance and regulation). You can find out how to apply [here](#). Sarah Smith, the author of this blog, would be happy to have a conversation with potential attendees who have questions. Contact her at [info@sarahsmithmediationservices.com](mailto:info@sarahsmithmediationservices.com)