

Help and Support for Separated Families Mark



Briefing Pack

Introduction

The Help and Support for Separated Families (HSSF) Mark is awarded to individuals and organisations which can demonstrate their services support parents to work together to resolve disputes (where it's appropriate and safe to do so) and help them focus on the interests of their children.

Any organisation working with families is eligible to apply for the HSSF Mark. They will be assessed against a set of standards, designed to show their services promote collaboration and put the needs of children at the heart of the process. Assessments are carried out by the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP).

The aim is that as awareness of the HSSF Mark increases, more families will be able to access and benefit from the services provided by the individuals and organisations with the HSSF Mark.

The HSSF Mark standards

The standards were developed by the Tavistock Centre for Couple Relationships (TCCR) following consultation with a variety of large and small voluntary sector organisations. They have been designed to ensure:

- separating and separated families receive support and guidance from a service (web, telephony or face to face)
- mark-holders support collaboration between both parents, and
- providers have flexibility to develop and improve services to meet their own specific client group or local needs

The standards are broken down into four elements which are set out on pages 2 and 3, along with examples of the evidence an organisation needs to provide.

What evidence do you need to provide?

Documentary evidence must sufficiently demonstrate your organisation meets the requirements of each element.

The evidence is split into two columns 'required evidence' and 'alternative evidence'. We would expect to see all of the evidence from the 'required' column. If this wasn't possible, we will accept evidence from the 'alternative' column.

The process aims to be straightforward and flexible, ensuring individuals and organisations working with separated families can apply - irrespective of size or area of focus.

The documentary evidence provided will be reviewed and rated according to whether it meets the requirements of the standards. If more evidence is needed, the assessor will contact you and explain what additional evidence is required. A site visit to the organisation is also part of the assessment process.

Please contact the [DWP HSSF Team](#) if you have any queries.

Four elements and required evidence

Element One: the organisation has a vision/mission/strategic aim that includes the promotion of collaboration and reduction of conflict in the best interests of children	
We are looking for evidence of the strength of an organisation's philosophy, values and principles. For example a strategic document which articulates the organisation's commitment to reducing conflict and promoting collaboration, as well as some form of Trustee Board level endorsement of this.	
Required evidence	Alternative evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charity (if applicable) Memorandum of Articles or other founding documents • Mission statement • Code of practice • Board of trustee strategic objectives • Board Meeting minutes where strategic objectives have been discussed/agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job descriptions and person specifications for senior staff • Staff handbook / office manual • Organisation chart • Process for resolving internal conflict issues • Member/ staff survey results referring to organisational vision

Element Two: the organisation consistently demonstrates its commitment to the promotion of collaboration and reduction of conflict	
We are looking for evidence of how an organisation communicates both externally and internally about its values and its work.	
Required evidence	Alternative evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual report • Business Plan • Examples of relevant leaflets • Website (we will review your website content) • Examples of signposting to other support services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications strategy • Marketing strategy • Style and brand guidelines

Element Three: the organisation is effective in the promotion of collaboration and reduction of conflict

We are looking for evidence of an organisation's ability to assess its own performance, have a sense of how well / successful it is and how it measures effectiveness and outcomes.

Required evidence	Alternative evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality assurance mechanisms (e.g. feedback templates etc.) • Key performance indicators that include outcomes • Examples of research used to create and maintain your services • Staff appraisal processes • Supervision processes • Policy and processes for adult and child safeguarding • Evidence-based interventions or practices used (e.g. Parenting Programmes, Parenting Alliance Measure (PAM) etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies • Internal testing of effectiveness • Training strategy • Staff guidance/practice manual • Staff training and development plans • Team / departmental meeting minutes showing consideration of external research, evidence or feedback • Certificates of qualifications/memberships • Membership agreement with an association or accreditation body

Element Four: the organisations service users/clients/patients/callers/website visitors report positive, helpful, negative and unhelpful experiences that help the organisation redesign services to improve them

We are looking for evidence that an organisation asks the people using its services what they think of it; and that feedback helps the organisation make appropriate changes

Required evidence	Alternative evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence that feedback is regularly sought (e.g, client / member / staff surveys) • Complaint handling policy, procedures and records • Complaints responses and outcomes • Example of process change as a result of complaint / positive feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example of materials changed as a result of feedback (online and offline) • Client feedback form • Mechanisms for informing users of changes made following their feedback

HSSF Mark Agreement

If successful, you will be asked to sign-up to the HSSF Mark agreement that includes the commitments listed below:

- i. Adhere to the four standards developed by the Tavistock Centre for Couple Relationships
- ii. Inform clients that the HSSF Mark is awarded to organisations that are committed to resolving disputes collaboratively, and, where appropriate, in the best interests of their children.
- iii. All branches displaying the HSSF Mark on their literature (if possible) and websites within six months of accreditation.
- iv. Display the HSSF Mark certificate to the public on the organisations premises within six months of accreditation.
- v. Provide the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) with positive case studies showing how the organisation has helped parents to collaborate (at least one per year).