

My name is Maire Farren. Before starting as a full time mediator in May 2010, I was a housing officer for 10 years. In those 10 years, I had experience in mediation as a part-time staff mediator and had attended an accredited training course.

When I started as a full time mediator, I was made aware of the SCMN accreditation scheme and what was involved. It was recommended that I submit a portfolio for verification.

This was a daunting task for me as it had been a long time since my student days. It was made slightly easier as my colleague, Colin McFarlane, was also preparing his portfolio.

To start with, I found the task like a jigsaw puzzle but as I worked through it, the portfolio came together well and made sense. My senior, Gary McCallum gave me good guidance and realistic timescales but wanted to ensure that the work was unique to us and that it would reflect our individual styles as a mediator.

Once completed, I was proud of the achievement and happy with the content of the portfolio. The standards required for meeting the Accreditation Scheme are that we show our training, current practice and professional development to be of satisfactory quality. The finished document showed the above criteria and also made it clear that we had progressed through practice and experience.

After the portfolios were submitted, I was anxious about the interview process, however, the two assessors made me feel relaxed. Although being asked questions in a formal setting, I found the interview to be rewarding in a way that helped me reflect on my own professional experience.

I would recommend the SCMN Accreditation scheme. The completed portfolio and process can be used as a working tool, to further professional development. Learning can be gained through reflective practice, the CPD log and updating the portfolios to meet agreed standards. I feel that this will help to ensure that we don't get complacent and remind us that this is a continual learning profession.

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