

QUALITY STANDARDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

for counselling parents on the specific needs of minor children as a result of their divorce, in accordance with Section 95 (1a) of the Non-Contentious Proceedings Act (AußStrG)

Preamble

1. Legal background

The Federal Constitutional Act on the Rights of Children was adopted in Austria in 2011 (Federal Law Gazette [BGBl] 1 No. 4/2011). Embedding into the Constitution the key basic principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is designed to ensure that the rights of children are protected both socially and politically, and taken account of in current legislation. Alongside the best interests of the child as the primary consideration (Article 3 (1)), the opportunity of the child to be heard, the right to contact with both parents and the right to participation are determined (Article 9 (3), Article 12 (1) and (2) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child).

The Parent Child Relation and Naming Rights Amendment Act [*Kindschafts- und Namensrechtsänderungsgesetz, KindNamRÄG 2013*], which entered into force on 1 February 2013, took particular account of the UN Convention on Children's Rights. The definition of the best interests of the child in Section 138 of the Austrian Civil Code [*Allgemeines bürgerliches Gesetzbuch, ABGB*] highlights the right of the child to care and security, the protection of physical and emotional integrity, the right to be heard and the importance of reliable contacts of the child to both parents and to important caregivers. In addition to the existing role of children's advisor, the KindNamRÄG 2013 envisages the introduction of the family court assistance service and visitation mediators, both of which are designed to help ensure that the focus in care procedures should be placed more heavily on the needs of the child. Section 95 (1a) AußStrG fits into this context, where it states that before concluding or submitting to the court an arrangement on the outcome of the divorce, parents must verify that they have sought advice from a suitable person or institution regarding the specific needs of their minor children stemming from the divorce.

The fundamental principles of the UN Convention on Children's Rights are thus taken into account in various different respects. The new Act should push the interests and the welfare of the child clearly into the foreground during conflicts of custody and rights of contact brought before the court. Yet this also means that every couple in Austria striving to reach an amicable divorce are obliged by law to seek parental counselling. This general legal obligation does not apply in the event of a contested divorce, but in accordance with Section 107 (3) AußStrG the guardianship court is entitled to order the parents to undergo counselling within the meaning of Section 95 (1a) AußStrG (or more comprehensive counselling).

2. Mandatory counselling – is it even worth it?

It can generally be assumed that counselling definitely requires a certain willingness to initiate processes of understanding, to achieve change in pedagogical activity, and to persuade parents to follow what someone else suggests.

That said, the general practice of divorce counselling also points towards other things, and introduces some advantages of mandatory counselling that are “conducive to counselling” in general to some extent: The basic concept here is obviously that the parents – albeit involuntarily – are put in a position where they can learn how children process the divorce on an emotional level, thereby triggering a process of understanding that would perhaps not have come about without this enlightenment. The “mandatory nature” of this form of counselling can prompt some parents to participate in the counselling “despite their own misgivings”: the fear that attending parent counselling could be interpreted by the court as “evidence of pedagogical weakness” and be detrimental in proceedings is misplaced in the case of the parent counselling in accordance with Section 95 (1a) AußStrG. Counselling practice also demonstrates that attending a session at which both parents are obliged to be present can with some parental couples lead to initial cooperation on a “new form of parenthood”, which would not yet have been possible at this juncture without the counselling. Parent counselling in accordance with Section 95 (1a) AußStrG thus offers the opportunity to shape the divorce in such a way (and to take advantage of further counselling) that the children affected are able to make progress and develop. Early experiences with the parent counselling in accordance with Section 95 (1a) AußStrG confirm that the parents, despite initial resistance, tend to perceive the counselling service as helpful, and they feel supported in coping with the divorce process.

However, to conduct the counselling “successfully” in this context, working in accordance with defined standards of methodology and content are prerequisites for quality.

3. Objectives

This was the purpose of a conference organised by the Austrian Ombuds Offices for Children and Young People, the Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth and the Federal Ministry of Justice on 22 March 2013 in Salzburg, attended by roughly 180 experts.

The recommendations for quality standards relating to counselling in accordance with Section 95 (1a) AußStrG are based on the guidelines for such counselling as elaborated in the plenary presentations and the workshops at this conference. They were consolidated by an interdisciplinary advisory board comprising representatives of the conference organisers¹ and of “Rainbows”², Univ.-Doz. Dr. Helmuth Figdor and Univ.-Ass. Mag. Regina Studener-Kuras, MA, who also documented the conference on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Justice, and thus

¹ On behalf of the Ombuds Offices for Children and Young People: Dr.ⁱⁿ Andrea Holz-Dahrenstaedt, Mag.^a Elisabeth Harasser, Mag.^a Astrid Liebhauser, Mag.^a Gabriela Peterschofsky-Orange, DSA Monika Pinterits, DSA Mag.^a Brigitte Pörsch, Mag. Michael Rauch, Mag. Christian Reumann and Mag.^a Christine Winkler-Kirchberger. On behalf of the Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth: Dr.ⁱⁿ Elisabeth Habringer, Dr. Michael Janda and Mag.^a Gundula Sayouni. On behalf of the Federal Ministry of Justice: Dr. Peter Barth.

² Mag.^a Monika Aichhom and Mag.^a Dagmar Bojdunyk-Rack.

supplied the “material” as it were for the advisory board meeting and a first draft of this document. The text is structured like the workshops of the conference:

- Point I covers the guidelines regarding the **framework conditions and set-up**.
- Point II covers standards regarding the **content** of the counselling at the level of the children and parents, and the structure of daily life, and
- Point III determines the criteria for the **qualifications of counsellors**

The recommendations certainly do not address every aspect that could play a role during parent counselling in the context of a divorce or separation, and not all of the aspects that were raised during the conference on 22 March 2013. They are rather intended to cover the most important issues that arise with this new form of counselling based on experience, and thereby set its framework.

I. General conditions and set-up

1. Information in advance of the counselling in accordance with Section 95 (1a) AußStrG

The first results of empirical findings and the experience to date of experts with counselling in accordance with Section 95 (1a) AußStrG demonstrate that it is crucial in terms of the success of this form of counselling for basic information to be exchanged at the first contact or when the parents register, in order then to determine the content of the counselling on this basis.

Thus before the counselling begins:

- information must be gathered on the current living situation of the couple and their children (at the time of the counselling),
- the ages of the children and the number of (step, adopted) siblings must be known,
- the needs and opportunities for using the services of an interpreter must be clarified (in the event a parent does not speak German as their native language).

Equally before the counselling, the parents should be informed:

- about the location and time of the counselling as well as its financial and formal conditions, and
- that the counselling must be in person, and
- that the counsellor is sworn to secrecy vis-a-vis third parties (i.e. people that have not taken part in the counselling) with regard to all the information he/she becomes aware of solely during this activity.

2. Structural conditions (location, time and costs)

The following standards apply for the structural focus of the counselling in accordance with Section 95 (1a) AußStrG:

- The choice of locations should be aligned with the local conditions, they should be easily reachable and regionally well spread out.
- For individual and couple counselling at least one to two hours is recommended, while group counselling should last two to three hours.
- A guideline for appropriate counselling fees would be:
 - EUR 60/hour/person for individual counselling,
 - EUR 35/hour/person for couple counselling,
 - EUR 30/group session/person,
- The parents must be notified of these clearly defined costs in advance.
- For parents who do not speak German proficiently enough, it is advisable to establish a permanent cooperation framework with certain interpreters or counselling centres for migrants (to be able to offer special conditions for low-income parents if required).

3. Set-up of counselling sessions

The set-up of counselling sessions in accordance with Section 95 (1a) AußStrG should comply with the following guidelines:

- The counselling sessions can be group, couple or individual, with preference given to group sessions – where feasible – as they are more suited to keeping particular family problems separate from the counselling education.
- Particularly in rural areas it is recommended to promote group sessions as “information events” or “info evenings”, as the word “counselling” can easily fuel fears that personal problems may be disclosed.
- In some cases, couple or individual counselling is indicated (parents geographically far apart, issues of violence or abuse, or other circumstances that arise in preliminary discussions with the counsellor).
- The group sessions should include no more than 20 people.
- Counselling sessions embracing creative methods, such as theatre or film, etc., can also be integrated into the counselling in accordance with Section 95 (1a) AußStrG as “ice-breakers”.
- Ideally both parents should also attend the group sessions together. By way of explanation, it can be pointed out that the joint attendance of a group gives the opportunity to obtain information and potentially ask questions in a larger group of people without delving in immediately to the individual dynamics of the divorce circumstances. Furthermore, attending a counselling session together provides the certainty and the clarity that both parents have received the same professional information.
- The parents should be given brochures with helpful information about the rights of the children and on further counselling options.

4. Methodology notes on parental counselling

From a methodology perspective, counselling in accordance with Section 95 (1a) AußStrG can follow the basic professional standards of parental counselling in the context of a divorce. However, another two methodological aspects must also be taken into account, which are crucial for ensuring the quality of counselling in accordance with Section 95 (1a) AußStrG. Firstly, coping with the *resistance and rejection* that parents may have against “ordered counselling”, and secondly, the fact that parents only tend to come to such counselling once, so it is a case of *purposefully selecting* the content that parents should be informed about (see Point II).

Hence when carrying out parental counselling in accordance with Section 95 (1a) AußStrG, the following methodological aspects must be observed and implemented:

- A trusting atmosphere must be created in the counselling session, in which a “working alliance” can emerge between the parents and the counsellor, and the parents feel understood.
- The counsellor is subject to a confidentiality obligation vis-a-vis third parties in respect of the parent counselling in accordance with Section 95 (1a) AußStrG.
- If there is any suspicion of a risk to the best interests of the child, the Child and Youth Welfare Office

must be notified accordingly.

- During the counselling, the resistance and rejection of the parents regarding the mandatory counselling must be considered and processed methodologically. By way of explanation, it can be pointed out that the “obligatory aspect” must be actively addressed and broached as a legal requirement, for example as follows: As parents they have to comply with this obligation, but in return they get the opportunity through the counselling to receive support in coping with their divorce.
- The content focus of the parent counselling in accordance with Section 95 (1a) AußStrG should be determined in line with the available standards.

II. Content of counselling

In accordance with the objectives set forth in the preamble, as well as the prior experience and professional expertise of those attending the conference on 22 March 2013, the following *key content* is recommended for consideration in the parent counselling in accordance with Section 95 (1a) AußStrG.

Accordingly, the following content should be addressed in the counselling sessions:

- The experiences of the children, their needs, desires, hardships, fears and reactions in connection with the divorce of their parents should constitute the focal point of the counselling.
- The rights of the children (to care, security and the protection of their physical and emotional integrity, to be heard and to reliable contact with both parents) and the associated consequences for shaping the current and future living situation of the children should be clarified.
- The emotional challenges and conflicts of the parents must be addressed and discussed.
- The parents must be made aware of the different options to support and relieve the pressure on their children.
- The opportunities must be highlighted that can arise from a divorce (such as growing up in an atmosphere less prone to conflict).
- The taboo over counselling should be dispelled, and the options for further support and advice should be laid out.

By way of explanation, it should be noted that the content of counselling must be tailored to the age of the child/young person and their stage of life, and the current divorce circumstances must be taken into account.

1. Content to be communicated at the level of the children

The following chapter deals with the guidelines that relate *to the experiences of the children* in the context of a divorce. It must be demonstrated here how the experiences of children can impact on their medium to long-term mental and emotional development: Psychosomatics, self-esteem, school life, superego development, gender identity, attitude towards the other gender, trust in relationships and ability to love, the probability of remaining mentally sound or falling ill (aggressiveness, depression).

As part of these recommendations for quality standards in counselling in accordance with Section 95 (1a) AußStrG it is not possible to delve into “all content”. This is why the topics that definitely should be part of the counselling are outlined below.

II.1.1 Needs, feelings and conflicts of children

As part of the counselling in accordance with Section 95 (1a) AußStrG and with regard to the emotional experiences of children, parents should be informed that their divorce:

- is always experienced as a massive loss by the children (even if in the child’s current circumstances, and from a certain perspective, this does come as a form of relief),
- represents a painful stage in the life of the children, and always creates an abundance of feelings, concerns and conflicts,
- triggers feelings of powerlessness, helplessness, anger and shame in children, and
- burdens children with feelings of guilt since they assume that their “own, childish misbehaviour” could have been the possible reason for the divorce,
- triggers fears of (completely) losing the parent who possibly leaves or is no longer around so regularly,
- causes conflicts of loyalty, and children seek to remain on one *and* the other side of the parental relationship, and conform to the ideas of the respective parents.

II.1.2 Experiences that children need and want to make

The counselling should also address the wishes regarding the need for certain relationship experiences.

This includes the wish (and the right)

- to love both parents equally,
- to be in contact and close to both parents,
- not to hear and experience abasement and insults about the other parent,
- to hold out the prospect and the hope that (against all rational thinking) “one day everything will be fine again” and the parents will get back together,
- not to have to get to know their parents’ new partners immediately,
- to like and love new partners, but to retain their natural parents as unique and special, and be allowed to spend time with him/her,
- to continuity and existing relationships, and contact with caregivers that are important for the child,
- to keep a familiar everyday life, living situation, school and friends, and
- to retain important rituals and routines of everyday life where possible.

II.1.3 Reactions of children and understanding symptoms

To be able to process a parental divorce, children must be allowed to grieve in all manners. This grieving process for children is a healthy way of processing that enables them to recover their emotional balance, and it is

associated with the emergence of symptoms and reactions.

During the counselling, parents must therefore be informed that

- the reactions of children to divorce and the events surrounding separation are necessary and healthy “psychological measures” which enable children to regain their emotional balance,
- most of these reactions are not “consciously controlled and initiated” by the child, and must instead be understood as an expression of the internal psychological processing which enables them to cope with the losses they are experiencing,
- children who do not exhibit any problems, reactions, etc. cannot be assumed to be unaffected by the separation/divorce, and
- children who exhibit no reactions must be encouraged by the parents to express their feelings, and the emergence of symptoms (such as temper, aggression, dejection, but also bed-wetting, poor academic performance or physical symptoms) can be understood as a way of expressing inner tensions.

It should generally be pointed out during counselling that the reactions, symptoms and needs of children can vary drastically depending on their age. It is the task of the counsellor to vary the content in this respect.

In summary, parents should be made aware that

1. the painful experiences surrounding parental divorce and all the emotional turmoil associated with it are unavoidable,
2. these occur in all children of all ages, and while they generally *cannot be prevented*, they can be understood and mitigated by parents, and
3. it is thereby possible to take advantage of the opportunities provided by a separation.

2. Content to be communicated at the level of the parents

During counselling in accordance with Section 95 (1a) AußStrG, parents must be told that from a pedagogical and development psychology perspective it is possible to process a parental separation constructively and without traumatic long-term consequences.

However, to support children in this sense with the processing of a parental divorce, it is necessary for parents to be informed about the requirements for this, what they can contribute, and how they can explain important processes to the children, such as the imminent separation and its consequences, in an age-appropriate manner.

Accordingly, the counselling in accordance with Section 95 (1a) AußStrG at parental level should focus on the following:

II.2.1 Attitudes, conflicts and tasks of parents

During the counselling, parents must be informed that

- it makes sense with regard to the needs of the children that a distinction is made between the “couple level” and the “parents’ level”,

- the divorce can then present an opportunity for children if the parents are prepared to accept the crisis they have caused. However, this means recognising that
- many separating or separated parents almost inevitably find themselves in a difficult conflict: i.e. some of the things that the parents would need – based on their own crisis, their grievances and hurt, and the fear of losing the children to the other parent – to regain their own balance *contrast with the things the children need at this time*. Typical examples of such parental behaviour: securing the loyalty of the children, reducing contact with the other parent because the children are upset after visits, not hearing or speaking about the other parent between visits, replacing the mother or father with a new partner, etc.,
- this conflict generally manifests itself in all parents in some way: The fact that what is good for me (as a mother/father) is not good for my child, and is perhaps even damaging for them, is one of the most painful realisations of parents that are separating or have already done so. And it is undoubtedly a heroic achievement if parents manage firstly not to deny this conflict exists, and secondly to change their own attitude,
- it is really helpful for children if both parents – actively – accept the blame and the responsibility for the crisis and the suffering of the child, and pay attention in this sense to what the child needs to process the divorce in a manner that helps their development (this removes the child's own feelings of guilt (see Point I. 2.1).
- children are NOT to blame for the separation.

2. Parental action that relieves strain on children

During the counselling, parents should be informed how strain on the children can be alleviated. In this sense, during the counselling sessions it should be communicated that children benefit if

- they are always given the chance to speak about the divorce, the associated events and the reasons for it in line with their age and state of mind,
- the appreciation and respect for the other parent is maintained, because this otherwise fuels new conflicts of loyalty,
- it is taken into account that contact between the children and the other parent requires a reliable framework, in which there is flexibility for special rules,
- they are not seen and used as “spies and messengers” of the other parent, to avoid adding to their fears and conflicts,
- they feel that they are not alone with their problems,
- their worries and problems are acknowledged and their concerns are taken seriously,
- they are given time and space to “evaluate” their parents’ new partnerships, and distance may also be maintained here,
- they live in a patchwork family and are assured they will not lose their natural parent, and they may love this parent in their own unique and special way,
- they have the right to love both parents, and
- the parents seek professional advice and support and therefore have someone to help them keep an eye on the needs of the children.

3. Content on shaping a familiar daily life

The content guidelines on shaping daily life should give parents information about how to support the life of children in “everyday things” and alleviate the stress on them. The recommended content outlined below contains examples and is also intended as an excerpt of the outcomes of the conference.

Depending on the views of the counsellor, the content can be adapted to the questions of the parents in the respective counselling sessions.

With regard to shaping a familiar daily life, the parents should be informed that their children may feel supported if

- they are in agreement on visits and important celebrations in the children's lives,
- parents sometimes attend school events, sport and leisure activities of their children together if possible,
- there are opportunities to make contact spontaneously "at short notice" (telephone, etc.),
- they engage together on matters important to the child (e.g. pets), and thereby convey to the child that this is important to them,
- (regardless of their age) they have "transitional objects" at both parents, i.e. things that "form a bridge" (between the two homes) because they are emotionally important for the children or symbolise the missing parent (i.e. photos for example), and
- it is accepted that "being at home" with mum *and* dad is important for children, and the living situations of the children are set up accordingly.

III. Qualifications of counsellors

Based on the results of the conference held on 22 March 2013, below it is determined what qualifications are required to conduct parent counselling in accordance with Section 95 (1a) AußStrG:

III.1. Basic training:

- holders of a bachelor's or master's degree in psychology, pedagogical or educational science, or comparable studies;
- social (education) workers (completed training at a social academy or university of applied science);
- psychotherapist;
- marital and family counsellors and equivalent counsellors recognised based on the Act on Family Counselling Promotion.

III.2. Additional qualifications:

- Proven competence acquired in further education or training with regard to counselling parents going through a separation/divorce.

III.3. Professional experience:

- at least three years' experience in parent counselling, and
- at least three years' practical experience in working with children affected by the separation/divorce of their parents.

III.4. Supervision

Documented close supervision.

Training equivalent to that provided by educational institutions for marital and family counsellors, in accordance with Section 2 (1) 3 of the Act on Family Counselling Promotion:

The courses of the following providers are considered equivalent, or equivalence can be obtained by completing additional training modules:

- Styrian Academy for Life and Social Counselling (degree examination from 2005, graduates from earlier years must provide evidence of additional training)
- WIFI Lower Austria (degree examinations from June 2002, graduates from earlier years must provide evidence of additional training, recognition temporarily suspended from 2006)
- ORGANOS Linz (further training course in family counselling also required)
- Danube University, Krems (university course “Psychosocial counselling/Life and social counselling”, degree examination from 2004)
- SYMPAIDEIA (advanced course in family counselling also required)
- “TEAM WINTER COMPETENCE TRAINING”, Vienna (further training course in family counselling also required – this course only offered from 2006)
- ABSOLUT Bildungsmanagement GmbH, 7432 Oberschützen (further training seminar of 60 hours also required)
- Bfi Burgenland, 7400 Oberwart (further training seminar of 60 hours also required) – recognition temporarily suspended for courses from 2008 H2.
- ARGE Erziehungsberatung u. Fortbildung GmbH, 1070 Vienna, additional seminar of 30 seminar units also required
- “Lichtblick” Association, Wiener Neustadt, from 2007-2009 year, “further training course in family counselling for qualified life and social counsellors also required”
- Institute for Christian Life Counselling and Spiritual Welfare, 4052 St. Marien, three-semester course in Couple and Family Counselling also required
- K2-Partner für Beratung und Training Adrian & Schrenk-Mannsberger OEG, 2095 Drosendorf, course valid from November 2008
- Mentor GmbH & Co Management-Entwicklungs-Organisation Graz, additional module of Marital and Family Counselling also required
- ARGE Bildungsmanagement Wien, 1210 Vienna, from year 2009, graduates of earlier years must provide evidence of a further training seminar
- WIFI Wien, 1180 Vienna, additional module in “Marital and Family Counselling” of 80 hours also required
- Vienna International Academy for Holistic Medicine (GAMED) / Academy for Salutogenesis & Mesociation, applicable to courses from 18 September 2008

- ISYS Academy, 9300 St. Veit an der Glan, Hauptplatz 16/2, from year VI (academic year 2013-2015), graduates of earlier years must provide evidence of further training in family topics of at least 46 hours
- ASO-WiLAK GmbH, 1010 Vienna, Rathausstraße 11, now 1070 Vienna, Schottenfeldgasse 71/2, from course LSB 6, for other courses “Couple, Marital and Family Counselling” upgrade of at least 54 teaching units required
- Ausbildung Wien - “dietsi AKADEMIE”, 1080 Vienna, Feldgasse 21, “Life and Social Counselling, Couple and Family Counselling, Animal-Assisted Counselling”
- Beziehung.Leben in cooperation with the Academy for Further Education at the University for Applied Sciences in Upper Austria, 4021 Linz, Kapuzinerstraße 84, six-semester course in “Partner, Marital, Family and Life Counselling”
- Institut für angewandte Pädagogik - I.F.A.P., 8010 Graz, Conrad v. Hötzendorfstraße 17/1, course from 2003 and completion of additional study in “Marital and Family Counselling for Life and Social Counsellors IFAP” over 152 units
- 1 A - Institut für ganzheitliche Systementfaltung Richter & Klug GmbH, 1130 Vienna, Gemeindeberggasse 10-24/9/1, “MFL Upgrade” also required
- ATI-Ansorge Training International, 1090 Vienna, Grünentorgasse 8/3-5, as part of the LSC training the 3 elective modules and 5 additional modules focusing on marital and family counselling must be proven.

Please note: Further training seminars are always tailored to the basic training of the given course organiser, and therefore only apply for those who have completed the basic training of the organiser. However, in individual cases it is up to the management of a certified training institution to assess whether the training of a life and social counsellor in/from another institution can be deemed equivalent in terms of content, methodology and scope to the training at their own institution, and whether further training at their own institution is therefore required.

Furthermore, for recognition as an equivalent counsellor under the Act on Family Counselling Promotion it is necessary **during the theoretical training listed** that a placement of at least 130 counselling hours be completed under supervision (of at least 30 hours) **in a supported family counselling centre**. If the placement is not visible on the certificate, separate proof of these hours must be provided by the placement provider.

The following applies for training commenced from October 2016:

Training equivalent to that provided by educational institutions for marital and family counsellors in accordance with Section 2 (1) 3 of the Act on Family Counselling Promotion pursuant to the published quality criteria from October 2016.

Currently, the courses of the following providers are considered equivalent, or equivalence can be obtained by completing additional training modules:

- ASO-WiLAK GmbH, 1070 Vienna, Schottenfeldgasse 71/2, from course LSB 11
- ISYS - Akademie & Beratung GmbH, 9300 St. Veit an der Glan, Hauptplatz 16/2, from December 2016 course

- ARGE Erziehungsberatung und Fortbildung GmbH, 1070 Vienna, Neubaugasse 1/7, from August 2017, with dissertation requirement
- ARGE Bildungsmanagement, Friedstraße 23, 1210 Vienna, from LSC course No. 009.0/2003 in conjunction with the one-semester EFL further training course
- Course for educational and youth counselling at the Marital and Family Counselling Institute, 6020 Innsbruck, Anichstraße 24
- SYMPAIDEIA - Institute for Inclusive Education, Wiener Straße 134, 2103 Langenzersdorf, from the curriculum as of 2 February 2018 with a dissertation requirement

Please note: Further training seminars are always tailored to the basic training of the given course organiser, and therefore only apply for those who have completed the basic training of the organiser.

Furthermore, for recognition as an equivalent counsellor under the Act on Family Counselling Promotion it is necessary during the theoretical training listed that a placement of at least 130 counselling hours be completed under supervision (of at least 30 hours) in a supported family counselling centre. If the placement is not visible on the certificate, separate proof of these hours must be provided by the placement provider.

Recognition of MFL further training courses commencing after 1 October 2016:

Recognition under the new quality criteria may be given as a gesture of goodwill if:

- The basic LSC training took place at a recognised institution following a recognised curriculum.
- The training institution no longer offers the required further training in MFL, and a different training institution already recognised offers all the additional modules required for this basic training.
- Basic training and further training including a placement can be deemed related training, in terms of timing too. This means that the further training takes place directly after the basic training, and/or if the placement has been completed in the meantime it represents the next available opportunity to complete further training. There may be no more than two years between the end of the basic training and the MFL further training for them still to be considered a unit.
- The further training must cover all the content and hours provided for in accordance with the acknowledgement of LSC training for recognition as a counsellor in accordance with Section 2 (I) 3.

For LSC training previously not recognised, it is no longer possible to obtain recognition after MFL further training.