

FIFE CLUSTER PEER MEDIATION PROGRAMME

FINAL REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

Scottish Mediation (SM) 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 until January 2023. The programme was delivered across Fife with one training planned for each of the 18 high school clusters. Each cluster consists of a group of primary schools that all feed into the same high school see Appendix 1 for a map of all the clusters and corresponding primary schools.

Our Minds Matter were keen to bring primary school pupils together across the clusters, as an opportunity to meet other young people who will likely attend the same high school and also to provide them an opportunity to mix with other people at a time when their social interactions had been greatly reduced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Anecdotal evidence tells us that young people have struggled with social skills because of the Covid-19 Pandemic as this quote shows from a UK briefing on Covid suggests:

“Some primary-aged pupils were struggling with social skills. A number of leaders said that they were seeing more instances of the youngest children not coping well with minor setbacks or having difficulties co-operating with others. In some cases, this had led to a breakdown in friendships.”

*COVID-19 series: briefing on schools, November 2020
(publishing.service.gov.uk)*

These issues have been in part due to the need to renegotiate friendships and learn to be together again after a long period of home-learning. Peer mediation training is an opportunity to come together and share learning as well as a chance to consider and adopt a positive approach to dealing with disagreement within schools, empowering young people to support each other without always needing adult intervention.

Our Minds Matter (see further information below) were keen on the peer mediation approach and worked alongside Scottish Mediation (SM) to create a suitable and sustainable model of delivery which would see all primary schools across Fife invited to take part.

This report sets out how the programme was delivered, highlights the feedback received and demonstrates the impact. It also addresses learning points, next steps and reflects on any potential future developments.

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 High 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 to 103 schools 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.
- 2 Fife Education staff members are now fully trained and have the skills and knowledge to deliver peer mediation training independently.

WHAT IS PEER MEDIATION?

Peer mediation is a process by which children and young people help their peers deal with difficult situations in a constructive, non-violent way. It involves two trained mediators helping their peers deal with the situation through a series of mediation steps. Appropriate situations can include fights in the playground, rumour-spreading, or different types of bullying behaviour. During peer mediation, disagreements are faced and brought out into the open with the help of the peer mediators. Importantly, shared understanding and agreements are worked toward through careful exploration of the situation.

A key aspect of peer mediation is that young people are empowered to sort out disagreements themselves rather than always relying upon an adult to sort things out for them. Evidence shows that people are more likely to stick to an agreement if they have taken an active role in making it rather than it being based on someone else's ideas about what should happen. Young people have the ability to suggest solutions and can be so creative and mature in their approach. Peer mediation offers them the space to do this and also develops a wide range of skills including conflict-resolution, communication, listening, team-working and many others. Involvement in peer mediation can also have a positive impact on confidence and self-esteem teaching young people that they are capable of resolving situations that before they wouldn't have previously had the confidence to do themselves.

Central to the mediation approach is the idea that it is not about determining who is right or wrong or getting to the 'truth' about a situation. It acknowledges that everyone involved in a challenging situation is coming at it from their own perspective and supports people to develop an understanding of each other's perspectives whilst moving forward towards a positive resolution that each person is able to live with.

PEER MEDIATION TRAINING

Peer Mediation Training takes a fun and interactive approach to offering young people the skills, knowledge and understanding to become peer mediators to support the setting up and delivery of a peer mediation service within their school.

Peer Mediation Training is delivered by experienced trainers over two, ideally consecutive, days either in a school or appropriate community venue. It uses a range of games and activities to build up the skills of mediation enabling the young people to gain confidence in their skills and abilities.

Adults from the schools are encouraged to join in with the training alongside the young people to develop their own skills and offer support for taking peer mediation forward.

RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR MINDS MATTER

Our Minds Matter is part of Fife Council Education Services and focuses specifically upon the wellbeing of young people within Fife's schools. They support and deliver a range of programmes related to mental health and wellbeing for pupils and adults within schools. When we first met Louise Stean, Our Minds Matter Lead Champion, she immediately took to the peer mediation approach and felt that it would be beneficial for young people in Fife, especially as we were coming towards the end of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Louise was pivotal to the successful delivery of the programme in Fife. Her role included all engagement with the schools and clusters, determining delivery dates, venues and ongoing communication as well as social media updates.

Louise also trained as a peer mediation trainer first attending Training for Trainers, then shadowing a delivery session and ultimately delivering alongside SM trainers. This is the first time we have worked on this basis and it worked fantastically. Louise is now fully equipped to deliver in Fife independently from SM. Two other Fife Education staff were also trained as part of this programme. More on this below.

Louise worked tirelessly in both the organisation and the delivery of the programme. SM are endlessly thankful for her work and support.

Louise has responded to some questions regarding her involvement in the programme. You will find her full response in Appendix 2.



*From left to right: Kathryn Hilditch (SM), Heather Zajac (SM) and Louise Stean (Our Minds Matter), January 2023
Photo: Louise Stean*

OVERVIEW OF FIFE PROGRAMME

The original plan was to deliver 18 sessions, one for the primary schools in each high school cluster in Fife between October 2021 and June 2022. The delivery model was based on bringing together pupils and accompanying adults from across the primary schools in each cluster. The intention was for each training to include a maximum of 30 pupils with an average of 4 pupils invited from any one school. It was also a requirement that an adult from every school attended and took part in the training. These adults were then expected to support the pupils in taking the peer mediation services forward within their individual schools. The adults who took part were a mixture of Class Teachers, Head or Deputy Head Teachers or Pupil Support Assistants (PSA's).

As a result of the resurgence of covid towards the end of 2021, most sessions in December 2021 and January 2022 were cancelled. The term of the programme then extended to the end of October 2022 with one final session planned for January 2023.

The following table outlines the sessions that have been delivered and outlines the numbers of schools and pupils who have taken part in the training.

Dates	Cluster	Number of Pupils	Number of Schools
Block 1 October 2021 - December 2021			
27th & 8th October	Bell-Baxter	19	6
3rd & 4th November	Bell-Baxter	26	9
1st & 2nd December	Auchmuty	27	6
Block 2 January 2022 - April 2022			
24th & 25th February	St Andrews, Kirkcaldy	25	6
16th & 17th March	Beath	24	6
23rd & 24th March	Woodmill and Dunfermline	26	4
Block 3 April 2022 - June 2022			
20th & 21st April	Balwearie (Burntisland)	27	1
27th & 28th April	Inverkeithing	20	5
11th & 12th May	St Columba's, Dunfermline	28	7
18th & 19th May	Lochgelly	26	7
25th & 26th May	Waid	31	8
Block 4 August 2022 - January 2023			
24th & 25th August	Glenrothes & Glenwood?	31	7
21st & 22nd September	Queen Anne	32	8
28th & 29th September	Madras	35	10
5th & 6th October	Kirkcaldy and Viewforth	25	11
18 & 19th January 2023	Levenmouth	28	7
Total		430	103

Table 1: Training sessions with school and pupil numbers

We were flexible in our approach, delivering 17 sessions out of the original 18 planned. Some clusters were combined to suit available resources. Pupils from all 18 clusters were involved in the training over the course of the programme.

Reaching this number of schools over the course of one year is unprecedented in terms of the delivery of peer mediation in Scotland. It is a fundamentally different approach to previous peer mediation that we have delivered in that we have worked with a small group of pupils from each school (and an adult) rather than a whole group from one school. This small group was then tasked with taking the learning back to their school and either extending the knowledge to other people within their schools or delivering the service as a small group (at least initially).

In the “What have we learned” section below there is a summary of pros and cons of this approach and suggestions for enhancements to the model.

TRAINING FOR EDUCATION STAFF

Built into the model for Fife from the start was the idea of training adult staff within the area to take forward peer mediation training beyond the delivery of the initial programme. Three adults were selected including Louise Stean from Our Minds Matter and two school staff. These adults completed Training for Trainers training with Scottish Mediation and then offered opportunities to shadow and support the training alongside Scottish Mediation staff until they felt confident to take a lead role in the training. For Louise and one other member of Fife staff Lesley Knox (see below for more information) this approach went well and they have both now taken a lead role and have the skills and knowledge to deliver training moving forward. Unfortunately the other person trained could not continue due to personal reasons.

This model is supportive of the sustainability of peer mediation, especially when delivering across a whole local authority area such as for this programme. This is something we are keen to emulate should we deliver another programme of this scale.

FEEDBACK AND IMPACT - YOUNG PEOPLE

In terms of evaluation of the project with the young people involved, the main source of this was through evaluation forms completed at training delivery.

In terms of key take aways from this evaluation, the following statistics paint a picture of the response to and impact of the training in terms of developing understanding of peer mediation. The first image highlights the percentage of young people who agreed with the statements in the image at the end of the training.

99.7%

“I understand what peer mediation means.”

99.4%

“I understand how peer mediation works.”

97.6%

“I feel confident that I can do peer mediation.”

98.9%

“I understand why peer mediation is important.”

Post Training Statistics from Evaluation Questions

FEELINGS

Young people were also asked how they felt both before and after the training. The word clouds below show what the young people wrote on their evaluation forms about how they were feeling both at the beginning of the sessions and then again at the end. This was an opportunity for them to express their feelings in their own words. It is evident that there is quite a change between the start and the end in terms of how they were feeling.



The following image also shows the numbers of people describing themselves as feeling either happy, confident and/or excited on the evaluation forms at the end of the two days of training:



In addition to the words the young people wrote down, another key source of feedback is what the young people said verbally at the end of the training. At the start of each training day we do an opening go-round asking for one word or phrase about how each person is feeling. At the end of each day we then do a closing go-round asking how each person is now feeling. The change from the very first go-round where lots of people talk about feeling nervous and perhaps confused, to the last one where they are happy and confident and often sad to leave is massive. This change is palpable, you can feel it in the room with higher energy and increased quality and quantity of contributions. These young people leave with greater confidence and a strong desire to take peer mediation back to their schools.

QUOTES

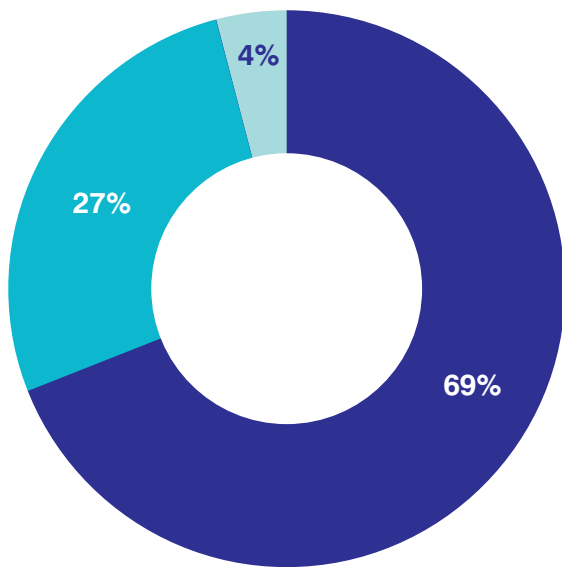
The following quotes are taken from the post-training evaluation forms the young people completed at the end of each session. They relate to the question asking how they are feeling now at the end of the training delivery:



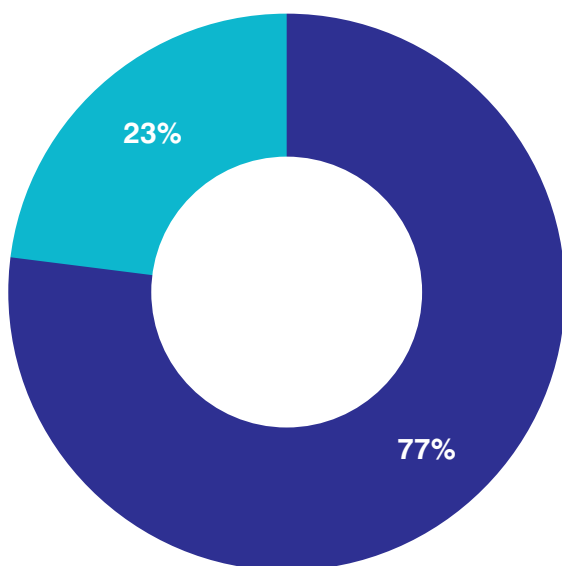
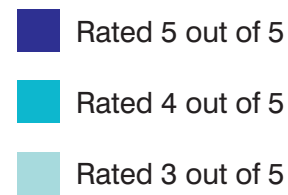
FEEDBACK AND IMPACT - ADULTS

In terms of adult feedback, this was collected after the training delivery in the form of an online survey.

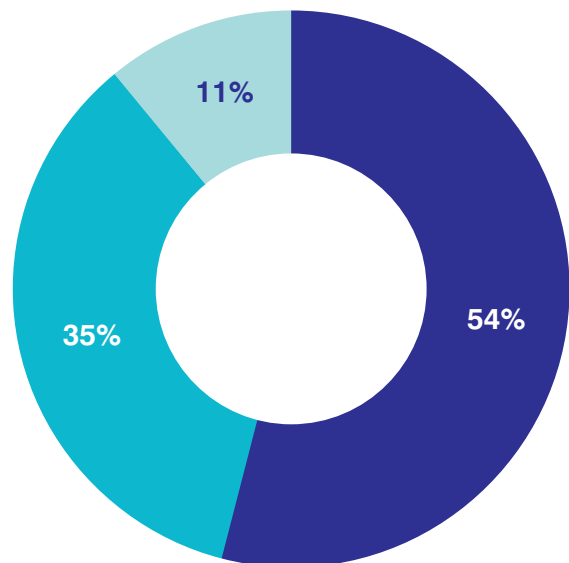
The following charts show some key findings from the feedback. For each chart the scale rating is 1-5 with 5 being the highest.



How would you rate the format of the training?



How would you rate the way the training was led?



How would you rate the training in terms of how it has prepared you and your young people for setting up a peer mediation service withing your school?

FEEDBACK AND IMPACT - ADULTS

Some written quotes from the adult feedback are as follows:

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

"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."

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

"Children have been using their skills already and it's really great to see."

"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. Thank you Kathryn and Heather it was a brilliant 2 days! You are a credit to Scottish Mediation."

"Excellent course and has been easy to transfer to school to complete the training with the rest of the cohort."

EVIDENCE AND IMPACT OF IMPLEMENTATION

In terms of evidence of the impact of peer mediation beyond training delivery, we have a number of school case studies to share where peer mediation has been set up successfully.



Alex - qualities of a peer mediator

DAIRSIE PRIMARY SCHOOL

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

LYNBURN PRIMARY SCHOOL

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 offered 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

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 P6's to encourage sustainability of the scheme.

They offer mediation for P1-P6's and they mainly mediate for P1's and P2's. 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

SUPPORT SESSIONS - JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 2023

Following the completion of the training delivery in January 2023, Scottish Mediation and Our Minds Matter hosted two online support sessions for the adults involved in the training programme. Every adult who attended training were invited to attend either one of the sessions.

The details of the sessions are as follows:

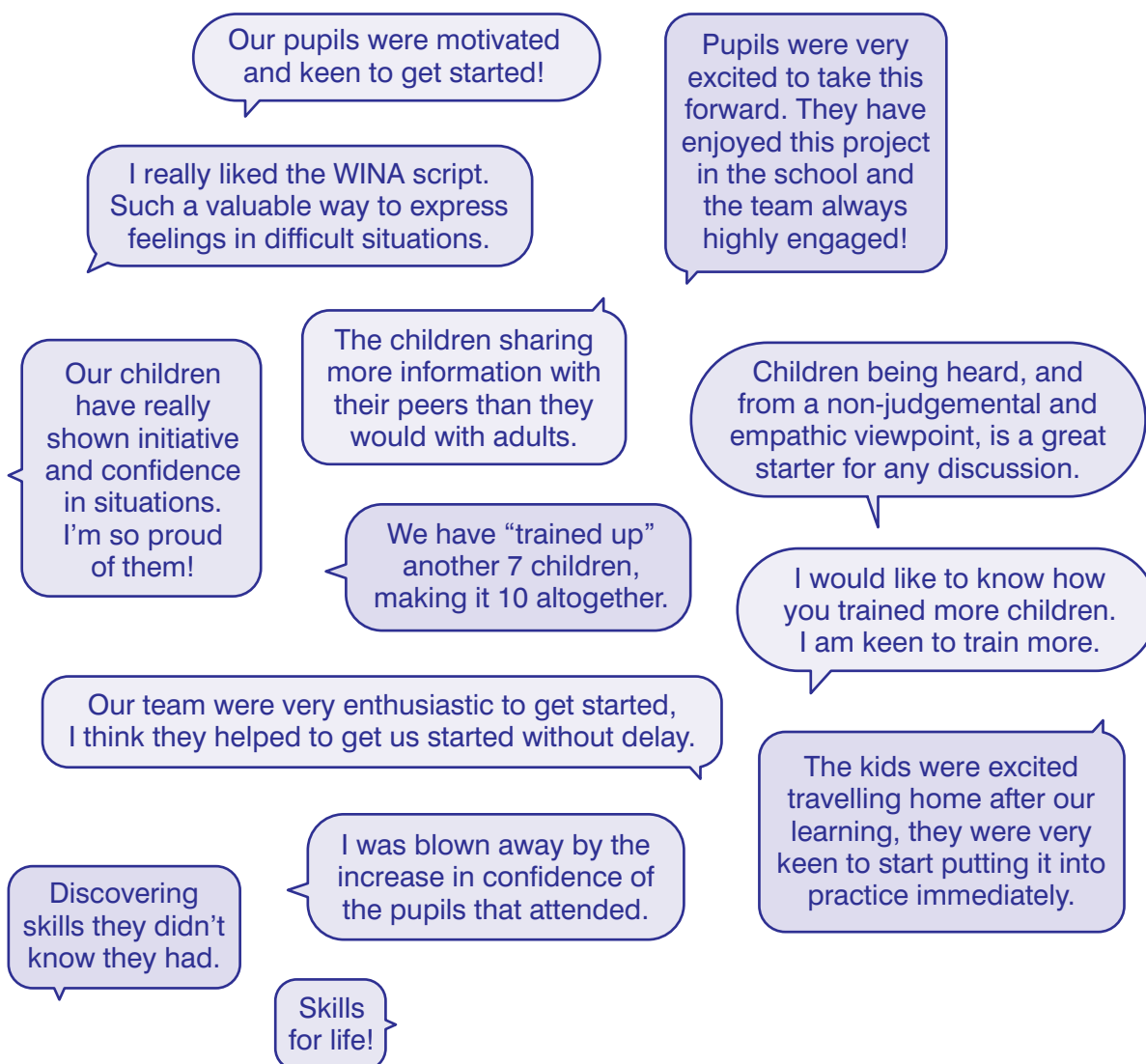
Session	Date	Time	Number of Attendees
1	24th January 2023	13.15-14.30	21
2	2nd February 2023	15.15-16.30	18

Prior to the support sessions, Our Minds Matter carried out an online survey to check how schools were getting on with setting up their peer mediation services. Approximately half of those who responded said that they had managed to get their service set up in some form.

This correlates with the two support sessions where about half of those who attended also said that they had a service set up and running. For those who didn't have peer mediation in place most said that they were keen to get started or restart things soon and were using the support sessions as a starting point for this.

Some key findings from the support sessions are set out below. The first section sets out some quotes taken from the sessions regarding views on the training and approach. The second highlights some barriers that people highlighted in terms of getting this started and sustaining the services.

QUOTES



The following barriers to setting up and sustaining peer mediation services were highlighted at the support sessions:

- Staffing and timing
- Child absence
- Young people losing interest
- Not sure where to start
- Haven't accessed resources
- Scenarios used weren't relevant to real situations schools are facing
- How to train others within the schools to pass on skills and knowledge
- Loss of momentum

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT?

As mentioned above, this is the first time that we have delivered a programme of this scale and nature across a whole local authority area.

There were massive positives to this approach. One of the main ones being the opportunity for young people to meet and work intensively with others from across the cluster. One of the key lessons of peer mediation training is about understanding that everyone has a different perspective on a situation and that this can influence how they think and feel. What better way to teach this than to bring young people together who have different lives and backgrounds which will have a big impact upon their thoughts and ideas? It was fantastic to see the young people work through the training together and to form as a group so well over the two days. They were quickly split into mixed school groups and supported to work together - to encourage everyone to have a voice and to make sure it wasn't only those who feel able to shout the loudest who were heard. This mixing was a challenge for them, especially those who came early in the programme when social mixing restrictions were still in place. They rose to the challenge and soon it was hard to tell who was from each school. They displayed such fantastic teamwork and respected each other so well. Many of these young people will be attending the same high schools and it is our hope that they will enjoy seeing a familiar face that they met at peer mediation.

Another benefit of the model is that every school had the opportunity to attend. This ensured inclusivity of the model and ensured that the messages about positive conflict resolution and mediation in schools were spread as widely as possible within Fife. With so many schools trained, Fife has an opportunity to be a centre for excellence in peer mediation and a network of services could be formed to share ongoing learning and ideas. At the support sessions it was evident that there is already an appetite to share learning and ideas across the cluster. It will be fantastic if this can be sustained to encourage a partnership approach to peer mediation in Fife. One way to encourage this has been a recent development of an online platform for Fife schools to share updates, resources and ideas around peer mediation.

Alongside all of these positives, there were a wealth of learning points that have come from the programme which will support us in developing peer mediation moving forward. The following section outlines some of the key learning points and highlights some initial thoughts around how we are going to adapt future work as a result of them.

CAPACITY

The programme reiterated to us the benefits of a co-facilitation model for delivery of the training. This mirrors the co-mediation model of peer mediation so you are able to model the approach for the young people. Having two facilitators was also essential due to the numbers attending the training. With adults coming from every school, at some sessions we had almost 50 people in the room, all of whom needed to be supported and managed. And finally, it was important to have two facilitators due to the risk of anyone falling ill or needing to miss a session for any other reason. This has been of particular importance during the course of the programme with covid being a constant concern and raised levels of other illness as a result.

In terms of SM staff, the delivery team for this programme consisted mainly of two people Kathryn Hilditch and Heather Zajac - both Project Officers for SM. We also had admin support from Clare Jackson (Officer Coordinator) who also supported the delivery on two occasions.

In addition to this, we trained Louise Stean from Our Minds Matters who supported and later facilitated a third of the sessions and we also trained another two members of school staff from across the area. One of these staff members Lesley Knox - went on to support the delivery of the training and would now be ready to take on a lead facilitator role. Unfortunately the other person was unable to continue due to personal reasons.

From a staff perspective, we were extremely limited in our capacity and the programme took up a massive proportion of our time. It was also high intensity delivery with some sessions running back to back for weeks at a time. This is not something we would be able to sustain on an ongoing basis. We therefore believe that, should a programme of this nature be commissioned again, we would need to build up our delivery capacity. A possible suggestion is to train facilitators to deliver from within the local authority in a similar model to the approach to this programme (please see the section on Bell Baxter below for more on this) or SM could set up an independent panel of facilitators to deliver on our behalf. This something we are considering for future delivery.



Heather Zajac, Kathryn Hilditch and Clare Jackson delivering the first peer mediation training session at the Cupar Corn Exchange, October 2021

INCIDENT MONITORING

It became apparent throughout the course of the programme that it would be useful for schools to carry out some form of conflict/incident monitoring exercise prior to peer mediation being introduced. If schools were able to monitor incidents for a set period of time possibly one week prior to peer mediation training and then repeat the exercise at an agreed time after the introduction of peer mediation, this would allow some analysis of the direct impact of the approach in terms of conflict incidences. As well as numbers of incidents and their nature, the monitoring could also record how things were dealt with prior to the introduction of peer mediation and whether this had changed later once peer mediation was introduced.

LOGISTICS

Central to the success of the programme was having a champion in Louise Stean. Louise was the key source of contact with the clusters and schools, already having an established role within the local authority education department and access to relevant contacts. Initially Louise arranged community venues for the delivery due to covid not allowing mixing within schools. Later Louise asked the cluster chairs to arrange venues within the cluster schools. For future projects of this nature, it will be essential to have someone within this role supporting the logistics. Ideally this person would be within the local authority in which we are working as having a working knowledge of the structures and people involved is a massive advantage. It is recommended that for future projects, the schools are encouraged to organise venues themselves.

Logistically it was also challenging to bring pupils together from different schools. It was essential that there was an adult accompanying each group who were responsible for the pupils as this role could not be taken on by the trainers with such large numbers.

MODEL

The current model of two consecutive days of delivery does work well and could continue to be the model we use. There does, however, seem to be a gap in terms of training options for those schools or pupils who are keen on conflict resolution and mediation skills training but not necessarily to develop into full mediation training. One option would be to offer one day training for large groups of young people in conflict and conflict resolution skills. This would be relevant and helpful for all young people and would teach them valuable life skills. Those young people who are particularly keen could then put themselves forward for peer mediation and the two-day training focusing specifically on peer mediation could then be offered.

If the above model were an option, this would allow for more time for mediation practice for those young people who show a particular interest in continuing their peer mediation journey.

Related to this we would also recommend that if schools are taking training forward themselves in the future, they may want to extend or adapt the delivery model examples would include delivering the training over more days to give more time for practice or delivering the training in sections over a number of weeks. Schools delivering themselves have much more flexibility and the opportunity to adapt the model to their own school culture and structure.

There also seems to be an interest in training for adult school staff in conflict-resolution and mediation skills that they can use in their work, particularly for PSA's who are working in the playground where a lot of conflict arises. One school requested this style of training and a 3 hour face to face session on Mediating Skills was delivered for teachers and PSA's on the 15th February 2023. This session was well-received and could be beneficial to other schools.

WHO ATTENDS - YOUNG PEOPLE

On average 4 young people attended from every school. These young people were chosen by the schools in a variety of different ways. We have limited feedback on this, however our suggestion is always that young people can apply themselves or be recommended by peers and or school staff. We recommend that pupils who show the signs of having good emotional intelligence should be encouraged to take part in the programme and that there is a mix of personalities as mediators come in all styles and characters. All of the young people involved were fantastic. Some will make great mediators and others may take a bit more time or may decide against mediation but will have gained skills from taking part in the training.

Such small groups of young people could put pressure on them to take it back and introduce it to their schools. For future programmes it may be beneficial to encourage slightly larger groups from each school so that there are more people involved who are able to share the role.

WHO ATTENDS - SUPPORTING ADULTS

The overwhelming majority of adults attending the training were fantastic and we could see that they will put everything into delivering successful peer mediation services. There were some, however, who had very little background information about why they were there and what they were attending. They were perhaps the only staff member available who could be released on those days and peer mediation was not something that they naturally adapted to. This is something to consider for future work of this nature the adults from the schools should ideally be identified well in advance of the training and given information prior to attending about what the training involves and the level of commitment required in taking their peer mediation service forward.

Our Minds Matter and SM are currently considering how to support adults in the schools further on peer mediation. Further support sessions are planned and we are also considering the possibility of training for Learning Support and Nurture Teachers so that they feel able to support school staff in taking peer mediation forward if required.

TRAINING FOR ADULTS

As mentioned previously, we trained three adults from Fife in delivering peer mediation training throughout the course of the programme. The aim of this was to have capacity within the area for training delivery to support the sustainability of the programme. This should be a central element of any future programmes of this nature.

RAISING AWARENESS OF MEDIATION

This programme gave Scottish Mediation the opportunity to share learning and raise awareness of mediation and mediation skills with over 400 children and approximately 100 adults. The potential impact of 500 people passing that information and learning on to their families, to friends, to their colleagues and other young people within their schools - is massive in terms of widening knowledge of mediation and its benefits.

Every young person who attends peer mediation training would ideally have an opportunity to become a peer mediator within their school. For those young people who decide peer mediation is not for them or for whatever reason do not get the opportunity to mediate, the training will still have offered them an enhancement in their life skills and a better understanding of positive approaches to conflict resolution.

MOVING FORWARD - BELL BAXTER TRAINING

As a direct result of the success of the Fife-wide programme, one cluster Bell Baxter - decided that they would like to go one step further and train all Primary 6 pupils across the cluster in peer mediation skills during the 2022/23 school year. Following discussions with the cluster, it was decided that 10 training sessions would be delivered for the approximately 300 Primary 6 pupils. The first 7 sessions would be delivered by Scottish Mediation and the final 3 sessions by staff from the Bell Baxter area. To support this, 10 adults from across the cluster who were interested in the approach were selected and attended a Training for Trainers session at Freuchie Primary School on the 18th August 2022 delivered by SM. These 10 adults were then offered shadowing and support opportunities to become confident at delivering the training without the direct support of SM staff.

From October 2022 to January 2023, SM delivered the first 7 sessions with the support of the trained school staff. The final 3 sessions were then delivered by the school staff team in January and February 2023.

The idea of training up a group of adults from across the cluster to continue the training delivery after Scottish Mediation intervention was the direct result of learning from the wider fife programme.

Feedback from all of the Bell Baxter sessions was positive. A follow up discussion with the cluster chair also told us that every school within the Bell Baxter cluster area now have a peer mediation service set up as a result 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

APPENDIX 2 | LOUISE STEAN, OUR MINDS MATTER

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

What made you choose peer mediation as an intervention for your schools?

We surveyed all of our P7 pupils in May 2021 on indicators relating to mental and emotional wellbeing and found that poor self-confidence and difficulties relating to peer relationships were key themes. We wanted to support our primary aged pupils to build confidence, self-esteem and communication skills, particularly in the wake of the pandemic, which we know impacted on their ability to connect with their peers and wider communities.

What made you choose Scottish Mediation as your training provider?

I attended a short session to find out about the peer mediation course that Scottish Mediation ran and spoke to one of the primary schools in Fife who had received the training previously, and felt that their fun and experiential training would be able to support our schools.

What were your aims and objectives that you wanted to achieve from the programme?

Improved confidence and self-esteem of pupils attending the course, and a focus on restorative approaches and less playground and school-based incidents over time.

Did the programme meet your needs and expectations?

Yes it did, although ongoing covid restrictions have prevented us from being able to roll the programme out as seamlessly as we would have liked. We won't know yet if it has made a significant difference in reducing low-level playground incidents.

APPENDIX 3 | SOME RELEVANT RESEARCH

Addressing the impact of COVID-19 | COVID-19 education recovery |
National Improvement Hub

“Some children and young people have found it difficult to re-engage in learning on return to the classroom... The lack of interaction with their peers has also significantly impacted on children’s health and wellbeing. Many report feeling anxious, and some have suffered the loss of significant others. Building relationships and managing transitions will both be important in re-engaging children and young people in their learning, and ensuring that they feel safe and confident in the school or setting.”

Coronavirus (COVID-19): impact on children, young people and families -
evidence summary October 2020 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

“A recurring theme is the importance of re-establishing friendships, as well as the critical importance of positive and supportive relationships for children’s wellbeing more generally.”

Helping each other SEN Magazine

GOOD REFERENCES TO RESEARCH

Coronavirus (COVID-19): impact on children, young people and families -
evidence summary October 2020 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

“Friendships and relationships - a recurring theme is the importance of re-establishing friendships, as well as the critical importance of positive and supportive relationships for children’s wellbeing more generally. Having somewhere safe to meet with friends is highlighted in some of the evidence which, given the recent changes in restrictions and the onset of winter, may merit some attention.”

Scotland’s Wellbeing: The Impact of COVID-19 - Chapter 5: Children,
Education | National Performance Framework

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