

Mediation for Social Workers

Course Overview

This is a one day course primarily designed for social workers working with families where children are placed away from their parents but remain within the wider family. This course is particularly, but not exclusively, relevant to situations where a Special Guardianship Order has been made. Whilst such placements are often welcomed by families, as time progresses it is not unusual for tension and conflict to escalate between parents, special guardians and other members of the extended family. The purpose of this course is to equip social workers with the skills and confidence to intervene effectively and constructively, with a view to decreasing unhappiness and promoting stronger relationships. The welfare and perspective of the children remains of primary importance.

Method

The course is conducted by a trainer who combines extensive experience as a barrister specialising in family law with more recent practice as a family mediator, and who currently works as a relationship and family counsellor. The course will promote discussion and debate, and includes some smaller group work. Participants will be encouraged to look at some case studies, with course flexibility to allow delegates to bring their own work and experience into the discussion. The course will not rely upon PowerPoint presentation.

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of the course, participants will have a strong understanding of the emotional impact upon parents and carers when children are placed within the extended family. They will have learnt specific skills in order to allow them to create the environment for well-managed, safe, family discussions and meetings. They will have learnt at least four different conversational approaches for reducing conflict and promoting wider family co-operation.

About the Trainer:

Holly Carter is an experienced counsellor, supervisor and trainer, who has worked for Relate for over ten years, combining this with a private practice in Exeter. Prior to obtaining a Master's degree in Relationship Therapy, Holly enjoyed a twenty year career as a practising barrister, specialising in family law in chambers at 3 Dr Johnson's Buildings, Temple, London. She has also trained and worked as a family mediator.

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Subsequent to obtaining a PTLLS qualification, Holly has written and delivered numerous training courses for diverse organisations including the CAB, Relate, and the Stroke Association. She enjoys training, and recognises the importance of blending the professional with the empathic, encouraging participants to recognise and build upon their existing competencies, alongside the lifelong learning of new skills.

Session Plan

9.15 - 9.30	Registration
9.30 – 11.00	Introduction. Formalities. Course outline Exploring emotional context for parents and carers Establishing an effective environment for discussion
11 – 11.20	Break
11.20 – 1.00	Preparing for Family Meetings/Discussions <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contracting• Agenda• Practicalities• Language• Emotional containment
1.00 – 2.00	Lunch
2.00 – 4.30 (+break)	Exploring conversational strategies & interventions <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Common ground• Circular questions• Scaling• Goal orientation• Written agreements• Appreciative enquiry
4.30 – 4.45	Feedback & Conclusion