

FIFE CLUSTER PEER MEDIATION PROGRAMME



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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BACKGROUND



Scottish Mediation was commissioned by Our Minds Matter Fife to deliver peer mediation training to primary school pupils across the Fife local authority area from October 2021 to January 2023.



Peer mediation is a process by which children and young people help their peers deal with difficult situations in a constructive, non-violent way.



Peer mediation empowers young people to sort out difficult situations themselves rather than relying on an adult.



The introduction of peer mediation can lead to increased empathy, understanding and better relationships across school communities and a significant decrease in conflict, leaving more time for teaching and learning



Peer mediation training supports young people to develop the skills and knowledge to become a mediator in a fun and interactive way.



In Fife one training was planned for each of the 18 school clusters. Each cluster consists of a group of primary schools that all feed into the same high school. Approximately four pupils and one adult were invited from every primary school.



AIMS, OBJECTIVES, OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

Our aim was to introduce peer mediation to Fife primary schools as a process by which children and young people help their peers deal with difficult situations in a constructive, non-violent way.

Our objectives were to:

- deliver peer mediation training for every school cluster across Fife
- invite pupils and an adult from every primary school across each cluster to attend
- support each school who attended to set up a sustainable peer mediation service

Our output was delivering 17 training sessions (2 days per session) to 103 schools (from every cluster) with 430 pupils attending.

Our three key outcomes were:

- 97.6% of young people who responded felt confident they could do peer mediation after attending training; and,
- Approximately 50% of schools reported 3 months after training delivery that they had a peer mediation service set up in their school with many others on their way to having one set up.
- Two Fife Education staff members are now fully trained and have the skills and knowledge to deliver peer mediation training independently.

Feedback from school staff:

Possibly the best intervention I have witnessed. I think this is going to do wonders at our school. Particularly at the moment, children are struggling with social skills. I hope to be able to continue training peer mediators this is a life long skill children (and adults) need and I feel they would be less threatening than adults to help sort out their disputes.

Great focus on building relationships - everyone enjoyed it and learnt a lot as a result.

This training was fantastic! Both myself and kids were engaged with the training. Feeling very positive rolling this out within our school.

The approach was fantastic. A really good bit of professional learning for myself. I couldn't believe how quickly the children began to change and take on the strategies and skills that were developing over the two days.

I was blown away by the increase in confidence of the pupils that attended.

LYNBURN PRIMARY SCHOOL, DUNFERMLINE

Four pupils from Lynburn Primary School attended peer mediation during the course of the programme. With the support of their nurture teacher, Emily Laranja and a Pupil Support Assistant, they have now managed to train others within the school and have a group of 20 peer mediators working across the school with peer mediation in every break session (they have split breaks for different year groups).

To support the learning and development of the peer mediators, they come together once a term to share learning and ideas. They also now have a range of resources to support the programme including hats, lanyards and hoodies to identify themselves. Also to encourage a supportive system for mediators they have a buddy system where they train a group of P5 pupils and they link in with the existing P6 mediators to support them in gaining confidence in mediating.

Another fantastic initiative is that peer mediation is now linked into a pupil designed “Calm Club” in the playground where pupils in disputes are supported to calm down using appropriate breathing exercises and then go to peer mediation for support with sorting out the issue if this seems appropriate.

There is a great deal of interest in becoming a peer mediator at the school and peer mediation is in demand at break and lunchtime. They operate a rota and are flexible over how many times per week peer mediators are on duty. Some choose to do it every day and others only one or two sessions per week making it something attractive to a wide range of pupils.

Lynburn Primary School provided pupil voices for a voiceover for a short video on peer mediation which was shown at a Scottish Parliament exhibition on Peace Education in September 2023. A small group of peer mediators from the school were also given the opportunity to come along to an event at the Scottish Parliament as part of the Exhibition. The peer mediators had a chance to meet and share their learning with various people at the event including MSPs (Members of the Scottish Parliament) which is fantastic and supportive of wider learning as a result of their involvement in peer mediation.



Three members of the peer mediation team at Lynburn Primary School with their Nurture Teacher, Emily Laranja at the Scottish Parliament, September 2023

DENBEATH PRIMARY SCHOOL, BUCKHAVEN

At Denbeath primary school there are currently 4 trained mediators who will now be going into primary 7. At the start of the Autumn term beginning August 2023 they were planning to train (with the support of their Principal Teacher) another group of P6s to encourage sustainability of the scheme.

They offer mediation for P1-P6s and they mainly mediate for P1s and P2s. The main issue that they deal with is name-calling. Between January and June 2023 they estimate that they have mediated 40 times. To access mediation, the school uses a book system where each class has a book and the class teacher can note down pupils they feel may need peer mediation during the week. The peer mediators check the books on a Friday and if people are keen to mediate, they plan it for the following week. The peer mediators are also on duty in the playground and can support pupils with disagreements as and when they happen.

The peer mediators raised awareness of peer mediation by doing talks at assemblies. At first there was some confusion over what peer mediation was and what it could be used for. Over time everyone started to understand it and now staff in school trust them to support pupils to sort out their issues and will sometimes allow them to take time out of class to do this adding to the flexibility of the scheme.

The peer mediators were overwhelmingly positive about the impact of peer mediation on themselves and other pupils within the school. They felt that being peer mediators made them role models for other pupils and that they learn from them and then don't need as much support sorting out their issues. They told us that "Peer mediation is awesome" (Primary 6 pupil, Denbeath Primary School, June 2023) and that they love being a part of it.

In addition the peer mediators told us that being involved in peer mediation had helped them in the following ways:

- It has made them more confident
- It has helped them with their relationships outside of school
- It helps them learn more in class



The Peer Mediation Team at Denbeath Primary School with Kathryn and Heather from Scottish Mediation, June 2023

DAIRSIE PRIMARY SCHOOL, CUPAR

The Peer Mediation Coordinator at Dairsie Primary School is Lesley Knox who is a Pupil Support Assistant (PSA) at the school. Lesley attended the cluster training in October 2021 and then decided to train further to become a peer mediation trainer by attending our Training for Trainers course and shadowing training to gain skills and confidence to deliver independently (see Training for Trainers section above).

Lesley told us the following about peer mediation at her school:

- It is flexible - no set time for peer mediation - the pupils ask for it when they need it
- They have seen a reduction in the need for adult intervention in the playground and in class
- The pupils are using conflict-resolution skills directly when dealing with disagreements
- The pupils are more independent and regulating their own disputes
- They are seeing a reduction in requests for Bubble time, which is when pupils can request individual time with their class teacher to discuss issues
- They are planning for the existing peer mediators to train others to pass the skills on



Lesley Knox with the group of Peer Mediators at Dairsie Primary School

BELL BAXTER CLUSTER

As a result of the success of the original Fife programme, one cluster - Bell Baxter - decided to spend some Covid recovery money on peer mediation.

Between October 2022 and January 2023 every Primary 6 pupils across the cluster was trained in peer mediation.

Nine school staff from across the cluster were trained to deliver peer mediation training which has massively increased capacity across the cluster and added to the sustainability of the work.

Follow up to the work in the Bell Baxter cluster has been positive and it is noted that peer mediation is now set up and took place in every cluster primary school throughout the 2022/23 school session.

A success story from one of the Bell Baxter schools, Freuchie Primary, is that the P6 peer mediators who were originally trained have now planned and delivered a peer mediation training session for a group of P5s who are now able to join the peer mediation service within the school.

Feedback from Freuchie also noted that the peer mediation training was a highlight for pupils and staff and extremely worthwhile regardless of whether they chose to continue as peer mediators or not.



Bell Baxter pupils during Week 3 of the programme

CONCLUSION



It has been an absolute pleasure and privilege to deliver this programme across Fife and to have the opportunity to work with so many fantastic young people and supportive adults. They have shown amazing commitment, engagement and resilience and we can't thank them enough.



The young people and adults who attended the sessions have all gone away with an increased awareness of positive approaches to conflict resolution and the opportunity to develop a peer mediation service within their school. We are keen to continue to keep in touch with the schools in Fife and to offer them ongoing support should it be required.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- To continue working with schools in Fife to support it to become a centre of excellence for peer mediation in Scotland
- To investigate opportunities to work with other local authorities to introduce peer mediation based on our learning from the Fife model
- To develop the approach of training adults within a local authority area to support peer mediation training delivery moving forward
- To develop a panel of skilled facilitators who are trained to deliver peer mediation on behalf of SM
- To consider alternative formats of training delivery and the opportunity to develop specific conflict-resolution training sessions for school staff with a focus on PSAs
- To investigate any funding opportunities which would offer the chance to mentor some schools within Fife while they set up and sustain their peer mediation services
- To promote opportunities for reflective practice, learning and shared resources across the Fife area
- To consider any potential links with the mediation network within the University of St Andrews and any other further or higher education institutions.

CONTACT US

If you have any queries or would like more information please contact:

Graham Boyack

Director

graham.boyack@scottishmediation.org.uk

www.scottishmediation.org.uk

0131 556 1221

 @ScotMediation