



PEER MEDIATION TRAINING FOR SCHOOLS: BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES

This document is primarily aimed at organisations who provide training to schools for peer mediators. It will also be useful for school staff so that they can be aware of what they should expect from service providers.

These Best Practice Guidelines were originally put together from the 22 questionnaires which the Education and Youth Subcommittee of Mediation UK received, in 2007.

In 2018, the Peer Mediation Network sought Training Approval from the College of Mediators. These guidelines were then reviewed and updated.

Service Providers who have been awarded the College of Mediator's Training Approval are expected to achieve all Good Practice criteria and more than half of the Best Practice criteria.

We realise all services have finite resources available to them, and some will not be able to achieve all that is recommended here. This document is to provide something to aim for.

Many thanks to everyone who contributed.

CONTENTS

Contact beforehand.....	3
Good Practice	3
Best Practice	3
Training for staff and other adults.....	5
Good Practice	5
Best Practice	5
Awareness raising before the mediation training	6
Good Practice	6
Foundation Skills Work.....	7
Good Practice	7
Best Practice	7
Selection of pupils	8

PEER MEDIATION TRAINING FOR SCHOOLS: BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES

Good Practice 8

Key Components of training 9

Qualifications & Experience of the Trainers 9

 Good Practice 9

 Best Practice 9

Hours of mediation training 9

 Good Practice 9

 Best Practice 9

Numbers of pupils trained 9

 Good Practice 9

 Best Practice 10

Additional support and training..... 11

 Good Practice 11

 Best Practice 11

How the mediation scheme functions..... 12

 Best Practice 12

Evaluation 13

 Good Practice 13

 Best Practice 13

Tips & Ideas from mediation services and training organisations..... 14

Research 16

Useful Resources 16

WHAT IS PEER MEDIATION?

Mediation helps people to resolve conflicts by finding their own solutions, using impartial third party mediators.

Peer mediation involves children and young people who are trained to mediate conflicts between fellow students.

Peer mediators in schools typically operate in pairs, providing a confidential, optional service to other young people.

CONTACT BEFOREHAND

GOOD PRACTICE

- Consider if the school is really ready for mediation.

You will need to assess:

- Commitment from the Head
- Present levels of conflict (pupil-pupil, pupil-staff, staff-staff)
- Long term commitment and sustainability – is there an enthusiastic staff member who can act as the school’s Mediation Coordinator, with support from the Senior Management Team and with time available?
- Foundation skills of pupils.
- What other peer support and participation schemes already exist in the school and how well they function.
- Willingness for the school to take on a whole school approach to conflict, which may involve some cultural change on their part.

This can be done by sending questionnaires to the head and staff (and secondary students), and a follow-up school visit, or in discussion with the Head Teacher and/or Senior Leadership Team

Often a school may not be ready for a peer mediation scheme immediately. These schools can be offered conflict resolution or peace-building skills-based training for pupils and/or staff first.

- A ‘Service Level Agreement’ clarifying what the service and the school will provide. Eg the school should commit to providing a training room, staff present in pupil training, private designated space for the mediations, ongoing staff support for the mediators etc and the service commits to post-training support.

BEST PRACTICE

- In depth Conflict Audit which will inform an evaluation of how the scheme has affected levels of conflict in the school. (i.e. a systematic assessment of the above)

- Support pack and information for schools to look at before work begins, looking at how mediation fits into an overall ethos of participation, and how far the school supports the underpinning values of mediation:

Voluntary Participation – This includes mediators and the school Mediation Coordinator. Are schools willing for mediators to drop out if they no longer wish to be part of the team? How are the benefits and challenges of being a mediator and coordinator explained to pupils and staff so they can make an informed decision?

Neutrality – Mediators are discouraged from mediating their friends, siblings or other family members, and to maintain a neutral position.

Impartiality - To what extent will the school support the Mediation Coordinator to also maintain a position of impartiality, particularly on occasions when disputants cannot reach an agreement?

Neutrality and Impartiality are linked to fairness, which is integral to mediation. What classroom-based work has already taken place to explore fairness? How can the relationship between fairness and mediation be explored with staff?

Independence –Mediation supports young people to resolve their own conflicts, independently of adults. To what extent will the school put its trust in this process?

Safe Participation in the Process – The methodologies used by service providers allow confidence and trust to be developed between the trainee mediators, the trainers and the mediation coordinator. Safe participation means that ideas can be heard, everyone is included, and decisions made by the team, in this context, will be upheld by the school. To what extent will the school support these decisions?

Equality of Opportunity – The selection process will need to take into account the needs of all pupils. Is the process accessible to all [for example those who have difficulty completing forms]? Are those making decisions about the process aware of the effect of unconscious bias? How can this be minimised? To what extent will this be explored with children/young people?

TRAINING FOR STAFF AND OTHER ADULTS

GOOD PRACTICE

- Training for core staff or representatives from each relevant group within the school community, ie Head or Deputy, Mediation Coordinator, lunchtime supervisor, learning support assistant/teaching assistant. This can include the involvement of staff in the mediation training itself, as well as a meeting with staff.
- Focus on the 'Whole School Approach' to conflict. It is critical for the school to include lunchtime supervisors in all stages of the programme.

BEST PRACTICE

- Encourage a 'Whole Community Approach', involving a wider range of groups such as governors, parents and others from the community such as police officers, eg by providing workshops, or invitation to attend staff training in school
- Peer mediation is most effective when part of a whole school ethos of restoring harm. Providers offering restorative approaches training to schools or school-wide peacemaking approaches will offer mediation in this context, for maximum impact.

AWARENESS RAISING BEFORE THE MEDIATION TRAINING

GOOD PRACTICE

- Aim for all pupils, staff and parents to be aware of the following:
 - What the mediation scheme aims to achieve.
 - What will be happening in terms of the training and who will be involved.

Be aware that parents may have concerns unless the scheme is explained carefully. It will help if the school can explain how peer mediation will be a development of its existing bullying, behaviour management and inclusion policies. Communication with parents could also emphasise the boundaries within which mediation takes place, for example – confidentiality, voluntary nature, neutrality, the kinds of conflicts mediators can and cannot mediate. Staff and pupils to have some understanding of the mediation process.

- At least one hour's work should be done with the year groups that will contribute mediators to raise awareness about what mediation is, and to discuss what makes a good mediator. There should be an opportunity for questions, discussion and to check for understanding of what mediators do.
- Other ways the service can support this work – provide lesson plans for awareness raising, provide a sample letter to parents, present an assembly.

BEST PRACTICE

At least one hour's work should be done with each form in the school to raise awareness about what mediation is.

- Work in each form should be carried out by staff who have attended training by the service. This could be the mediation coordinator delivering training to each form with the form teacher present, each form teacher or the mediation service itself.

FOUNDATION SKILLS WORK

GOOD PRACTICE

- Contact with the school about the key skills of pupils should show what training needs to happen before pupils are ready for mediation training. This can be planned with the Mediation Coordinator using a programme provided by the service, or resources such as 'Let's Mediate' (primary) or 'Mediation Works!' (secondary). A list of other useful resources can be found on the PMN website.

BEST PRACTICE

- The longer spent working with potential users of the mediation scheme, the more effective it will be. One service provides six circle time sessions (on emotions, communication skills, and mediation awareness) to all years. Another provides twenty hours 'peacemaking skills' training to the relevant year group. (This includes communication, affirmation, anger management, co-operation, problem solving and critical thinking.)

SELECTION OF PUPILS

This should involve collaboration between the pupils, staff and service provider. The selection process needs to be open, clear to everyone and seen to be fair.

GOOD PRACTICE

- The service should have a clear discussion with the school about how this should be done.
- Following the lesson on 'What makes a good mediator', pupils can select themselves or nominate others. Voting should take place by secret ballot.
- Some places can be left for staff to choose. This can ensure that there is a cross section of the school community based on socio-economic background, ethnicity, gender, academic ability, neighbourhoods and friendship groups.
- If application forms are used, care should be taken that this does not exclude those with difficulties reading and writing.
- Care should be taken if the process involves the rejection of any pupils.
- Potential mediators and staff should understand that being a mediator is voluntary and pupils can drop out at any point if it is not for them.

KEY COMPONENTS OF TRAINING

- Ground rules: for the training, for mediation
- Conflict: understanding conflict, responding to conflict (eg dealing with anger), power relationships, identifying feelings and needs (own and other people's)
- Mediation principles & philosophy: Impartiality, confidentiality, voluntary participation, disputants rather than mediators solve the problem
- Skills and qualities of a mediator:
 - Communication Skills: Active listening, 'I' Statements, asking open questions, body language
 - Cooperation: Team work, working with your co-mediator
 - Patience, open-mindedness,
- Mediation process, practice role plays, dealing with difficult behaviour, trouble-shooting guidance ('What to do if...?'), identifying feelings and needs
- How the service will function: Child protection/ boundaries of the service (when to hand cases on to staff), meetings and supervision with the mediation coordinator, what to do when problems occur.

MEDIATOR'S SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE FOR ASSESSMENT

Mediators are assessed using the skills and knowledge framework found in the Appendix. The trainer() takes responsibility for stating whether peer mediators have completed training. To do so, they can use observation, trainee's self-assessment and peer and staff feedback.

QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE OF THE TRAINERS

GOOD PRACTICE

Experience with training children and with mediation.

BEST PRACTICE

Have a mediation training qualification.

HOURS OF MEDIATION TRAINING

This will depend on the foundation skills of the pupils and how much training they have already received.

GOOD PRACTICE

- Two or three days equivalent (10-15 hours) as minimum.

BEST PRACTICE

- Five days (30 hours)

NUMBERS OF PUPILS TRAINED

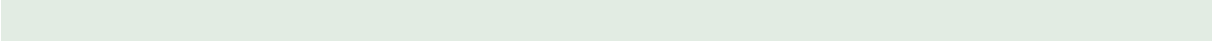
GOOD PRACTICE

PEER MEDIATION TRAINING FOR SCHOOLS: BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES

This should depend on the size of the school and other factors (eg level of conflict, other peer support programmes, make-up of the school community).

- One trainer to 16 pupils as a maximum ratio.
- One trainer and one school staff member to 24 primary pupils as a minimum ratio.
- Two trainers to 24 secondary pupils as a maximum ratio?

BEST PRACTICE

- Ultimately, the more students are trained in mediation and conflict skills the better. This inclusivity will help with a whole school culture and sustainability.
 - Involve experienced older peer mediators in training new cohorts.
- 

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT AND TRAINING

It should be the responsibility of the service provider to agree beforehand with the school what the outcomes of the training will be (perhaps as part of a 'service level agreement'), to ensure that they have left the school in a position to begin an effective mediation scheme. This should be possible with a conflict audit having established the baseline, and the service level agreement ensuring the school provides the support needed for this to happen.

POST-TRAINING SUPPORT:

GOOD PRACTICE

- Follow up phone calls and emails.

BEST PRACTICE

- Evaluation day with staff and pupils, 2 terms after initial training.
-

HOW THE MEDIATION SCHEME FUNCTIONS

HOW

Mediators work in pairs.

Confidential: The content of the mediation can be discussed in the debrief with the other mediator, or, if needed, with the mediation coordinator, but is otherwise confidential. The exception is if mediators feel the case is 'too hot to handle'. It should be explained to the parties in the introduction that under some circumstances, including if they are told about something that 'will harm you or others' they will inform the mediation coordinator.

Voluntary: Cases can be referred by staff, but mediation is voluntary, so both parties must choose to be there.

WHEN

Most schools have mediation occurring at lunchtime; three services saw mediations during break times; one service mentioned mediations during lessons; two secondary programmes supported mediations after school.

WHERE

Mediations should take place in a quiet, designated space. This may be outside in the case of a primary school but the disadvantages are: other pupils can see who is visiting the mediators, other pupils may disturb the mediation and it is cold in winter.

PARTY MEETINGS

BEST PRACTICE

Secondary mediators are trained to meet each party separately first in more complicated cases.

SUPPORT FROM STAFF

Adults are usually not present during mediations but are within call.

The scheme coordinator should support and ensure that debriefs happen between mediators where they discuss how the session went, what was done well and what could have been done better.

The scheme coordinator should be on hand to support mediators for difficult cases.

There should be regular meetings of the whole group of mediators at least monthly.

EVALUATION

GOOD PRACTICE

Evaluate what the training has achieved by

- Obtaining feedback about the training
- Assessing the participants' understanding

This should inform the planning of ongoing support for the school.

BEST PRACTICE

Evaluate the impact of the mediation scheme on conflict in the school by comparing with the baseline determined from the Conflict Audit.

TIPS & IDEAS FROM MEDIATION SERVICES AND TRAINING ORGANISATIONS

Whole School Approach

- Must be on a whole school basis. Strong backing from senior management. A lot of groundwork with everyone concerned with the school.
- Start with a conflict resolution skills course delivered by teachers after a workshop input. Don't try to work in schools that are not willing to take on board the changes in ethos, power, relationships etc that are necessary – waste of time and money!
- Check out the OFSTED report of the school to see how much of an ethos of pupil participation it already has (although do not give it much weight if the report is over two years old).

Staff Support

- Key person from school needed to coordinate sessions. This person should be given time and money to do the job properly.
- A minimum of two staff to support and carry the project through and forward
- Need a 'mediator support group'.
- Ensure there is enough commitment from the head and staff. Ensure there will be enough staff to offer support to peer mediators when the training is complete.
- Ensure someone high up is involved with the process. Make sure all staff have an awareness of how it works.
- Needs at least one enthusiastic teacher.
- Get lunchtime support staff on board.

Service Support

- Assign a support worker from the mediation service to ensure the project continues in the school.
- Keep regular contact with the school.
- Factor in the follow up to a training programme.

Pupil ownership & input

- Let pupils 'own' the project – eg pick the name, organise the publicity etc
- Get ideas from the students about improving it
- We now set secondary schools up with Team Leaders who are students and are responsible for the logistics of their Peer Mediation teams.

Curriculum links

- Staff need to feel the benefits. Fit into the curriculum eg PHSE. Conflict resolution skills need to be adopted by the whole school for a climate where mediation can be encouraged. Can provide a PHSE package to schools before specific mediation training.

Resources

- We leave a folder of activities with the school & they can add to this themselves.
- LAMP have an 'introduction to mediation in schools' sheet available to projects thinking of setting up.

Networking

- Always contact other projects that provide peer mediation training. Contact LEAP [020 7272 5630].

Funding

- Find out what core funders want you to prove.

- Do your sums thoroughly before applying for funding.
- Don't do it just to attract additional funding (usually short-term) to keep a Community Mediation Service going or to expand it. It is more skilled than this and community mediators *may* not have child-centred skills.

Other

- Get the schools to take ownership of their schemes.
- Work within a pyramid ie Secondary and Primary feeders.
- Don't expect too much. Some schools we have worked with are using Peer Mediation in ways that we find difficult to understand. The skill level of the mediators can be very low but it still achieves amazing results.

RESEARCH

Baginsky, William. Peer mediation in the UK: a guide for schools, NSPCC, 2004. Available to download from www.nspcc.org.uk/inform/EducationProgramme/PeerSupport.asp

Sellman, Edward Mark. The Processes and Outcomes of Implementing Peer Mediation Services in Schools: A Cultural-Historical Activity Theory Approach. Birmingham University PhD.

Sellman, Edward Mark. Peer Mediation, School Culture & Sustainability. Birmingham University research paper. e.m.sellman@sheffield.ac.uk

USEFUL RESOURCES

Peer Mediation Training Manual, CRESST

Learning for Peace: A guide to developing outstanding SMSC in your primary school, Peacemakers, 2016. <https://peacemakers.org.uk/resources/learning-for-peace-book>

Statement of Restorative Justice Principles: As applied in a school setting, Restorative Justice Consortium, 2003. Available to download from www.restorativejustice.org.uk/resources/standards.htm

Let's Mediate: A Teachers Guide to Peer Support and Conflict Resolution Skills for all Ages by Hilary Stacey and Pat Robinson. Lucky Duck Publishers. Available with handbook and video.

Mediation Works! Conflict Resolution and Peer Mediation Manual for Secondary Schools. Mediation UK.

Find the latest material at www.peermediationnetwork.org.uk

APPENDIX

Mediator's skills and knowledge for assessment [adapted from COM standards and assessment pack]

Preparing for a mediation

ACTIVITIES	SKILLS & QUALITIES	KNOWLEDGE & UNDERSTANDING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Let's the Mediation Coordinator [MC] know if they are unavailable. Let's the MC know if their partner is not available. Checks they are not mediating a good friend or family member. Makes sure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reliable Honest Open Good team worker Keeps people informed Clear communicator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knows who they can and can't mediate Knows what situations they can and can't mediate Is aware of issues of safety and what to do if they feel unsafe.

Welcome Stage

ACTIVITIES	SKILLS & QUALITIES	KNOWLEDGE & UNDERSTANDING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes sure the space is clean and comfortable with chairs set out properly. Discusses with co-mediator how they will work together. Directs disputants where to sit. Starts to build trust with the disputants Makes sure disputants can access the service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friendly Encouraging Confident Active listening Not easily distracted Supports disputants not to be distracted by outside factors Allows space for questions and concerns to be raised Communicates clearly Can check understanding of the ground rules and what will happen in mediation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knows what active listening is What sorts of distractions might there be? Knows what to do if disputants are having difficulty accessing mediation eg language issues, physical barriers – wheelchairs, etc. Knows how mediation works!

Conducting the Mediation

ACTIVITIES	SKILLS & QUALITIES	KNOWLEDGE & UNDERSTANDING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps disputants explain what has happened using the script Helps disputants express their feelings using the script 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well prepared Friendly Respectful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What can help reduce tension Impact of their body language and tone of voice on the mediation process Knows the script

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports disputants to hear and acknowledge the other party’s feelings • Helps overcome any uncertainties or misunderstandings the disputants may have • Supports disputants to think of ways they can solve their problem • Remains neutral and impartial 	<p>Gives the disputants the time they need</p> <p>Checks understanding</p> <p>Using open questions</p> <p>Can repeat back a story without using blaming language</p> <p>Can check body language and tone of voice</p> <p>Can resist advising or leading the discussion</p> <p>Can set and maintain boundaries for behaviour</p> <p>Can be assertive to stabilise a situation</p> <p>Can give the same attention to both disputants</p> <p>Is aware of own attitudes towards disputants and can monitor and modify behaviour in respect of this</p>	<p>Knows how to help disputants generate different ideas</p> <p>Understands the causes and sources of conflict</p> <p>Knows when the situation is unsafe and they need some help</p> <p>Aware of own prejudices, discriminating behaviours, assumptions, feelings towards others.</p> <p>Understands how own perceptions can affect their responses [at secondary]</p> <p>Knows the signs and effects of power imbalances [at secondary? Staff level?]</p>
---	--	--

End Stage

ACTIVITIES	SKILLS & QUALITIES	KNOWLEDGE & UNDERSTANDING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brings the session to a timely close • Makes sure disputants know what the agreed decisions were, and what further actions will take place. • Makes sure disputants leave with a sense of what has been achieved [whatever that may be] 	<p>Able to sum up and recognise what has been achieved</p> <p>Can check for understanding and clarity</p> <p>Shows caring towards the disputants and the process – wants to provide a quality service.</p>	<p>Knows the right time to end the mediation</p> <p>Understands the range of positive outcomes that may arise from being part of a mediation</p>

Following the Mediation

ACTIVITIES	SKILLS & QUALITIES	KNOWLEDGE & UNDERSTANDING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • De-briefs with co-mediator and gives/received honest feedback • De-briefs with Mediation Coordinator • Shares with MC areas of difficulty and seeks support • Completes log book 	<p>Able to learn from experience</p> <p>Able to give and receive feedback</p> <p>Able to recognise when skills or knowledge need developing</p> <p>Able to ask MC for support</p> <p>Able to reflect on a mediation and say what went well and what could be better</p>	<p>How to give and receive feedback</p> <p>Understands the importance of review meetings and refresher training</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Takes part in sessions to refresh skills		
--	--	--