

The Role, Responsibilities and Career Paths of PPCs

Final Report of the PPC Panel to the FMSB

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Foreword

I warmly commend this report from the FMSB's PPC Panel. It articulates the thoughtful and rigorous discussions that the Panel has held, strongly informed by extensive consultation with the profession at large.

Professional Practice Consultants (PPCs) are at the core of our systems for maintaining high standards of professional practice. They act as sounding-boards, stimulate reflection, provide support and advice, and make key contributions to assurance. It is important to be clear about their roles and how their responsibilities interact.

The PPC role is complex, and requires experience, skill and sensitivity. PPCs need to be well trained and well supported themselves, so that we maintain a strong cohort of senior mediators acting enthusiastically and effectively in this role.

As you will see when you read the report the Panel has addressed all these issues with great care and attention. Most significantly it has done so by seeking out and reflecting on the views of the profession through a programme of widespread consultation that stimulated direct engagement with large numbers of practising mediators.

The report sets out an evolutionary process of development to build on the key principles that have been agreed through the consultation. There will be many strands of implementation, in which the full range of the FMC's and FMSB's panels will be involved. There will be careful impact assessments of all proposals to ensure that they are proportionate and manageable for both PPCs and all mediators.

I am most grateful to all members of the PPC Panel for the time, effort and skill with which they have approached their work over the past two years. And we all greatly appreciate the contributions made by so many mediators through the consultation process. This report reflects the growing consensus that has resulted from that process, and as we move forward, we will continue in that vein.

Robert Creighton

Chair

Family Mediation Standards Board

February 2025

Introduction

Professional Practice Consultants (PPCs) perform an important role in the family mediation community, supporting fellow mediators in the delivery of family mediation services, and helping mediators working towards accreditation develop their skills and experience.

In 2019, the FMC published a PPC Code of Practice and accompanying guidance. These documents were drafted by mediators and PPCs from across the FMC Member Organisations, together with independent FMSB members, and were finalised following consultation with the mediation community. The PPC Code of Practice described for the first time the status of PPCs within the family mediation community. In 2023, the FMSB identified a need to explore the role of PPCs further.

Some mediators considered that the role was or should be evolving, in order to offer the public increased confidence that mediators offer services in accordance with agreed professional standards (e.g. MIAM standards), whilst others felt that the role of the PPC should be more focused on mentoring and support.

There were also some concerns that PPCs were not sufficiently trained or supported, and that the requirement for mediators to have at least four hours' support a year from their PPC was too low to carry out all the work expected of PPCs. Some mediators believed that this resulted in a drop in the number of PPCs, with experienced PPCs retiring and a lack of other mediators willing to train as PPCs, and a decrease in numbers of PPCs supported this view. There was also much discussion about PPC charges, which some mediators do not see as sustainable, although PPCs often charge less than their usual hourly mediation rate to provide this service.

The FMSB therefore asked the PPC Panel to advise on the role, responsibilities, support for and career paths of PPCs. In order to do this, the PPC Panel conducted extensive consultation to better understand the views of those with an interest in family mediation on all these issues.

In June 2024 the PPC Panel published its interim report. Since then, the PPC Panel has conducted an additional consultation exercise, and now presents this final report to the FMSB.

PPC Panel recommendations to the FMSB

NB Where a recommendation is made to update the PPC Code of Practice, the FMC Code of Practice should be amended to include appropriate counterpart clauses.

Role of PPCs

1. The PPC Code of Practice should be amended to be more specific about the support that PPCs should provide consultees including in connection with their welfare. The FMSB should ensure that information about the support that PPCs are required to provide is available to mediators.
2. PPCs should be required to take a series of steps to address any concerns they have if a consultee's way of working may breach professional standards. Guidance should include the circumstances in which the PPCs are required to make a referral to the FMSB and the mechanism for doing this.
3. The PPC Code of Practice should be amended to be clearer about conflicts of interest between a consultee and a PPC and how these can be managed.
4. PPCs should be able to choose whether to offer consultation to mediators working towards accreditation, or for specialist services such as child-inclusive mediation, and should not be required to offer a specific level of co-working, observation opportunities or group supervision to consultees.
5. PPCs should not be required to provide marketing and business advice as part of their role, but should be free to do this if they choose.
6. PPCs should be required to be transparent at the outset about the services they would offer, the opportunities they would make available and their costs. The FMSB should facilitate this by making available a comprehensive record of what each PPC offers, alongside information about the likely range of fees.

Levels of PPC support for mediators

7. The FMSB should introduce a requirement for PPCs to review consultees' ways of working once every three years. The review should include either an observation or a file review.
8. The Standards Framework should be amended to require mediators to have at least 4 hours scheduled PPC support a year as a minimum (excluding the triennial review), irrespective of experience, and to emphasise that mediators may need additional scheduled consultation time if they have less experience or ad hoc support in addition to scheduled PPC time if challenging issues arise.

9. PPCs should be required to inform the FMSB if they have had no contact with a consultee for more than 6 months (having tried to make contact, and in the absence of a satisfactory reason e.g. the mediator is on parental leave).

CPD & PPC support for consultancy work

10. The current CPD requirement for PPCs should not be changed.
11. The Standards Framework should be amended so that PPCs are required to have a minimum of two hours' consultation time a year about their professional practice consultancy with their own PPC, in addition to the minimum time for their mediation practice.

Complaints received by mediators and about PPCs

12. Mediators should be required to inform PPCs of any formal complaints they receive (e.g. from clients/prospective clients). The FMSB should produce guidance to help mediators know where the threshold lies between concerns that might not need to be notified to their PPC and complaints that do.
13. The FMSB should clarify the mechanism for complaints to be made by consultees against PPCs.

Support for PPCs

14. The FMSB should strongly advocate or pilot a series of networks, consisting of mediators with a variety of experience, including an experienced PPC, a number of less experienced or 'apprentice' PPCs, FMCAs and WTAs. The Panel recommends that the FMSB measure the impact of mediators belonging to such a network, with a view to considering whether this should be a requirement, if it proves successful in helping mediators maintain high professional standards.
15. The FMSB should provide an update on standards at regular intervals, with the form to be decided.

Further Work

The PPC Panel/FMSB should:

16. Research whether the FMSB can require PPCs to consult only for FMC Registered Mediators, unless mediators are not eligible for registration.
17. Liaise with the FMSB's Training Panel about specific training for PPCs supporting mediators WTA (noting that all PPCs should have an understanding of the competencies), as well as the content, length, duration and in-person/online nature of PPC foundation courses.

18. Agree selection criteria for PPCs, alongside the work on training.
19. Explore the practicalities of providing a PPC helpline, including how this could be resourced.
20. Explore the practicalities of providing an FMSB notice board for observation and co-mediation opportunities, and how to encourage FMCAs (who are not PPCs) to support mediators working towards accreditation.

Report

Role of a PPC

The primary question that the PPC Panel sought to answer was whether a PPC should have a mentoring role, a supervisory role, or both. Mixed answers were received from mediators in the initial questionnaire, with many perceiving the question to be 'does a PPC have a policing role' and answering 'no', yet feeling strongly that PPCs should be held to account by their own PPC.

The PPC Panel therefore decided to pose a different question to mediators, asking what they felt PPCs should do when they had a consultee who was not practising in accordance with the standards. Responses were consistent: mediators considered that PPCs should talk to/work with their consultee to try to address the issue, but if the mediator could or would not change and work in a way that is consistent with the standards, PPCs should refer the consultee to the FMSB for it to consider the issue.

This suggested the answer to the 'mentor' or 'supervisor' question is 'both, with supervisor taking precedence.

The Panel agreed with this conclusion, noting that PPCs must seek to support their consultees to comply with professional standards, but where this was not successful, or in certain specified urgent or serious cases, PPCs must refer consultees to the FMSB.

What should a PPC offer a consultee

Respondents were asked what PPCs should offer consultees. The Code of Practice currently specifies that:

PPCs must support their consultees:

- i. in connection with their mediation practice, including both process and documentation;*
- ii. with their professional development;*
- iii. to adhere to the FMC Standards Framework, whilst recognising that responsibility for compliance lies with the consultee; and*
- iv. following a complaint being made about the consultee.*

On the whole, respondents felt this was appropriate (NB see above re the supportive vs regulatory role of a PPC).

Respondents also suggest that additional support should be provided:

- For mediator wellbeing, by being available for debrief, discussion and emotional support for distressing cases or those that raise personal issues for the mediator which may impact on professional performance or impartiality;
- By providing opportunities for reflective learning and development, specifically by offering a sounding board, listening ear, experience sharing, ongoing advice and problem sharing (focus on wellbeing and the personal as well as professional) and building confidence;
- By responding in a timely manner to ad hoc practice queries, with particular emphasis on availability for urgent support and advice with regard to safeguarding issues; and
- By providing group supervision opportunities.

The Panel noted that the suggestions above were a mixture of areas identified for support, and mechanisms to deliver these. The Panel agreed that all of the above support should be provided by PPCs where relevant and thought they were probably covered by the general description in the existing Code of Practice, but recommended the Code be amended to be more specific about the support that should be provided.

It was also suggested in the consultation responses that PPCs should be required to provide marketing and business advice/ information.

The Panel did not consider that it should be part of a PPC's role to provide marketing and business advice. The Panel noted these were not necessarily within a PPC's skill set, and there were lots of other sources of support and advice on these issues. The Panel noted the FMC provides marketing resources such as template press releases on a regular basis, and, provides marketing webinars from time to time (the most recent of which is on the FMC website).

Several respondents focused on the support PPCs could or might be expected to provide to mediators working towards accreditation, including providing work and observation opportunities. The panel agreed that not all PPCs should be required to offer a specific level of co-working or observation opportunities to WTA, but did recommend that PPCs should be required to be transparent about the opportunities they would make available and their costs from the outset.

The Panel noted that several respondents also raised questions about the accreditation process, including the process for enabling a PPC to sign off on a WTA's ability to undertake different parts of the mediation process and whether they are able to do this co-working or solo. The Panel noted this was the remit of the Accreditation Reform Group and that the ARG was already aware of the issues raised.

What makes a good PPC

Respondents valued PPCs with a number of different characteristics and experience including:

- Mentor, coach, teacher, supporter, champion
- Non-judgmental approach
- Available & reliable
- Pro-active
- Knowledgeable and able to share knowledge
- Constructive criticism
- Somebody who is not your boss (related to conflicts)
- Somebody who has a different professional background to you (a different perspective)
- Opportunities to co-mediate

The Panel noted that these may be considerations which mediators take into account when choosing a PPC, and PPCs may want to consider whether they have these qualities/can develop these.

Most PPC respondents indicated they were willing to work with both WTA and FMC mediators. The Panel welcomed this.

Training to be a PPC

Initial PPC training was largely considered to be very positive by those who had undergone it. Those whose training was online felt an in-person element may have been beneficial, and some respondents felt the PPC training should be longer as it needed to cover an extensive range of issues.

Respondents felt the following should be included:

- Role and functions of a PPC
- Theoretical underpinning
- Different practice models and supervision styles
- Reflective practice and how to provide constructive criticism
- Rules, framework and procedural aspects

- Mediation practice issues: in depth safeguarding and domestic abuse, CIM, legal aid, use of different mediation models
- Challenging situations and how to provide constructive criticism
- Boundaries
- Role in quality assurance
- Building resilience and confidence
- Delivering group supervision
- Specific training on supporting mediators working towards accreditation/portfolio building

Respondents considered that trainee PPCs would benefit from hearing about experiences of qualified PPCs and skills-based role play as part of the PPC training.

The Panel agreed to liaise with the FMSB's Training Panel about the content, length, duration and in-person/online nature of courses, though noted this work could not be completed until the role of a PPC was agreed.

The Panel noted that a vast majority of respondents felt that specific training on supporting mediators working towards accreditation and building a portfolio was necessary. The Panel agreed with this, but noted that all PPCs would still benefit from having an understanding of the competences required of an accredited mediator, in order to understand the skills and knowledge they were required to maintain.

Selection of PPCs

There was a strong sense from the initial 2023 survey that there should be more of a selection procedure for prospective PPCs rather than it being solely based on self-selection supported by their PPC. The Panel agreed with this and explored potential selection criteria in its 2024 consultation.

The criteria suggested most often, were that the mediator should be:

- Experienced
- Knowledgeable
- Approachable
- Supportive

Additionally, some mediators considered that the following criteria be applied:

- That the mediator has been nominated for the role
- Professional membership
- Further study evidence
- Professionalism
- Coaching skills
- Teaching
- People skills
- Commitment to standards
- Active
- Kind
- Capacity/availability

The Panel agreed that in principle there should be selection criteria, and that it would consider specific requirements along with Training (together with the FMSB's Training Panel).

[Requirements for PPCs to act/not act as consultants for different types of mediator](#)

There was a strong feeling from respondents to the consultation that PPCs should not be compelled to act as consultants for mediators working towards accreditation, or for mediators who need specialist consultancy i.e. for child-inclusive mediation. The Panel agreed that it was important that PPCs had a choice about the type of consultancy to offer and therefore it should be possible for PPCs to choose to consult only for accredited mediators and not offer consultancy for specialist services.

Consultation respondents were generally of the view that PPCs should only consult for family mediators practising in England and Wales if those mediators were FMC Registered. Those with a contrary view said that they felt it was better for mediators working outside the system to have the support of a PPC, but the Panel agreed with the majority view that this undermined the regulatory system. The Panel agreed it would like to see PPCs consulting only for FMC Registered Mediators, unless mediators are not eligible for registration. This would not therefore prevent PPCs from consulting for mediators who practice another type of mediation e.g. SEND, or mediators in Northern Ireland, Scotland or the Channel Islands. The Panel noted however that it may not be possible to restrict the work PPCs can do, as this could be considered a constraint on trade. The Panel therefore agreed this needed further consideration.

Complaints about a consultee

Some respondents said mediators should be required to share any concerns or complaints raised by their clients with their PPC, so the PPC is aware of these. The Panel agreed that mediators should be required to inform PPCs of any formal complaints received, and recommended that this be incorporated in to the Standards Framework. The Panel recommended that the FMSB produced guidance in relation to where the threshold lies when a mediator is made aware of concerns. PPCs do not have a role in responding to complaints about consultees, but do have a role in supporting a consultee when a complaint had been made, can support the consultee as they develop their response to this and to support any change to their practice if this is required. The panel noted it may also be helpful to produce guidance for PPCs on this.

PPC concerns about a consultee's practice

If it is accepted that it is the role of a PPC to support a mediator to comply with the standards, but to refer to the FMSB where this support doesn't result in compliance, questions arise about when and how a referral to the FMSB can be made.

At the June 2024 consultation, there was a general level of agreement amongst mediators that a PPC should take a series of steps before making a referral, and that these should broadly be as follows:

- Clarification, recognising that everybody makes and can learn from mistakes, speaking with the consultee to understand their practice/what had happened, and to clarify whether standards were being breached
- Engaging with the consultee to try and address the issue/agree next steps: this might involve, amongst other things, reviewing documentation or observing mediation sessions/MIAMs as well as discussing a consultee's practice with them, before supporting the mediator to amend the way they work

The Panel agreed with this, and recommends that a protocol should be established which sets out the staged approach to addressing concerns about a consultee's practice. This should include clarification and engagement with the consultee, and discussion with the PPC's own PPC about how the issue might be addressed. The FMSB should produce a protocol to be followed which sets out these steps, but which recognises that the exact point of referral will rely on PPCs exercising their professional judgment.

The Panel noted that respondents to the consultation suggested introducing an anonymous FMC helpline where PPCs (and possibly consultees) can discuss any concerns. The Panel welcomed the suggestion of a

helpline in principle but recognised this could be difficult to deliver in practice. The Panel recommended that this idea be explored further, particularly with regard to how a helpline could be funded.

The Panel agreed that if a PPC identified an issue with a consultee's practice and worked with the consultee to rectify this, the PPC should not need to report this to the FMSB.

The Panel recommends that the FMSB specifies the circumstances in which a PPC should make an immediate referral to the FMSB, for example if the PPC believes the consultee has broken the law or someone is at risk of harm, after reporting to the relevant authorities (i.e. the police for immediate risk or local authority for safeguarding issues). Good practice would be to do this alongside engagement with the consultee, but there are certain circumstances where it is unsafe to do so. The FMSB should produce guidance on these circumstances.

The Panel recommends that in some circumstances, such as where a PPC becomes aware that a consultee should have made a declaration to the FMSB under the good standing provision but has not done so, the PPC allows the consultee an opportunity to make the declaration themselves, before checking this has been done.

The Panel also recommends that PPCs should retain the ability to end a consultancy contract if they do not feel they can continue to support a consultee, just as a consultee can end the consultancy contract if they do not feel supported by their PPC.

The Panel welcomed a suggestion from the consultation that PPCs should be required to inform the FMC if they have had no contact with a consultee for more than 6 months (having tried to make contact, and in the absence of a satisfactory reason e.g. the mediator is on parental leave), and recommended this be adopted.

The consultation showed that many PPCs were not aware that, at present it is possible to refer a mediator to the FMSB's complaints process where a PPC has a concern about a consultee's professional conduct. The Panel therefore recommended that the FMSB publishes a clear guide on the process of making a referral to the FMSB.

Requirements to review a consultee's way of working

If a PPC is to support a mediator in their practice and compliance with professional standards requirements, it follows that a PPC must have a good understanding of each consultee's practice.

The Panel recognised that at present, there is a variety of practices among PPCs about how and when they gain an understanding of a consultee's practice. Some PPCs conduct regular reviews of their consultee's work through file reviews and observations, but others do not.

The Panel recommends the introduction of a formal framework that requires PPCs to review consultees' ways of working once every three years, perhaps as part of a mediator's renewal of accreditation. There should be a clear definition of what the review is designed to achieve, and the way(s) in which the review should be conducted, which should include at least either an observation or a file review. Clear guidance about the nature of the review should be produced.

The Panel noted that the PPC should decide how the triennial review should take place. This should ideally be agreed with the consultee. The Panel noted that if a consultee refuses to be observed or for their PPC to review their files, this would be a cause for concern and may result in a referral to the FMSB.

Structure of PPC consultation time

Respondents to the consultation provided mixed answers about:

- The minimum time a mediator should spend per year with their PPC. Many felt four hours was sufficient depending on what PPCs are expected to deliver, whereas others argued for an increase to six hours. Some respondents felt that the number of hours should decrease with experience, with more recently qualified mediators being required to have more than 4 hours supervision and very experienced mediators either having less, or being able to decide to have consultation when they feel it is required.
- Whether the consultation time should be ad hoc as required for difficult issues etc, or scheduled in advanced (i.e. planned and take place irrespective of the types of issues being raised in cases). However, the majority of respondents, including those who were PPCs themselves, considered scheduled PPC time was valuable to their professional development.
- Whether PPC consultation time should be more directed, e.g. group supervision, yearly review of practice to include: file reviews, PPC observation of a mediation / MIAM session.

The Panel noted that many respondents considered that adding requirements for annual file reviews and observations to the existing PPC role would make it difficult for PPCs to deliver all necessary support within 4 hours. However, the Panel recognised that some mediators may need this additional support. The Panel also recognised that mandating an increased amount of PPC time would increase a mediator's costs and ultimately drive-up mediation costs.

The Panel considered that direct observations of mediators and a review of the way a mediator worked were valuable in ensuring the public receive mediation services that meet agreed standards.

The Panel recommends the Standards Framework is amended to require mediators to have at least 4 hours scheduled PPC support a year as a minimum, irrespective of experience and that to emphasise that mediators may need additional scheduled consultation time if they have less experience or ad hoc support in addition to scheduled PPC time if challenging issues arise.

For clarity, the triennial review that the Panel has recommended should be in addition to this regular four hours scheduled support. The Panel considered that the three-yearly review would take an additional one to three hours, depending on the nature of it, which it considered proportionate to the aim of ensuring PPCs can support mediators in complying with professional standards.

Liability of PPCs

If it is decided that PPCs must take a series of steps to address any concerns they have about potential breaches of professional standards by their consultees, then there is an argument that the PPC should be held responsible for any failure by their consultee to comply with those standards. On the other hand, this would remove personal responsibility from consultees for their own compliance, which is not something that the FMSB has contemplated before, or that the mediation profession had called for in the consultation responses.

The Panel agreed that responsibility for any breaches of the FMC's Codes of Practice or Standards Framework should continue to lie with the mediator themselves, and not the mediator's PPC (i.e. PPCs should not be liable for a breach of professional standards by their consultees).

Accountability of PPCs

The vast majority of respondents considered that PPCs should be held accountable by their own PPCs, which suggested that PPCs should have a role in monitoring standards (in an apparent contradiction of answers given about the 'role of the PPC').

Other ideas included:

- Peer supervision from other PPCs including direct observation and review of PPC log;
- Feedback from consultees and a PPC response to this;
- Group/pod PPC support meetings to discuss cases, file reviews etc);
- Review PPC's WTA consultees' accreditation success rate; and
- A clear complaints mechanism for a consultee to complain about a PPC, their work quality and conduct.

The Panel agreed that PPCs should be held to account by their own PPC, with the same staged approach and referral mechanism to the FMSB as applies to other mediators, in the event of non-compliance. In order to ensure this happens, the Panel recommended that PPCs are required to have a minimum of two hours' consultation per year about their professional practice consultancy with their own PPC. The panel noted that this was common practice at present, but was not a requirement. The Panel noted that this may increase costs for PPCs who are not already having such consultancy and that these costs are ultimately passed on to clients, however, the Panel felt that this requirement was critical to underpinning the system of professional practice consultancy and maintaining standards.

The Panel agreed that a clear complaints mechanism was imperative and recommended the FMSB clarify the procedure for this.

The Panel agreed that PPCs would (and in many cases already do) benefit from attending group/pod meetings to discuss issues relevant to mediation practice and ways of providing support (see 'Supporting PPCs'). However, the Panel noted that whilst this might provide support for PPCs and could really benefit their professional development, it wasn't necessarily a way to hold them to account.

It was also suggested by some consultation responses that a PPC should only be allowed to offer supervision to a consultee for a specified period (e.g. 5 years) to ensure fresh input/ insights. The Panel considered that this may be impractical, and could also be counter-productive if a PPC and consultee had

built a good relationship. However, the Panel welcomed the prompt to consider how a PPC and a consultee could ensure they did not become complacent and fall in to a position where they were reinforcing bad habits, and recommended that the FMSB introduces guidance for mediators which encourages them to obtain other perspectives, and to regularly review whether a PPC continues to meet their needs.

Professional development of a PPC

Respondents broadly felt that around 5 hours professional development for PPCs a year was sufficient to maintain and develop their PPC practice. The Panel agreed with this.

The Panel noted that some respondents did not seem aware that the requirements for CPD for PPCs had changed in 2022, with a move away from 5 hours' a year 'updating' to an approach more akin to FMCA requirements, with development required in a range of areas, but to be tailored to a PPC's required individual development needs.

Respondents indicated that CPD should include guidance on standards etc from the FMSB in the form of:

- Newsletters, regular updates or updated PPC handbook;
- annual update training on changes in FMSB standards or requirements, provided either directly by the FMC or by providing key content to be delivered by others; and
- a PPC helpline with a Panel of PPCs, some of which will have specific areas of expertise.

Some respondents also said CPD should include:

- a wider range of opportunities to discuss theory and practise through training courses and perhaps approved regional support groups.
- update training on supporting WTAs through the accreditation process (again this could be provided directly by the FMC or specified content via approved training organisations); and
- scheduled courses on supervision theory that must be attended once every couple of years. The Panel noted that there were two broad categories of CPD: professional practice and standards updating. The Panel agreed that current requirements for PPC CPD were sufficient and did not need amending, and noted they already included supervision theory.

The Panel agreed that the FMSB should provide an update on standards at regular intervals, with the form to be decided. The Panel noted that this could provide an opportunity to remind PPCs of expectations as well as covering updates. The Panel welcomed the idea of a helpline, and noted that themes of the

questions asked could be fed back to trainers. The Panel agreed to explore the idea and practicalities (including funding) of the helpline further.

Charges

Some respondents felt strongly that there should be a standard framework for charges for PPCs and others felt strongly that there shouldn't.

The Panel considered that the FMSB couldn't set charges, as this would be anti-competitive. The Panel agreed with several respondents that clarity around costs and the services that would be provided for that was important. The Panel recommended that the FMSB requires PPCs to be transparent about costs and services, and that the FMSB publishes information about average PPC fees/the likely range of fees.

The Panel noted that several PPCs had indicated they provided support to mediators working towards accreditation free of charge. The Panel observed that this relied on goodwill which may not be sustainable, and agreed that the value of Professional Practice Consultancy needed to be recognised.

Conflicts of Interest

Respondents had mixed views on the benefit of PPCs working within a service, versus the disadvantages of a potential conflict arising. Some respondents felt strongly that a business owner/manager should not act as a PPC to someone they employ/manage, as the conflict of interest was too great. Others considered that having a PPC within a practice was valuable, and noted that business owners have an interest in ensuring their mediators offer a high standard of service. The Panel noted that the PPC Code of Practice and Guidance attempted to deal with this issue by requiring people to have secondary PPCs in case a conflict of interest arises, but noted that this was not always observed. The Panel recommended that this area of the PPC Code of Practice be reviewed and clarified, especially with regard to a direct conflict involving a manager/business owner.

Number of consultees per PPC

Lots of respondents felt there should be a maximum, not a minimum number of consultees per PPC. However, some respondents reflected that as long as a PPC has capacity and can deliver consultancy to the expected level, then there shouldn't be a maximum number. The Panel noted that a PPC with several consultees may be more able to carry out CPD and give more time to understanding and carrying out their PPC role. The Panel observed that responses about a minimum or maximum number of consultees centred

on whether a PPC was able to deliver a quality service to all consultees and that it was not necessary to mandate numbers if other mechanisms to monitor this were in place. The Panel recommended that the FMSB focused on assurance mechanisms rather than specifying the number of consultees a PPC should have.

Supporting PPCs

In its interim report, the Panel reported that it had identified that a network or pod approach, advocated by some mediators as part of the consultation response, would be highly beneficial to all mediators including PPCs.

This would reduce isolation that some mediators experience. There is a concern that isolation has a negative impact on the quality of PPCs' work.

The Panel noted that a network could consist of an experienced PPC, a number of less experienced or 'apprentice' PPCs, FMCAs and WTAs. This network could provide support in the form of observations or co-working opportunities to WTAs early in their careers, as well as the more experienced mediators from time to time. It would also allow for a career pathway where FMCAs gain experience in supporting as they become more experienced, and could gain experience in supporting WTAs or other mediators before deciding whether to train as a PPC.

The Panel noted that, as with all forms of PPC support, this would need to be commercially viable. It also noted that a number of pod or network models already existed and that mediators were required to be members of FMC Member Organisations (though each organisation offers different levels of engagement), which can offer some of the advantages of the approach that the panel supported.

The Panel explored this idea with mediators at its June 2024 consultation, with 86% of responses to a poll saying that it was either 'important' or 'very important' that mediators and PPCs are a member of a network, and 69% of respondents thought the FMSB should be directly involved in or actively encouraging mediators and PPCs to join a network.

The Panel noted that time spent with a network could potentially count towards a mediators' CPD.

The Panel recommends that the FMSB strongly advocates or pilots a network approach, consisting of mediators with a variety of experience, including an experienced PPC, a number of less experienced or

'apprentice' PPCs, FMCAs and WTAs. The Panel recommends that the FMSB measure the impact of mediators belonging to such a network, with a view to considering whether this should be a requirement, if it proves successful in helping mediators maintain high professional standards.

Support for mediators' relationship with PPCs

Respondents suggested that there should be a period following foundation training, where the FMSB helped mediators find consultees. The panel did not agree that the FMSB should allocate PPCs, but did support the idea of a post-training information package from the FMSB that could include information that outlines what the FMSB says a PPC should offer.

It was suggested that the FMSB provide a clear central list of PPCs that all training organisations can link to, with detailed information about services offered, whether work will be provided for those mediators WTA, costs, location etc. The Panel agreed that this was a good idea that it would like to see progressed, but noted that a low-resource way of keeping this list up to date was required.

A further suggestion was an FMSB notice board for observation/co-mediation opportunities. The Panel agreed that this would be a good idea in theory and would be worth exploring the practicalities further. Some respondents also suggested some mediators could benefit from having a mentor as well as a PPC. The Panel recognised the value of mediators having support from mediators other than their own PPC. The Panel noted that it was particularly beneficial for mediators working towards accreditation to be supported by FMCAs (not in a PPC capacity) and recommended the FMSB explored how this could be encouraged.