

YOUNG TALK TELEGRAPH

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We want to hear from YOU!

Young Talk is a network for peer mediators in Scotland, and we need the input from young peer mediators to work! So we are very interested in hearing from YOU. Don't be shy to write to us, through email, or facebook, with any thoughts, ideas, concerns, or just to say hi! We would love to hear from you. The same goes for adults working with peer mediation. You can find our contact details at the end of the newsletter.



A picture of some amazing young peer mediators in Dundee at Young Talk's official launch earlier in the summer. More about the launch of page 2

Welcome to the first issue of the Y.T. Telegraph!

We are delighted to announce our first issue of the Young Talk Telegraph—a newsletter for peer mediators and those working with them in Scotland! We will be sending out quarterly issues with articles relating to peer mediation in general, as well as to Young Talk, the peer mediation network. We are Scotland's own national peer mediation network, and there is more information in the newsletter about us and what we do! But for now, we just hope you'll enjoy reading this issue and finding out more about what's been happening around peer mediation in Scotland lately.



Peer Mediators in Scotland
Getting Together

What is Young Talk?

Young Talk is a national peer mediation network developed as a pilot project by the Scottish Mediation Network to support and empower young people in Scotland to deal positively with conflict through the use of peer mediation. The project is funded by Young Start through the Big Lottery Fund for the two first years of establishment (2015-17), dur-

“We are working to provide schools with support in creating, running and maintaining sustainable peer mediation programmes”

What have we done so far?

The first phase of the Young Talk project has focused on developing the appropriate membership material for the network, as well as general peer mediation resources. We have also been out to a number of schools getting feedback from current peer mediators about their experiences of mediation and conflict resolution within their schools. The schools we had the pleasure of visiting for these purposes are: St Hillary's Primary (South Lanarkshire), St Leonard's Primary (South Lanarkshire), Auchinraith Primary (South Lanarkshire), Rosshall Academy (Glasgow) and Baldragon Academy (Dundee).

Over the spring and summer term 2015 we have also been delivering initial and follow-up peer mediation training to a number of schools around Scotland. We've been to: Carbrain Primary (North Lanarkshire), Crosshouse Primary (South Lanarkshire), James Young High School (West Lothian), Dedridge

ing which the long-term sustainability of Young Talk as a peer mediation network will be worked toward.

We are working to provide schools and organisations with support in creating, running and maintaining sustainable peer mediation programmes, and through this promote best practice for peer mediation. Specifically, we are also working to provide development opportunities in conflict resolution skills for young people practising mediation and create opportunities for young people and others involved in peer mediation to

meet, connect and share ideas.

Why a peer mediation network?

Over the last few years a number of schools and organisations across Scotland have introduced peer mediation services to their schools. However, there has been no external organisation for supporting peer mediation out in schools. Similarly there has been no organisation for sharing good practice between schools and organisations, or to enable young people to continue their learning and development in mediation. So Young Talk sets out to do this.



Newly trained peer mediators from Mid Calder and St Ninian's Primary with their certificates, June 2015

Primary (West Lothian), Williamston Primary (West Lothian), Bankton Primary School (West Lothian), Bellsquarry Primary School (West Lothian), Mid Calder Primary (West Lothian), St Ninian's Primary (West Lothian), and Baldragon Academy (Dundee). That means we have around 150 newly trained peer mediators in Scotland! June 2015 also saw the official launch for Young Talk out at Baldragon Academy in Dundee. It was a small-scale event with a big heart, and we had delegates joining us from Education Scotland, the NHS, Dundee City Council, The University of Dundee, local mediation services as well as local schools and of course Baldragon Academy itself. Talks were delivered by the Scottish Mediation Network staff and board, as well as by Baldragon

"We have around 150 newly trained peer mediators in Scotland!"

Academy pupils and teachers. Baldragon Academy has been a great example of the success and positive outcomes of peer mediation in Scotland and the difference it can make for young people. Furthermore, the Young Talk/Peer Mediation section of our website has recently been launched, containing a variety of information about peer mediation and the network. This is intended to be a resource for young people, schools, parents, professionals and other involved/interested in peer mediation. We also have a Facebook page that young peer mediators (as well as adults/teachers) can join in order to stay updated on what Young Talk has on, and to be able to get in touch with us, as well as each other, easily. So do check out both the webpage, and like the Facebook page, to stay connected with Young Talk.

Website link: www.scottishmediation.org.uk Go to the Peer Mediation/Young Talk Section
Facebook Page: Young Talk Just search for Young Talk on Facebook.

What's coming up next?

Train the Trainer – We are planning on doing a few cluster training sessions for adults working with peer mediation in schools/organisations to pass on the skills and tools needed to deliver the initial peer mediation training to pupils in-house. This training is important in thinking about sustainability of peer mediation services within schools and organisations. At the moment it looks like we will be having sessions in South Lanarkshire, Livingston, and Dundee during the autumn/winter. **Get in touch for more information.**

Mediate 15 – on the 3rd and 4th of December 2015, The Scottish Mediation Network (which Young Talk is a part of) will have our annual conference, titled 'Mediate 15'. This year we are hoping to have a strong focus on peer mediation, and we will invite all of the Young Talk members to come take part in the conference for free. There

will be a variety of talks and workshops, focusing on different areas within mediation, and there will be a couple of specific peer mediation workshops for our young mediators! Get in touch for more information.



Peer mediators from Baldragon Academy attending the Mediate 14 conference last year

What are some of the researched outcomes of peer mediation?

Most of the research around peer mediation has been done within schools, primary and secondary. The research has highlighted both the benefits for school communities as a whole, as well as for individual pupils involved with peer mediation.

What are the benefits of peer mediation for school communities?

Extensive research on peer mediation programs show that they are indeed successful in improving school climate by teaching pupils to constructively deal with

conflict. This in turn reduces student-to-student conflict as well as suspensions and discipline referrals, and further improves relationships between peers as well as between pupils and teachers – creating a healthy school climate. Results from peer mediation programs show that when conflict

arises and is dealt with by a peer mediator, there is around a 90% agreement rate and satisfaction of outcome by pupils! Similarly, teachers and parents are also highly satisfied with the outcomes of mediation sessions.



What are the specific benefits for individual pupils?

Specifically, peer mediation programs have been shown to lead to improvement in controlling anger, developing appropriate assertiveness skills, and learning problem solving skills in young people. Other skills that it helps develop are communication/ language skills, leadership abilities and general interpersonal skills. Peer mediation also increases empathy, trust, tolerance, respect, and fairness for all pupils involved with it.

For peer mediators themselves, learning the mediation process has been shown to specifically increase self-esteem and confidence, as well as improve academic achievement. When peer mediators experience their ability to make a profound difference in the lives of others, and their contribution is valued by adults and peers alike, it has a positive, upward spiral effect for them

"For peer mediators themselves, learning the mediation process has been shown to specifically increase self-esteem and confidence, as well as improve academic achievement."

Do these benefits extend beyond the school environment?

Yes, studies have shown that participation in peer mediation training gives pupils skills to use in their lives outside of the classroom and school, and has a

significant impact on the strategies pupils use to resolve conflicts in their homes. So, being a mediator helps pupils approach conflict in their own lives and in their communities with new perspective and skill.

How does being a peer mediator help throughout school, university and working life?

There is no doubt peer mediation is a useful tool in dealing with conflict constructively among young people, but how can being a peer mediator help throughout life?



How is being a peer mediator beneficial in school life?

The research and evidence on peer mediation shows that it ties in perfectly with developing the four capacities of the Curriculum for Excellence (= Successful Learners, Confident Individuals, Responsible Citizens, and Effective Contributors) and as such is very beneficial to pupils all throughout their school life.

As mentioned, peer mediation enhances different types of learning (e.g. academic, social etc) on a variety of levels. This happens partly by creating a school environment with less conflict and distraction, leading to effective learning environ-

ments as well as more undisturbed teaching time with better quality. But it also happens through specifically promoting the development of perspective-taking skills (an integral part of the mediation process) which in turn improves other cognitive functions in the brain, leading to more successful learning. So being a peer mediator helps in school life by enabling better

sponsible behaviour through creating a sense of ownership within the school that comes with the peer mediator role and duties. Through peer mediation pupils have a direct and tangible way of contributing to the well-being of their school. The important peer mediation duties involve helping others in an active and inclusive way, and this contribution is appreciated by peers and teachers alike.

"Through peer mediation pupils have a direct and tangible way of contributing to the well-being of their school."

learning. It also gives tools to handle social situations confidently for young peer mediators, and the opportunity to reflect on inner mechanisms and strengths. Furthermore, it encourages re-

So, as we can see peer mediation helps develop the four capacities of the Curriculum for Excellence in a number of different ways, not least by improving skills such as within conflict-resolution, com-

munication, and leadership. These important skills are useful both in academic and social settings. They are also very beneficial for pupils if they want to take on other positions of responsibility within schools, such as head girl, or head boy, or when serving on committees, teams and councils. Last but not least, they are also incredibly helpful in enabling children and young people to form and maintain healthy and respectful relationships with other pupils as well as teachers and staff within schools.



Learning trust and respect through games and exercises during peer mediation training

How can peer mediation be useful at university/ further education?

If mediation is something that feels really right for you, then you have the option of taking it further than primary and/or secondary school. Some universities now offer mediation as a post-graduate degree (e.g. Strathclyde University, Queen Margaret University, Robert Gordon University) or as part of degrees (e.g. Glasgow University Law Department). There is also the opportunity at some universities to get involved with their internal or community mediation/conflict resolution service (e.g. Strathclyde University) as a volunteer, and some even have a peer medi-

"These important skills (...) are also very beneficial for pupils if they want to take on other positions of responsibility such as head girl, or head boy"

ation service set up (Dundee University) which you can join as a student mediator.

You can also train to become a professional mediator through training courses provided by organisations such as SACRO, Core, and The Mediation Partnership. There are different types of mediation training available depending on what type of mediation you would like to practice, and there are also conversion courses (to extend your expertise

to cover other types of mediation than the one you initially trained in). Different types of mediation include workplace, family, neighbour and community, in-court, health, additional supports and homelessness mediation.

In conclusion, you can go on and train as a professional mediator in a number of different ways after school should you want to, but even just having been a peer mediator early in life will benefit you at university or in further education. The confidence and perspective-taking skills that are developed in peer mediation helps not only with studying and academic achievement, but with-

in any social settings and situations, and promotes healthy relationships with friends. Furthermore, if you want to go on and take on roles of responsibility within societies and initiatives at university or in further education then your peer mediation experience will enhance your chances of getting such roles, and doing well in them.

Work

So, if you go on to do a mediation course or degree, you can then work with mediation directly as a professional mediator. As mentioned above, you can practice as a professional mediator in a variety of fields and areas. You can do this as part of different organisations such as SACRO or Relationships Scotland who provide mediation services to the public, or you can do it with-



in certain in-house teams in companies and public/private sector organisations. You can also practice as an independent mediator. There is also the option of working with mediation indirectly, in other words not being a mediator but managing or coordinating mediation services within companies, organisa-

tions and/or councils.

However, even if you don't go on to work as a mediator in your professional life, there are many jobs that benefit hugely from having mediation, communication and conflict resolution skills, for example social work, youth work, or work within management, healthcare, schools, or the legal/justice system. In fact, any job where you work within a team of people, or directly with other people, will be hugely benefitted by having the vital life and social skills learnt as a peer mediator. It will make you better equipped to deal with a variety of people and situations throughout your professional life.

"In fact, any job where you work within a team of people, or directly with other people, will be hugely benefitted by having the vital life and social skills learnt as a peer mediator"

Family and social

Peer mediation helps develop vital life and social skills that make communication with people around us, including family and friends, better and healthier. You could argue that anyone needs a degree in mediation to be able to manage stressful situations with family and friends! Not surprisingly, peer mediators often say that they take their skills with them and use them in their families and with their friends outside of school, mediating successfully between siblings, siblings and parents, or friends who have fallen out. Conflict is something that happens between people all throughout life, at all ages, and therefore mediation skills and knowledge will always be useful and beneficial.



Many young peer mediators talk about taking their mediation skills back to their families to solve arguments between siblings and family members

PEER MEDIATORS' VOICES

So over the last six months Young Talk has been out to a number of schools around Scotland, both primary and secondary, talking to peer mediators about their experiences of mediation. We've listened, chatted, asked questions and figured out what has been the best and the worst about being a peer mediator in Scotland. Even though the peer mediators we have met have all been different ages,

and come from different areas, the stories and comments have often been similar, showing that there are many shared experiences across the nation.

In the sessions out at schools, peer mediators often described mediation as something that helps them in all different aspects of their lives, whether in school, at home or elsewhere. A lot of pupils brought up how



much they have learnt through mediation, and how it has improved the way they interact with other people, and their team-working abilities.



"Peer mediators often described mediation as something that helps them in all different aspects of their lives, whether in school, at home or elsewhere"

Pupils further described peer mediation as a way of building common ground with others and understanding that people always have different perspectives on different issues. They also talked a lot about how fun it is to work in pairs and teams with other peer mediators, and in fact many said the best thing about peer mediation is meeting new people in the school, and of course getting to help others. They mentioned how great it is to see people making up and reaching solutions to their problems, knowing that they have helped that happen. Furthermore, it was often mentioned how much peer mediation helps to build confidence

and makes it easier to talk to other people, even if they are in different cliques and age groups. The pupils we talked to also mention some common challenges of being peer mediators, most of them concerned getting other pupils to understand exactly what peer mediation is and what they can use it for. They mentioned pupils either being too shy to use it, or sometimes using it for the wrong things.

Many peer mediators also talk specifically about the new skills they have learnt since doing the training and practising as peer mediators. One young peer mediator from Auchinraith Primary School explained that she

used to shy away from arguments between her friends, and just leave them to it because she didn't know what to do, but since becoming a peer mediator she enjoys helping them work out solutions instead of walking away. Many others talked along similar lines about the communication skills they have developed, and how much it has helped them.



All the peer mediators we visited and spoke to were keen to talk about their experiences of mediation and what it had meant to them

A common theme across all the schools was that the peer mediators were all incredibly enthusiastic and passionate about peer mediation, so much that it blew us away. It was wonderful to hear all of their feedback and ideas. Here's some quotes from the different sessions:

"Peer mediation has helped me mature and deal with all the nonsense and silliness. I have much more patience in dealing with younger pupils because of peer mediation, and it doesn't frustrate me as much anymore" P5 St Hilary's Primary School

"Peer mediation helps get to root causes of problems, and relieving tensions between friends, so it works on a deeper level and helps you understand things better" S3 pupil, Rosshall Academy

"Peer mediation to me is something that is working toward the future.. because you're always going to need maturity and responsibility to work with others, and you also need to be able to talk to others interactively and confidently and be comfortable around them. So it makes you feel more mature, and the training was really fun." – S5 Pupil, Rosshall Academy

"It's not just about helping people sort problems out.. you get to know everyone, and you just.. feel proud of yourself, it makes you feel proud" P5 Pupil, St Leonard's Primary

"I use the peer mediation skills I have to mediate conflicts between my siblings, and it works So I can use it outside of school as well!" P5 pupil, St Leonard's Primary School

"Peer mediation has made me more comfortable in interacting with other pupils, especially the older ones, because there are so many groups and cliques in school. It's a back up for feeling comfortable around others", S3 pupil, Rosshall Academy

"Peer mediation has given me an option in situations where I'm in trouble with friends, or they are in conflict, rather than resorting to conflict" S6 pupil, Baldragon Academy

"Peer mediation gives us common ground to build on, and makes it easier to talk and communicate well with each other and in general" – S6 pupil, Baldragon Academy

And here is what some of the teachers at the schools said:

"I believe in peer mediation because I see the difference it makes for pupils every day, and I believe it's a really important thing for our school to take forward" – Jill Honeyman, Head of Guidance, Baldrag-

"Peer mediation has had a huge impact on the school, not just in the development of skills the children have in being able to deal with conflict but also in building their confidence and capacity to take those skills and use them throughout life" – Jill Lindsay, Depute Head Teacher, Auchinraith Primary

Question time with Carol Hope

Carol Hope is our very own peer mediation expert! Carol has worked with peer mediation for a long time now, and has been out to schools and organisations across Scotland, and the world, for peer mediation! She is just wonderful, and a pool of knowledge and wisdom when it comes to making peer mediation work.



Carol training peer mediators in South Lanarkshire

How long have you been working with peer mediation?

- Since 2004

Why did you start?

- I was asked to help train some young people in West Lothian to be peer mediators. The group of professionals involved had loads of experience but no experience in actual mediation practice.

What has kept you going for this long?

- I love to see the impact the training has on individual young people, teachers and the school.

What do you think is the best thing about peer mediation?

- The way it empowers young people to take control of their lives and for them to see that there is another way to manage disputes.

And what is the most challenging?

- When schools want peer mediation training but then don't support it.

Why is peer mediation important for Scotland?

- Its important to embed mediation into the culture in Scotland and the best way to do that is to support young people to become mediators. Mediation is a life skill and I know from talking with young people that it's a great confidence booster too.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT!!!

We'd like to take the time to say congratulations to our very own Jill Honeyman. Jill is the Head of Guidance at Baldragon Academy (one of our member schools), and has championed peer mediation at the high school since last year with a lot of heart and energy! Earlier this year Jill got the runner-up prize in the category of Adult Leader in Youth Conflict Management at the LEAP Confronting Conflict Awards 2015. This is the first time this important award has been given out in Scotland!



Former peer mediator's voices

So far we have heard from some current peer mediators and teachers so we thought it might be interesting to hear from some former peer mediators and see how they look back at their experiences as peer mediators in school. We will hear from one former peer mediator in each issue of the Young Talk Telegraph.

First up is Kieran Tennant. Kieran is now 22 years, and currently a P.E. Teacher at Graeme High in Falkirk. He graduated from Whitburn Academy, where he was a peer mediator, trained by the Scottish Mediation Network. Here's what Kieran has to say about his experience:

"Peer mediation gave me confi-

dence, it gave me friendship and it gave me a place in the school. I wasn't the most popular guy at school, and definitely not the most confident. As a young man I would avoid situations in which I felt inferior to others. Peer mediation changed that, for once I was in control and I was doing something which really made a difference. The skills I had learned were invaluable in navigating my way through challenging situations in the years that followed. Whether it be family

"As a young man I would avoid situations in which I felt inferior to others. Peer mediation changed that"



situations, workplace issues or a bit of trouble with the girlfriend, I put my skills to use to overcome the obstacles put in my way and in the way of my friends and family. Now many years on I have qualified as a P.E teacher and rest assured I will be passing the skills I learned onto my pupils to support them in their journey through life. Peer mediation gave me a chance to own a part of the school community, it gave me a chance to shine and most notably it gave me lifelong friends who I can turn to whenever I need and for that I will always be grateful."

That's us at the end of our first issue folks! We hope you have enjoyed reading the articles and staying up to date with what's been going on! The next issue will be out in December. Again, we would absolutely love your feedback, or ideas for upcoming issues.

Roxan Nazifshirayi is the Young Talk Coordinator, and she's the one who has put together most of the material for this issue—so if there's anything you are wondering about, have comments on, or want to speak about (anything at all) just drop her a line. Her contact details can be found below.

A huge thanks to our peer mediators, and those working with them—you are all absolutely amazing, and your hard work is paying off.

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Peer Mediators in Scotland
Getting Together

Young Talk is part of..

scottish
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Check us out at:

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