

REFLECTIONS ON FJYPB ARRANGING FAMILY TIME REPORT AND LAUNCH EVENT

Robert Creighton, Chair, Family Mediation Standards Board (FMSB)

The underlying purpose of the FMSB is to ensure that the services offered by the family mediation profession are provided to the highest possible standards – so that participants in mediation are safe and well supported during their times of need.

The Board's work has two dimensions:

- Establishing baseline standards of practice for all mediators, assuring their compliance with those standards, and dealing with any failures of compliance;
- Encouraging the evolution of best practice through issuing guidance and supporting materials, and promoting their use across the profession.

The interests of children during family separations should be paramount but it can be easy for them to be overlooked, misunderstood or even ignored by the family justice system. Mediation is uniquely suited to engaging with children and young people to overcome these difficulties and give them appropriate voice. This is most fully implemented through child-inclusive mediation (CIM), but also applies even if children are not directly involved.

The FMSB is committed to keeping under review its basic standards (that mediators must follow) for securing children's interests, and to continuing the evolution of best practice in response to policy developments and societal changes. It does this through its own programmes and through working with partners that have similar commitments and relevant expertise.

The Family Justice Young People's Board is a valued partner in this, and its report on Arranging Family Time is an excellent example of the kind of material that the FMSB can promote. We warmly welcome its publication and will seek to ensure that mediators are well aware of it.

While it contains much that is immediately relevant to professional practice – understanding the practical needs of all children (eg. their activities and schedules) – it also challenges us to consider more strategic issues:

- How do we develop the skills and confidence of all mediators to practice effectively with children and young people, whether or not through CIM?
- How do we – and the wider family justice system – support parents in giving children and young people authentic voices?

These will be the subjects of continuing attention, leading to evolution in policy and practice.

20 April 2025