

Pathway to Accreditation

When accredited programmes were introduced into work with offenders, some programmes had a clear and practical facilitator accreditation process, whereas others had proposed routes to facilitator accreditation that lacked clarity, or were hard to implement. Partly in consequence, there has been a somewhat piecemeal approach to facilitator accreditation to date.

For Domestic Violence and Sex Offender Programmes, the existing routes to accreditation continue to apply. However, for medium to medium-high risk programmes, the route to accreditation has now been streamlined (see final paragraph for the list of programmes this applies to).

Progress towards accreditation starts when the facilitator is first trained in a programme and becomes, therefore, part of their Continuous Professional Development. The 'advanced training' that is the final step of accreditation is thus a bringing together of knowledge and experience that has been developed throughout the learning process, rather than a discrete and separate undertaking. This approach recognises that Core Skills training and Facilitator Development Workshops now provide much of the learning that might otherwise have been incorporated into accreditation training.

In these circumstances, it has become feasible to introduce accreditation training that, whilst succinct and operationally viable, retains all the symbolic and actual benefits associated with a member of staff reaching a formally recognised professional milestone.

In his keynote speech at the 2009 Treatment Manager conference, leading criminologist Shadd Maruna talked about the power of rituals as signifying a rite of passage. Whilst Maruna talked about the importance of rituals in offender reintegration (for example marking completion of a programme), so too we can readily grasp the collective and individual importance to staff of a rite of passage, in the form of accreditation.

Once the facilitator has met the criteria to be eligible for accreditation (see below) they will participate in a half-day foundation event addressing the common ground between programmes; they will take part in this on a 'one off' basis. They will then progress on to a half-day 'bolt-on' input that is programme specific, thus marking the important distinctions between each programme and between each associated offender typology. With minimal demand on staff time, a facilitator has therefore the potential to become accredited in each programme in which they are trained.

Treatment Managers have an important part to play in ensuring that a facilitator becomes eligible for accreditation. This would include helping facilitators to achieve their potential by way of supervision and facilitator development workshops, and notifying the relevant body that the facilitator is at a stage where they can become accredited in a particular programme. It is anticipated that Treatment Managers will be enthusiastic about an approach that means facilitators' very considerable abilities, efforts and commitment, often in challenging circumstances, can now be endorsed by way of accreditation.

Why Accredit Facilitators?

A facilitator who has met all the pre-accreditation criteria will have a specific body of skills and knowledge for which their employer will want to give them credit. A benefit to the individual facilitator is that their status as a relatively experienced and competent member of staff is formally recognised. In these circumstances, they will be able to support the learning of other less experienced members of staff, either within the co-facilitation relationship, or in other contexts such as working with Treatment Managers such as yourselves to deliver the facilitator development workshops.

In the longer term an accredited facilitator may, as part of their Continuous Professional Development, be well placed to apply to become a Treatment Manager and/or regional trainer in the specific programme in which they are accredited. They may be considered suitable to train for higher risk programmes, thus becoming a more knowledgeable and versatile staff member.

Benefits to Areas and Trusts are tangible and manifold. An Area pursuing Trust status will be able swiftly to highlight its competence in programme delivery, by ensuring its experienced facilitators are accredited. So too, any Area or Trust negotiating a contract with a partnership agency can demonstrate its excellence in programme delivery, in that facilitators' competence will have been endorsed by way of accreditation.

Additional benefits include a heightened impetus amongst the staff group to deliver programmes well, as individual staff members work to achieve accreditation in a particular programme. This will impact favourably on quality and effectiveness of programme delivery, and potentially completions, and on motivation and morale within programmes units.

From an operational perspective a series of regional conferences held in 2006, addressing the growing problem of facilitator attrition within the community, concluded that introducing an accreditation route into the learning process would significantly improve retention of programmes staff. The absence of an accreditation process was consistently identified by facilitators attending the events as a disincentive to their remaining in post.

How will we Implement Accreditation?

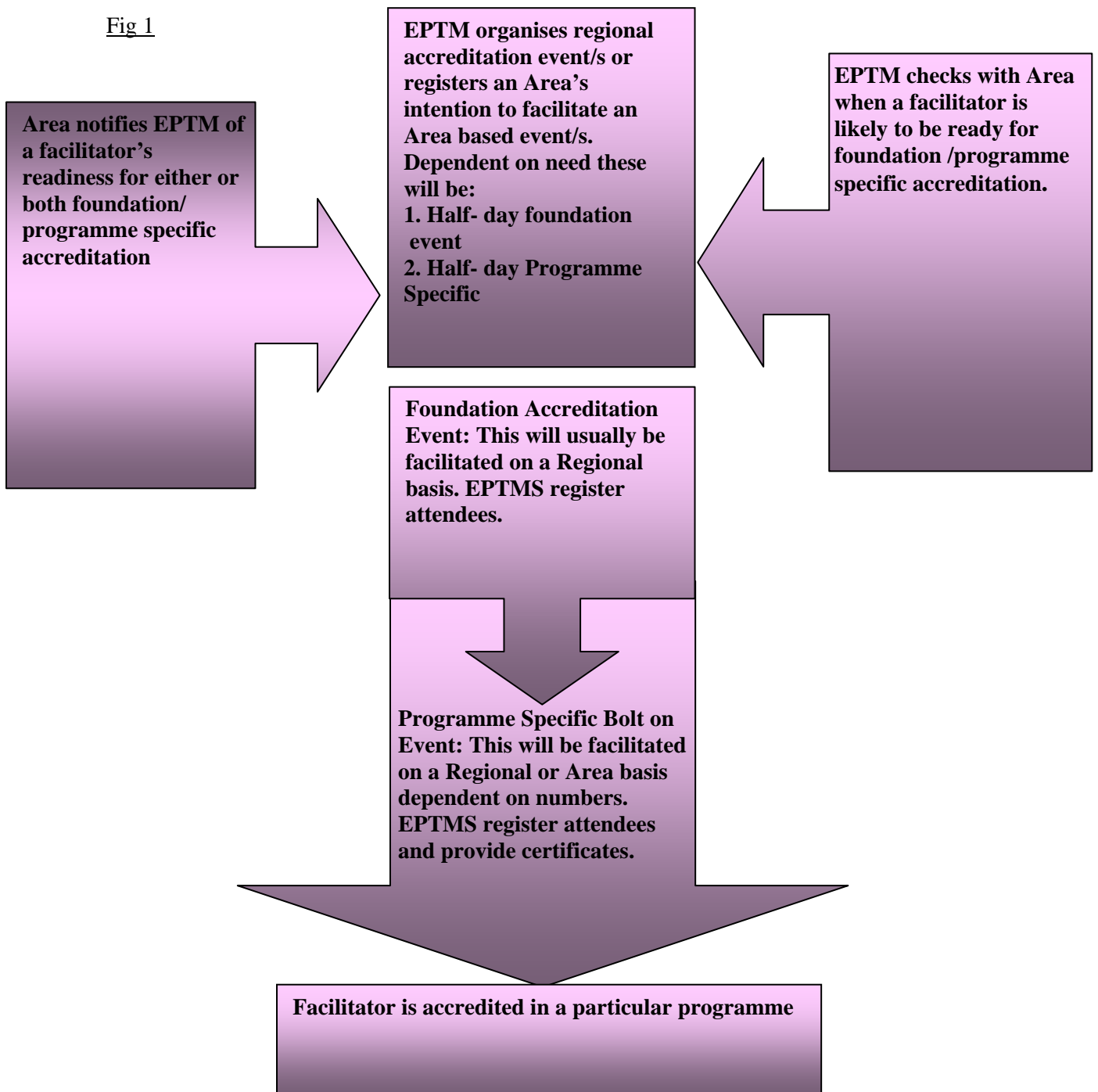
In the community, the Effective Practice Training Manager (EPTM) at each Regional Consortium has a key role to play in tracking the progress of a facilitator from the start of the Learning Process to the point of accreditation. The EPTM will trigger the accreditation process by finding out from Area whether a facilitator has reached, or is approaching, a stage in their professional development at which they can be put forward for accreditation. So too the relevant Treatment, Programme, or Training Manager in Area can contact the Consortia to notify a facilitator's readiness for accreditation. The EPTM will maintain a register of accredited facilitators and will be responsible for providing accreditation certificates for each event. The register maintained by the EPTM will outline which members of staff are accredited in what programme/s and this information will contribute to a national database of accredited facilitators.

The half-day foundation and programme specific events can be delivered in Area by a suitably experienced Programme or Treatment Manager, or - where there are larger numbers - on a Regional basis. An EPTM, Regional Trainer or Programme/Treatment Manager will deliver regional events. The half-day foundation accreditation event will attract greater

numbers; therefore the likely scenario is that this type of event will be run on a regular 'rolling' basis by the Consortia and the half-day programme specific accreditation on a 'needs led' basis. Areas should always notify EPTMS of an intention to run an Area event, as EPTMs will be aware of regional needs and may advise Areas that there are sufficient numbers to run a regional event instead.

In exceptional circumstances, a programme specific accreditation event can be delivered on an individual basis as part of extended supervision. However, the Treatment Manager facilitating the event will need to demonstrate that those learning outcomes usually met via peer discussion have been achieved in some other way, such as the facilitator initiating relevant discussion with colleagues prior to the event, relating to key learning points.

Fig 1



As is commonly known, in order to deliver a particular programme a facilitator will complete and pass an assessment centre, followed by the Core Skills Module and the relevant Programme Specific Module. The criteria outlined below will then have to be met before the facilitator is accredited in that particular programme.

- 1. The facilitator will deliver two entire programmes, or the equivalent of two programmes, to a good standard (see criteria 2). In effect, they will need to have experienced delivering each session in the programme at least twice.**
- 2. In the delivery of two programmes (or equivalent) the facilitator will have achieved a consistently good assessment of their abilities via the video monitoring process. Specifically, they will have achieved an average of 3.5 on the existing scale or in the event of a transition to NR, D, S, (Not Ready, Developing, Strength) will have achieved 60% S with the majority of the remaining items marked as D. In the run up to accreditation, the facilitator would be consistently achieving 3.5 or over, or a majority of S, with minimal items marked as D and no items still marked as NR.**
- 3. Reflected on and evaluated how they delivered the programme, and shown an appreciation of how this process contributes to their Continuous Professional Development. This will be evidenced in their completion of a streamlined accreditation portfolio.**
- 4. Responded positively to opportunities to improve their practice e.g. through attending and contributing to Facilitator Development Workshops and taking advantage of any opportunities for related training that may be available to them. Again, this will be noted in their accreditation portfolio.**
- 5. The facilitator participates in the half-day foundation accreditation event**

This is the penultimate stage in the accreditation process and entails the facilitator attending the event on a 'one-off' basis. The event provides an opportunity for facilitators to refresh their understanding of critical elements common to all programmes, discuss with other facilitators how they contribute to risk assessment, and signpost forward to collating evidence that may help them gain an external qualification.

- 6. The facilitator participates in the half-day programme specific event**

This is an opportunity for the facilitator to benefit from learning with and from other facilitators who have reached a similar standard in the programme, swapping ideas on best practice. In addition, facilitators will gain some more specialist insight into the typology of the offenders that the programme targets. The half-day's training ends with the facilitators' achievements being marked by way of a certificate, ideally presented by a senior member of the organisation.

In the event of their becoming eligible for accreditation in another programme they will attend a further half-day event, specific to that programme.

Neither component to accreditation (foundation and programme specific) is assessed as the assessment process is embedded into the facilitator's continuous professional development in the run up to accreditation. Events can take place on either a Regional or Area basis, however, the Consortia have a key part to play in ensuring regional registers of accredited facilitators are maintained and that certificates are produced. Events can be delivered by an EPTM, Treatment or Programme Manager or by a regional trainer.

This accreditation process applies to the current general offending programmes (Think First, Enhanced Thinking Skills and One to One), plus specialist programmes Aggression Replacement Therapy, Controlling Anger and Learning to Manage, Drink Impaired Drivers' Programme, Offender Substance Abuse Programme, Women's Acquisitive Programme, Addressing Substance Related Offending; programmes that fall within the medium/medium-high risk bracket. It does not apply to the suite of sex offender programmes (see PC/85/2005) and domestic violence programmes, which have their own accreditation process.

