



### New Year - New Faces

In recent months, OFM has seen major changes in personnel, including a new Chairman of the Board, Director and Children's Services Co-ordinator. We also welcome Alison Scott to the Trustee Board, and Jayne Coxall and Jane Hedges to our team of qualified mediators. OFM also thanks Martin Wilkinson for his work as outgoing Chairman, and we are delighted that he will stay on as Treasurer.

#### **Rodney Mann, Chairman**

Rodney comes to us from South Oxfordshire District Council, where he was Deputy Leader, and currently works with two other charities in Oxfordshire. He says: 'It is good to join the team at OFM, and to be part of a service which can make a real difference to the lives of people in Oxfordshire.'

#### **Lizzie Iron, Director**



Lizzie took over from Marion Stevenson in October 2011. Previously Head of Welfare Policy at Citizens Advice in London, Lizzie has also run a charity representing Army families. She says: 'This is an exciting time for Mediation, as the Family Justice Review has recommended more use of mediation instead of court solutions. Every family facing separation will need help from a range of services to reach positive outcomes. We know that mediated solutions are usually quicker and cheaper than court solutions, and they often last longer, simply because the partners come to agreement between themselves. It's also a challenging time, as everyone faces the consequences of economic recession and money is scarce.' Lizzie believes that her task at OFM is to raise awareness of the value of mediation, and to promote OFM as a prime provider of affordable mediation services across Oxfordshire.



#### **Sophia Giblin, Children's Services Coordinator**

Funded by a generous grant from BBC's Children in Need, OFM offers services especially for children experiencing family break-up. In November 2011, Sophia Giblin took over from Martha Beale as our Children's Services Co-ordinator, and has several years experience working directly with children with Special Educational Needs, and emotional and behavioural difficulties. She says: 'It's clear that there is not enough help out there for children who are suffering because of parental separation and divorce. The services that we offer are a fantastic resource to families, schools and children's centres across Oxfordshire. I believe that there is a lot of scope for new initiatives within OFM that will provide much needed support for families and children in turbulent times.' Sophia is working on our *Walking on Eggshells* drama project in 4 schools in the South Oxford partnership, and is looking to expand our *Family Plus: Children's Voice* service to offer help to more children in the county.

#### **Interested in our work? Here's how you can help...**

**Spread the word:** Research shows people in Oxfordshire have low awareness about mediation. Start talking about the benefits!

**Recommend Us:** If you work with families and young people, you can recommend OFM to families experiencing separation.

**Promote OFM:** If you could display posters or leaflets for us, please email [admin@ofm.org.uk](mailto:admin@ofm.org.uk)

**Support Us:** Make a donation by downloading a donation form from our website and help us continue our work with families and children.

## OFM Raises Local Profile

January 7<sup>th</sup> was National Mediation Day. Oxfordshire Family Mediation took part in a country-wide publicity drive to raise awareness of what mediation is and what it can do. The umbrella body, National Family Mediation, co-ordinated its 47 services nationwide to appear in print and on radio and TV, talking about the value and effectiveness of mediation in helping people reach positive solutions and move forward from separation. Lizzie Iron was featured in the Oxford Times in an article discussing the problems of debt after Christmas, and the strain it can cause on families. She was also interviewed by Nick Piercey on the Malcolm Boyden show for BBC Radio Oxford. Lizzie said 'Research shows that January is the worst time for couples who are struggling with their relationships. More people start the separation process at this time of year than at any other time. We are here to help them reach positive outcomes for the benefit of everyone in the family.'

### Facts and Figures

- Divorce or separation affects 1 in 3 families and children often bear the brunt of their parents' break up
- On average, it costs less than half to separate using mediation than going through solicitors (National Audit Office 2007)
- OFM was founded in 1989 and we serve the entire county with mediation outposts in Banbury, Didcot and Witney
- All our mediators are fully trained professionals accredited by the Legal Services Commission
- Feedback from clients shows that 89% would recommend OFM to a friend

## Last Word: OFM Thanks Marion Stevenson

On November 24<sup>th</sup>, friends and supporters gathered in the new reception foyer at Queens College to thank Marion for her dedication and commitment to OFM over many years. Marion had been continuously involved with OFM since the service started in 1989. For most of these 22 years Marion was a Mediator, and she also campaigned passionately for Mediation to become a standard solution for separating couples. Perhaps her finest hour came in 2007, when the organisation nearly folded. Through determination and conviction, she succeeded in finding a new Board to take over the reins of governance and subsequently became Director in early 2008. For almost four years she steered the organisation forward from a position of vulnerability to one of financial stability. Along the way many new initiatives were implemented, including our schools drama project, *Walking on Eggshells*, and in 2009 we won the Avril Reid award for Innovation in Mediation for our *Schools Link* work. Marion's legacy to OFM is immense and we wish her a very happy and fulfilling retirement.

## Meet our Mediators

OFM employs the services of ten qualified mediators, who are all fully committed to helping couples find a positive way forward after separation:

**Alec Henderson**

**Alison Pritchard**

**Isobel Filkin**

**Jayne Coxall**

**Jenny Harris**

**Jane Hedges**

**Kerry Williamson**

**Pauline Edwards**

**Roger Cullen**

**Wendy Aldiss**

We also support two trainees:

**Eric Fast**

**Polly Gavins**

## Dates for the Diary

- **May 22<sup>nd</sup> 7pm – 8.30pm**  
*Walking on Eggshells*  
Public Performance at  
Rose Hill School with  
gallery of art work
- **June 16<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>**  
Walk the Oxfordshire Way  
with Sir Hugo Brunner

Community  
Legal Service



National  
Family  
Mediation



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