



Family Mediation Contracts 2015

The Family Mediation Taskforce recently published its recommendations¹ for increasing participation in Family Mediation, which included proposals that the Legal Aid Agency (LAA) should:

- fund the first mediation session in all cases where one of the people involved is already legally aided; and
- review its future contracts with Mediation services to enhance overall service quality.

The government has accepted these recommendations and the LAA and MoJ will be working on a long-term tendering approach. In the interim the LAA intends to:

- Extend existing Mediation contracts by 12 months to the **31st October 2016**; and
- Invite expressions of interest from existing providers for new Outreach locations; and
- Open a tender process to give new organisations the opportunity to provide publicly funded Family Mediation services while the long-term tender approach is developed.

Tender process for new organisations

The LAA will be offering organisations the opportunity to tender to deliver Family Mediation services from 1 February 2015. These services will be in addition to those currently delivered by existing contracted providers. Therefore existing contract family mediation providers will not need to tender.

The tender process will be one stage and will test an organisation's suitability to contract with us (similar to previous Pre Qualification Questionnaires) and that organisations meet our minimum service requirements. All organisations that are assessed as meeting the tender requirements will be awarded a contract as there are presently no limits or restrictions on the volumes of Family Mediation that can be undertaken.

It will be a requirement of the Tender that applicants must also pass the Mediation Quality Mark (MQM) Desk Top Audit by the contract start date of 1 February 2015.

The tender process will open on the **1st October 2014** and run until the **31st October 2014**. Contracts will commence on the **1st February 2015** and run until the **31st October 2016**.

Applicant organisations need to apply for the MQM via the QMM form. The MQM Self Assessment Checklist sets out the documents that need to be provided as evidence of compliance with the Standard.

¹ http://justice.dialogue-app.com/what-more-can-be-done-locally-and-nationally-to-encourage-more-people-to-use-family-mediation-to-resolve-their-disputes/home?sort_order=rated

Key requirements for this will be:

- 1.) Employing a mediator who meets the individual competence standards set out in both the Family Mediation Specification and MQM Standard; and
- 2.) Having a Family Mediation Council (FMC) recognised and registered supervisor in place that meets the standards set out in the Family Mediation Specification and MQM Standard.

If this information is not submitted for assessment and received by the **15th December 2014** we cannot guarantee that Desk Top Audits can be completed by 1st February 2015. **Completed MQM applications should be submitted to: QualityMark@legalaid.gsi.gov.uk**

The QMM form and MQM Self Assessment Checklist are available on the Gov.uk website at: <https://www.gov.uk/legal-aid-agency-quality-standards>

The Family Mediation Supervisor Standard Declaration Form is available on the Gov.uk website at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standard-civil-contract-2010>

Please note that you should only submit your QMM application for the MQM standard and the MQM Self Assessment Checklist when you are able to meet all our requirements as set out in the MQM.

It will be the applicant organisation's responsibility to ensure all the applicable documents needed as part of the Desk Top Audit are submitted (see MQM Self Assessment Checklist) and the LAA will not chase missing documents.

It is therefore very important that you read the MQM and understand our requirements before you submit your application.

Extension of existing Family Mediation Contracts

Existing Mediation Providers are not required to respond to the Mediation tender process as they can continue to deliver the family Mediation work they are currently contracted to deliver under the 2010 Standard Civil Contract. Those contracts will be extended to 31st October 2016. Existing providers therefore do not have to take any action unless they wish to apply for additional outreach locations (see below).

Registration process for existing providers to open additional outreach locations

Existing Mediation Providers will be given the opportunity to request additional Outreach locations under the terms of their current 2010 Standard Civil Contract.

This registration process is open only to current contracted providers delivering Family Mediation work under the terms of the 2010 Standard Civil Contract. Any organisation wishing to deliver Mediation services that is not a current contracted Mediation provider must tender for a Mediation contract via the Mediation tender process described above.

Requests for Outreach through this registration process must be submitted no later than the **31st October 2014**.

Guidance on submitting a request for Outreach through this Registration Process

This registration process will open between **1st October 2014 and 31st October 2014**.

Existing Mediation Providers wishing to deliver Mediation services from additional locations must follow the process below to request additional Outreach locations under the terms of their current contract. Only LAA approved locations can be used by contracted Mediation providers for the purposes of delivering publicly funded Mediation under LAA contracts.

Requests for Outreach must be submitted using the pro forma 'Existing Mediation Service Outreach request form' which will be published on our website shortly.

On this pro forma a provider must complete:

- Organisation name
- LAA account number for the provider's designated Mediation Office
- Full address details of each additional premises they wish to use for the purpose of Outreach.

A provider's completed pro forma should be submitted by email to family@legalaid.gsi.gov.uk

What requirements must Outreach locations meet?

All Outreach addresses submitted as part of this registration process must be available for use by the Provider from the 1st December 2014.

Each premise must also meet minimum Mediation Quality Mark Standards:

<https://www.gov.uk/legal-aid-agency-quality-standards>