

Resolving Conflict in Schools

Peer mediation as a foundation for happier, healthier futures



A national evaluation
of peer mediation by the
Civil Mediation Council

“ I enjoy helping to lift a weight from people and helping them be happy again. ”

“ I’m more resilient to talk to people and hear them out more. ”

“ I can use the skills in real life, like paraphrasing even in my mind, and empathy. ”

“ We are not all the same and we do think differently about situations. ”

“ I’m more confident when I talk to people. ”

“ It makes me feel safer. ”

“ Sometimes when children have a conflict they like to speak to children their own age rather than get told off. ”

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Peer mediation as a
foundation for happier,
healthier futures



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of peer mediation by the
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Resolving Conflict in Schools: Peer mediation
as a foundation for happier, healthier futures
A report by the Civil Mediation Council

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Foreword

I am grateful for the opportunity to write a foreword for such an important report produced by the CMC. It demonstrates the huge benefits of mediation in schools, not only in terms of conflict resolution but as a driver of change. It provides a firm underpinning for the work already undertaken and a possible springboard for expansion in the future.

The wider impact of peer mediation which the report reveals is heartening. Unsurprisingly, the scheme has a positive effect on interpersonal skills, confidence, oracy, mental health and emotional maturity, amongst other things, as well as being a highly effective tool for dispute resolution.

As Lead Judge in relation to Alternative Dispute Resolution for the Judiciary, the most heartening aspect of the conclusions in the report is that peer mediation has the capacity to change the culture of the way in which conflict is seen and potentially resolved throughout society. I am fully aware of the benefits which mediation can have, both as a standalone means of settling legal disputes and as part of the judicial process itself. They are personal, social and economic. They can only be delivered to the full, however, if we embrace mediated settlement as a society.

This report highlights the work which is going on to encourage the rapid and positive resolution of conflict between young people, which in turn provides young people with skills which will serve them well in every aspect of their lives and most importantly goes some way to embedding a cultural shift in our society which will affect every aspect of our lives, including the resolution of legal disputes.



Lady Justice Asplin DBE
Lead Judge for ADR for the Judiciary
2 October 2025

Preface

Peer mediation works. Anyone who has had the privilege to deliver conflict resolution training to school pupils will know what a magical and meaningful experience it can be. However, the prevailing climate as described in this report means that peer mediation training is not merely a ‘nice to have’, but is an initiative that needs to be better embedded in education.

The CMC Peer Mediation Working Group has created this report for two reasons: to meet the need for fresh data on the impact of peer mediation programmes, and to review the value of peer mediation through a current lens. We see huge advances in technology, yet human skills with the potential to combat many modern-day problems are not given the same focus or priority.

Conflict is a natural part of life, and if individuals have the skills to manage it, it can be transformative in a positive way. Where those skills are missing, we see a huge cost to individuals and the public services we rely on.

Few would disagree that in a turbulent world we need to equip the next generation with the skills to better manage and respond to conflict. The timing of this report comes in the wake of increased global conflict and rapid technological development. We are also navigating the legacy of a global pandemic and soaring rates of mental ill health in our young people.

Although teacher experience is documented here, this report is not written from an educationalist’s perspective. The insights provided come from those with long-standing experience of mediation and working in schools, and there is a particular reason, explained below, why it is essential that the next generation has an understanding of what mediation is and how it works.

In the past two years seismic changes to the justice system in England and Wales have seen civil claims valued at less than £10,000 automatically referred to mediation. The Court of Appeal judgement in the landmark case of *Churchill vs. Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council*¹ ruled that courts can order parties to engage in non-court-based dispute resolution (such as mediation), and the Civil Procedure Rules now make alternative dispute resolution an overriding objective of civil justice. It is important that future court users have

a grasp of the benefits of mediation and are able to participate confidently in this new landscape.

Conflict is of course not confined to legal disputes. The impact of poorly managed conflict on individuals, families and communities cannot be overstated. The new research in this report will demonstrate the profoundly positive impact of peer mediation on individuals who are trained as peer mediators, as well as its effect on those around them. The life skill of conflict resolution has the potential to bring about a wide range of benefits, including reduced court backlogs, fewer school exclusions, improved teacher retention, better community cohesion, improved mental health in young people, and better skills for employability. The sooner peer mediation is better embedded in education, the sooner the ripple effects of its benefits can begin to take place. It really cannot happen soon enough.

Victoria Harris LLM



Victoria Harris, author
Chief Executive
Civil Mediation Council



Ben Harper, researcher
Peacebuilding in Schools
Coordinator, Quakers in Britain



Introduction

What is peer mediation?

Peer mediation in schools is a structured conflict resolution process where student mediators, often trained by specialists, help their peers work through disagreements or conflicts in a calm, respectful, non-judgemental setting. The goal is to promote understanding, improve communication, and reach a mutually acceptable solution, empowering students to resolve issues peacefully.

Peer mediation training tends to be delivered by mediators, peacemakers and educationalists, whose experience and values enrich the training they deliver.

What this report covers

This report will review the history of peer mediation and take a detailed look at the landscape in schools today to clearly demonstrate the need for peer mediation programmes. New data presented in chapter 3 details primary research undertaken by the Civil Mediation Council (CMC) Peer Mediation Working Group, which took place in the 2024–25 academic year. This research focused on six peer mediation providers, working with 29 schools and over 300 pupils to establish the impact of peer mediation on three groups:

- pupils trained as peer mediators
- school staff
- year groups included in peer mediation programmes

This report also considers a cost-benefit analysis for peer mediation programmes, looks at peer mediation work being delivered elsewhere in the world, and concludes with a set of recommendations.

Guidelines for the delivery of peer mediation training

When a peer mediation training provider goes into a school to deliver peer mediation training, they follow guidelines¹ initially created by the Education and Youth Subcommittee of Mediation UK which have been updated over time.

The guidelines cover a range of topics, from initial contact with a school through to evaluation of the training programme, and include how to engage with the school, how to help sustain the programme, how to assess whether a school is ready for peer mediation, and how to select pupils for the programme. A key point is that pupils must want to take part and must not be excluded due to perceived ability.

The length of the training delivery is a minimum of two days, with five days deemed best practice. In reality, the timing is often determined by what schools can fit into their busy curriculum.

The guidelines also look at the logistics of the programme to support its practical implementation and sustainability. Quiet rooms or appropriate spaces for mediation delivery, rotas for peer mediators, and how to report a dispute are all covered. Many schools implement the service at lunchtimes, with referrals received in various ways, such as via a dedicated postbox in primary schools or, for older pupils, via WhatsApp messages to a scheme coordinator.

In these ways, the guidelines are designed to ensure that a training provider supports the school beyond the delivery of training to pupils.

What pupils learn

A brief look at the content of the training, which is also detailed in the guidelines, reveals aspects that will be familiar to many mediators. Pupils are taught mediation principles – including impartiality and confidentiality, that it is the disputants and not the mediator who solve the problem, and how to set ground rules for a mediation meeting – and the skills and qualities of a mediator, including body language and active listening, are explored. Understanding emotions and how conflict starts and can escalate are also key parts of the training.

Role plays are integral to the learning. Peer mediation is practised in pairs, so each student teams up with a fellow pupil to co-mediate mock disputes. They begin with introductions, and role plays become more challenging as confidence grows and pupils are shown how to troubleshoot difficult situations. The training also covers situations – such as serious bullying, when it is important to involve a teacher – where peer mediation is not appropriate.

Peer mediators trained by CMC member training providers are given the opportunity to complete a specially designed peer mediation workbook at the conclusion of their training to reinforce key points and to demonstrate their understanding of what they have learned. On completion of the workbook, each pupil receives a CMC certificate to acknowledge their status as a peer mediator and to reinforce the value of this skill.

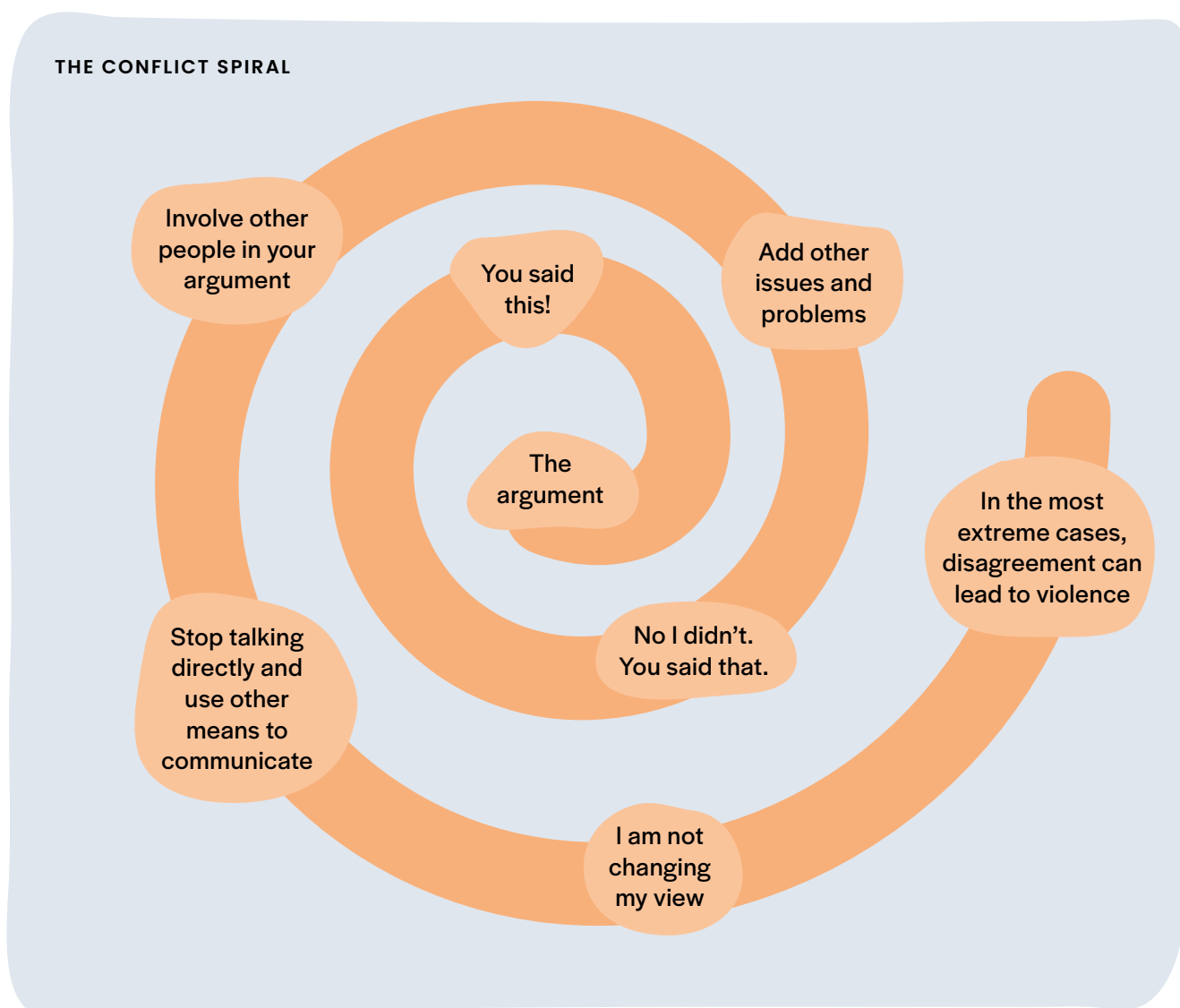


Figure 1 – Conflict spiral: a common tool in peer mediation training, which shows how conflict can escalate



1

The history of peer mediation in the UK

Early foundations

Influenced by work in the United States, peer mediation came to the UK in the late 1980s. The main goal was to reduce conflict in schools by training students to help their peers resolve disputes.

The first UK schools to adopt peer mediation typically had a strong commitment to a positive, non-violent school culture. Quaker schools influenced by peacemaking approaches were early adopters, embracing the idea that with appropriate training and support, students could play a role in resolving their own conflicts.

Growth and development

By the early 2000s, peer mediation was increasingly recognised as an effective way to address bullying and improve school culture. Peer mediation activity was supported by Mediation UK, which helped organisations and individuals to set up and deliver peer mediation programmes, providing a handbook and hosting conferences to connect individuals and to share learning. In 1998, Marian Liebmann co-authored *Mediation Works!*, a handbook explaining peer mediation and how to do it. In 2004, the Anti-Bullying Alliance in the UK began to promote peer mediation as part of its anti-bullying strategy for low-level bullying. Also, around this time the Youth Justice Board supported the development of peer mediation in youth settings, particularly in helping young offenders resolve conflicts and reintegrate into their communities. This work filtered into government committees.¹

Challenges and advances

Ellis Brooks, formerly Peace Education Coordinator at Quakers in Britain, has commented; 'I think my sense of the history is that between 2000 and 2010, a rich plurality of peer mediation providers emerged into civil society.' However, the growth of peer mediation in the UK has not had a linear trajectory.

In 2005 there were around 250 community mediation organisations delivering mediation in the community and a number supported peer mediation programmes. However, when austerity hit in 2008 many of these organisations lost funding and were unable to continue.² Mediation UK, the supportive umbrella organisation, also closed down. Without this key support framework the sector became more fragile.

Peer mediation managed to survive during the next decade thanks largely to the Peer Mediation Network (PMN), which linked to Quakers in Britain and, supported by the College of Mediators, updated guidelines for the delivery of peer mediation training. The network was attended by a group of mediators, peacemakers and educationalists who were keen to continue to develop and promote peer mediation.

In 2022 the PMN sought to integrate with the CMC to provide greater resources for this work, and in turn the CMC were keen to support community and peer mediation. This led to the CMC creating working groups for peer (and community) mediation which host quarterly meetings for interested individuals and organisations.

The CMC Peer Mediation Working Group currently has 75 members who deliver, or are interested in delivering, peer mediation training. Its meetings involve skill shares to help providers develop their practice. A standing agenda looks at topics including how best to promote peer mediation; research and influencing; fundraising; standards and quality assurance; youth engagement and inclusion.

In 2024 the CMC created a set of standards for peer mediation providers, including adherence to existing guidelines for training delivery, but adding two important aspects. First, all trainers must have a disclosure and barring (DBS) check to ensure that there is no reason why they cannot work with children. Second, trainers must have a safeguarding policy in place to show that they have received safeguarding training and know how and where to report any concerns for the children they work with. These standards, created by the CMC's Registration and Standards Committee (now its Mediation Standards Board), are vital to support safe delivery of peer mediation training.³

Challenges remain and some key challenges can be briefly summarised as follows:

- influencing policymakers to emphasise the value of conflict resolution training within the curriculum
- space for schools to adopt peer mediation programmes within a busy curriculum
- teacher training and school buy-in for meaningful implementation of these programmes
- for peer mediation programmes to be sustained within a school and have meaningful impact as part of a whole-school restorative culture
- the perennial challenge of finding funding for externally delivered peer mediation programmes

Emerging trends

Traditionally, peer mediation has been delivered to 10- and 11-year-olds before they transition to secondary school. There have always been exceptions, such as the excellent programme for sixth formers at Bacon's College in south-east London, and there is a growing trend to look at the value of these programmes across education. Universities, such as Goldsmiths in London, have recently developed a scheme, and at the other end of the scale the winner of the National Mediation Award for Peer Mediation Scheme of the Year in 2024 was Ocker Hill Infant and Nursery School, which delivered training to 6- and 7-year-olds.⁴

While peer mediation is being adapted for use across the education system, some providers are also distilling its life skills and delivering them as bespoke conflict-resolution training in secondary schools. An example of this is WMS's REFLECT programme, designed to provide targeted support for children who are at risk of suspension or exclusion from school.⁵

What is the biggest challenge you see facing the wider adoption of peer mediation in the UK?

We put this question to peer mediation training providers who collected data for this report.

Here are some of their responses:

"Getting research evidence trusted by influential educators."

"Funding!!"

"Resourcing this so that the training is of consistent high quality, and working on schools' wider policies on repairing harm and resolving conflict so this is part of a whole and not out on a limb."

"School budgets, as well as convincing (some) of the 'powers that be' of the value of peer mediation."

"The ever-increasing responsibilities that schools are put under from government etc. School is no longer just about reading, writing and maths. So much more is asked of teachers nowadays, including a massive amount of paperwork, coping with a variety of children from different countries, learning and behavioural difficulties, parents and complicated family lives, OFSTED requirements etc, etc. Whilst some schools will have a fundamental philosophy of improving behaviour, quite a few are struggling with teacher retention, which means that they are firefighting all the time on many fronts. Any new initiatives are almost impossible to implement."

"Staff are already pressed for time, so the idea of managing a team of mediators, supporting them and training new ones as well as keeping the scheme active and visible must be quite daunting."



2

The current landscape

The current landscape of education in Britain is under strain and raises the question of where focus for change must be applied for better outcomes. Here is what we know:

- **poor attendance:** over 170,000 children in England missed at least half of their scheduled classes in 2024¹
- **pupil suspensions:** there were almost 264,000 suspensions in spring 2022–23, the largest number on record for one term²
- **disruptive behaviour:** recent data from Education Support found that 63% of all staff feel they have experienced more incidents of challenging pupil behaviour, and 57% of all staff feel pupils have become more disruptive in lessons in the last year³
- **SEND:** the number of children with education, health and care (EHC) plans has increased year on year since 2016. The most common condition for those with an EHC plan is autistic spectrum disorder, and the key special educational needs (SEN) support for this group is for speech, language and communication needs⁴
- **mental health:** NHS data shows that one person in five between 8 and 25 years old has a mental health disorder⁵
- **effects of smartphones and social media:** a report commissioned by Channel 4 identified that Gen Z (currently 13–28 years old) is the first generation in recent history to be less tolerant of other people's views than the preceding generation⁶

Rachel de Souza, Children's Commissioner for England, has acknowledged that demand for children's mental health services continues to increase, outstripping investment, and that the numbers of children awaiting support is "staggering".⁷

The 2022 Quaker report *Peace at the Heart*⁸ provided us with a snapshot of student wellbeing. It stated that in a secondary school class of 22 students in Britain:

- four have a current mental health problem
- three have a diagnosable mental health condition, of whom two are unlikely to be getting the support they need from an overwhelmed NHS
- four have a history of self-harm, of whom at least one child will be self-harming currently, typically for relief from overwhelming feelings and/or to punish themselves
- seven have witnessed their parents' separation and may be experiencing anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem
- two have known at least four distinct types of traumatic experience

In *Reconnect: Building School Culture for Meaning, Purpose and Belonging* (2023), Doug Lemov cites three unprecedented problems faced by young people:⁹

- a mental health crisis coinciding with the increasing use of screen time, including smart phones, which has profoundly changed the nature of social interactions among young people
- an increasing lack of trust in institutions, as citizens see them as incompetent and unethical, resulting in increased scepticism and challenge by parents over whether schools can educate their children effectively
- increasing individualism, which is costing us a sense of community and mutual obligation in institutions, such as schools, built on social contracts

While these challenges paint a complex and often difficult picture of the current landscape, they also highlight the urgency and opportunity for meaningful intervention. In the face of these issues, it is essential to examine pathways available for restoration.

Repairing the landscape

Research is already taking place within Higher Education Institutions and United Nations agencies about how to respond to the challenges of our time and what we can do now to support the generation whose childhood and adolescence are taking place in such a rapidly changing world.

The Restorative Justice Council's latest report, *State of the Restorative Sector 2025 (Education)*,¹⁰ states that "... post-COVID-19 presents a unique opportunity to emphasise the importance of relational and restorative approaches in addressing the challenges of heightened dysregulation and diminished social skills among students and staff. Recognising this, the Department for Education (DfE) and Ofsted must prioritise the acknowledgment of restorative practices in their policy discussions, particularly concerning issues like exclusion and attendance".

The new data in the next chapter of this report makes a substantive contribution to the discussion, demonstrating how skills provided by peer mediation training help build and contribute to a restorative culture and self-esteem for individual pupils, which in turn supports better mental health. We will also see how peer mediation programmes in schools create a more inclusive school culture, which fosters an environment where more children can thrive and learn. The ability to connect and have difficult conversations benefits individual pupils, protects the learning environment for all and supports teacher retention. Affording our children access to the important life skill of conflict management is critical to mental health and resilience during education and beyond.

Oracy

Oracy and its link to peer mediation deserve mention. The essence of oracy is helping pupils to articulate their thoughts to others, to listen and reply with courtesy and intelligence. When Prime Minister Rishi Sunak spoke of all pupils learning maths up to the age of 18, the then leader of the opposition, Sir Keir Starmer, declared that oracy would be the skill focused on by a Labour government. Yet when the government's interim curriculum and assessment review was published in March 2025 the word oracy was absent.

Simon Jenkins, in an opinion piece for the *Guardian* (25 July 2025),¹¹ tells how oracy campaigners are seeking to hold Sir Keir Starmer to account. In an open letter, former education secretaries Charles Clark and Estelle Morris, writer Michael Rosen, political pundit Alistair Campbell, and 56 other oracy champions, pleaded with him, "in a world shaped by rapid advances in artificial intelligence, deepening social divides and persistent inequality, the skills of speaking, listening and communicating have never been more urgently needed." Jenkins concludes with his opinion that the Prime Minister is "more interested in giving 16-year-olds the vote than giving them a modern education" and suggests "if he were a true radical, he would honour his pledge and get them talking".

Of course, to mediators it's all about the listening rather than the talking. But if oracy is the arc under which better communication skills can lead to a breakthrough in embedding peer mediation in the curriculum, oracy and peer mediation make excellent bedfellows. Not least because the greatest contribution that a peer mediation programme can make is in supporting a generation to be more empathic, to be confident to have difficult conversations, and to learn the life skill of conflict management, a skill that will help them and our wider communities now and in the future.



Conflict is a part of life, but we are often ill-equipped to deal with it, leading to destructive conflict and subsequent aggression, submission or polarisation. Imagine instead if every young person in the UK experienced mediation as a peaceful and creative way to solve their conflicts while at school. Imagine cohorts of young people trained to be mediators providing this service. This is education in essential life skills for today's world, resourcing young people to resolve conflicts safely, creatively and confidently.

Sara Hagel, Peacemakers







3

New data

At the heart of this report is new data harvested over the academic year 2024–25. Six peer mediation training providers worked with 29 schools to collect data from three groups, detailed in sections A, B and C of this chapter:

- A: children trained as peer mediators
- B: school staff
- C: year groups with a peer mediation programme

Numerous studies highlight the high success rates of peer mediation. A meta-analytic review of 23 studies, involving 4,327 mediations, found an impressive **93%** agreement rate in resolving conflicts.¹ Rather than examine the outcomes of mediations, however, this study examines the impact of peer mediation programmes on peer mediators, school staff and year groups.

The peer mediation training providers who collected data were:

- Behaviour Matters – Greater London
- CRESST – South Yorkshire
- Mediation Hertfordshire – Hertfordshire
- Peacemakers – West Midlands
- The Resolution Centre – Jersey
- WMS – London

Peer mediation training providers worked with 29 schools to obtain data for this report. The schools were based in the following locations:

- Central London
- Greater London
- Sheffield
- Rotherham
- Birmingham
- Buckinghamshire
- Jersey

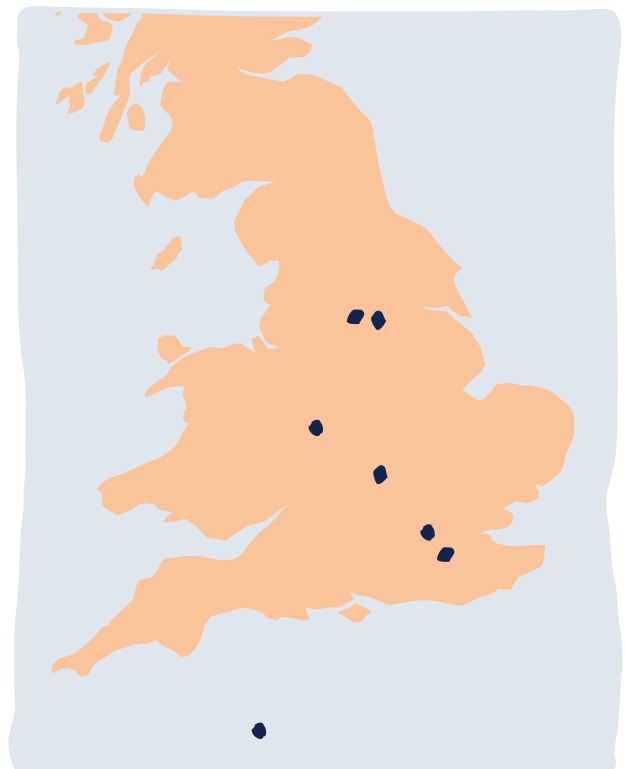


Figure 2 – Locations of schools which took part in this research



A: Children trained as peer mediators

The data collection focused first on quantitative data, based on set questions. First, children were asked whether the statement 'Becoming a peer mediator has made things better for me' was true or false. Of a total of 483 responses, 398 (82.4%) said it was true, 49 (10.1%) said it was false, and 36 (7.5%) did not respond. The second question and the children's responses to it are shown in table 1 below.

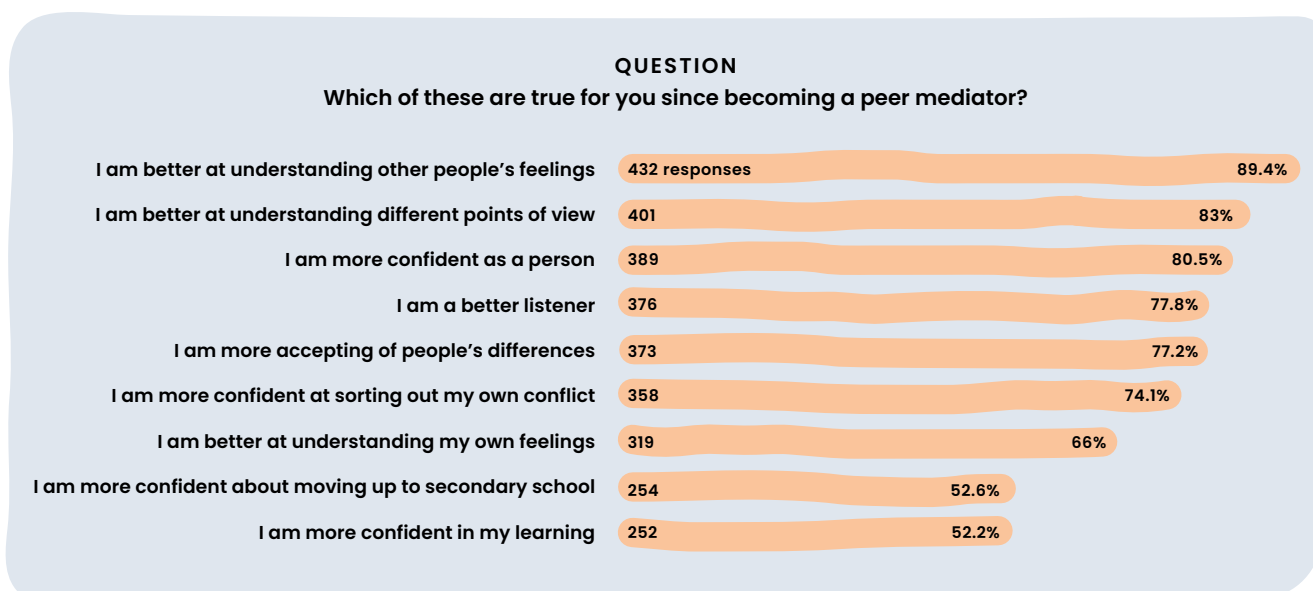


Table 1 – Has becoming a peer mediator made things better?

The research also invited commentary from the peer mediators. Qualitative data included the following comments:

"I am more confident when I talk to people."
 "It is better that I have a life skill that can always help in any conflict, even if it's not in school."
 "I feel more confident sorting problems at home."
 "Being a peer mediator has helped me sort out my own problems..."
 "Less scared of having arguments myself."

"I am more resilient to talk to people and hear them out more."
 "I am more understanding with other people in the school and having a better friendship with them."
 "Now I can use the skills in real life, like paraphrasing even in my mind, and empathy."
 "Being a peer mediator helps with understanding people's emotions, POV and much more. Additionally, the training is really fun and being able to help is amazing."

Conclusions for group A

The data shows clear benefit to children trained as peer mediators in two key areas:

Empathy and understanding

89.4% of children say they were better at understanding other people's feelings; 77.2% that they are more accepting of other people's differences; and 83% that they are better at understanding different points of view. It is evident that peer mediation supports the development of greater empathy, understanding and tolerance. At a time of increasing polarisation, this research demonstrates the impact

of peer mediation to reduce division and to counter concerns flagged about growing intolerance.

Emotional wellbeing

66% of children say they are better at understanding their own feelings, indicating greater self-awareness; 82.4% of children said becoming a peer mediator had improved their lives; and 80.5% that they are more confident. These statistics point to greater emotional regulation, which is crucial for improved mental health, stronger relationships and better performance in different settings.



B: School staff

We turn now to look at the responses from school staff, including teaching, support and lunchtime staff. The data collection focused first on quantitative data based on three set questions. First, staff were asked whether the statement ‘Peer mediation has had a positive impact in this school’ was true or false. Of 222 responses, 214 (96.4%) said it was true, and 8 (3.6%) that it was false.

Next, staff were asked ‘Would you recommend that other schools explore introducing a peer mediation programme?’ Of 221 responses, 214 (96.8%) said yes, and 7 (3.2%) said no. The third question and the staff members’ responses to it are shown in table 2 below.

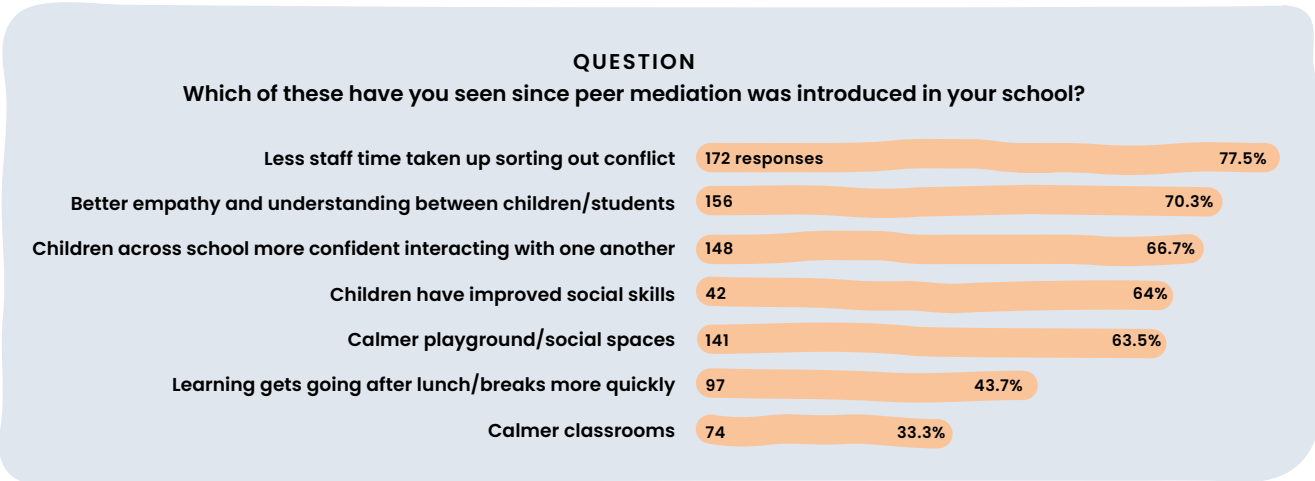


Table 2 – What changes have occurred since peer mediation was introduced?

The research also invited qualitative comments from school staff:

- “The smaller incidents go straight to the peer mediators” – lunchtime supervisor.
- “There’s less for us to manage with them around” – lunchtime supervisor.
- “Takes a lot of pressure off the adults. Low level incidents are resolved.”

- “There is also a noted increase of children returning from a dinner break happy that a problem has been dealt with without needing a member of staff.”
- “The process of mediation encourages our pupils to see situations from different perspectives, encouraging empathy and understanding between students and staff.”
- “Children (trained as PMs) have better communication and language skills and that comes into lessons.”

Conclusions for group B

Overall impact

96.4% of respondents say that peer mediation had a positive impact on the school, and 96.8% recommend that other schools explore introducing it.

Student development and wellbeing

64% say that children had improved social skills, and 70.3% reported better empathy and understanding between children.

Conflict reduction

77.5% say that less staff time was spent sorting out conflict, and 63.5% reported calmer playgrounds. A third reported calmer classrooms, and over 40% said that lessons got going more quickly after breaks and lunchtimes.



C. Year groups with a peer mediation programme

The data collection for this group involved a single question, to be answered before and after the implementation of a peer mediation programme at their school. The question was 'How do you mostly sort out fall-outs that happen between you and others at school?' During the data analysis and validation phase, it was determined that certain data entries did not meet the required standards. The issue was incomplete responses, which resulted in a mismatch between the number who had responded before and after an intervention. For this reason, numerical data for this aspect has been excluded from the analysis to maintain accuracy. A learning from this research is that more time was needed to enable some schools to collect and return the post-intervention feedback, and that data collection needed to be started earlier to facilitate this outcome.

Qualitative post-intervention feedback on the impact on year groups – from PUPILS

"It makes me feel safer."

"When you sit on that bench you just know it's going to get sorted out easily."

“Sometimes when children have a conflict, they like to speak to children their own age (so they won't get told off).”

"You can talk about what happened rather than spend 10 years in prison."

"The mediators ask questions."

"A world without PM would be a world without friends."

Qualitative post-intervention feedback on the impact on year groups – from SCHOOL STAFF

"The impact was noticeable – fewer minor disputes reached adults, and pupils became more reflective in their problem-solving."

Joe Melville, Deputy Head Teacher, Cotton-in-the-Elms C of E Primary School

“As adults we're dealing with a lot of problems during breaktime. These were usually squabbles that were easy to resolve but proved to be time-consuming. The adults in school are having far less problems to sort out as the children will speak with the peer mediators instead.”

Molly Whiffen, Teacher, Guilsfield Primary School

"So far, we are seeing success in terms of children seeking out the mediators, the mediators being confident and able to mediate the conflict."

Tammy Crees, ALNCO and Mental Health and Wellbeing lead, Penygloddfa School

Conclusions for group C

Quantitative findings from individual providers who were able to provide complete and accurate data did demonstrate a reduction in the percentage of children who were going to an adult to sort out fall-outs as well as an increase in the number of children who would ask for help from their peers.

Qualitative feedback from schools which have recently implemented peer mediation programmes supports this outcome.

The staff quotes shown above are excerpted from school case studies which are included in longer form in the appendix to this report.



4

Measuring the value

The manifestation of conflict within educational establishments bears a heavy price tag for young people and the teachers who support them. Often public funds are needed to repair the damage through spending on healthcare and teacher recruitment. Research to analyse the long-term impact and cost savings pre- and post-implementation of peer mediation programmes is still needed and is an example of longitudinal academic research that would help to elevate the voice of the peer mediation sector. This report, however, provides data from which we can extrapolate the cost of conflict in education by looking at the cost of school exclusions, mental health support and the effect of conflict upon teacher retention levels. It goes on to consider the comparative cost of implementing a peer mediation programme. Read in the context of the research findings set out in chapter 3, it amounts to persuasive evidence of the economic value of peer mediation.

Suspension and exclusion

A UK government report reveals that there were 10,885 permanent exclusions and 954,952 suspensions in the 2023–24 academic year, increases of 16% and 21% respectively on the previous year.¹ The economic cost to the public was estimated by the Institute for Public Policy Research in 2017 at **approximately £370,000** over the lifetime of each permanently excluded student.² Further, teenagers permanently excluded from school are twice as likely to commit serious violence within a year of their exclusion.³

CMC has been given access to statistics relating to a school in south London where, over an 18-month period, a peer mediation service dealt with 135 cases of conflict between students, of which 59 could have resulted in permanent exclusion or prosecution. Due to support from the peer mediation service, these disputes were managed and prevented from escalation with the associated serious consequences.

Teacher retention

The impact of conflict in the classroom upon teachers must not be underestimated. The latest available figures tell us that 40,813 teachers left the profession in 2022–23,⁴ which represents 8.7% of the teacher workforce, and while conflict is not the sole cause, it plays a part.

The *Guardian* ('Teacher vacancy rates at record high in England', 13 March 2025) reported that the teacher vacancy rate has doubled from that recorded before Covid.⁵ Jack Worth from the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER) is reported as saying, "Teacher recruitment and retention remain in a perilous state, posing a substantial risk to the quality of education." NFER also reported that pupil behaviour was one of the "fastest growing contributors to teacher workload" and they also reported a substantial increase in the proportion of teachers who say they are spending too much time dealing with pupil behaviour incidents.

In the Department for Education's National Behaviour Survey for 2023, teachers reported that, on average, for every 30 minutes of lesson time, 6.3 minutes were lost due to misbehaviour. The majority of teachers (69%) reported that between one and ten minutes were lost per 30 minutes of lesson time. Conflict in the classroom diminishes educational time for all students, as well as affecting teacher morale and on occasion promoting concerns for personal safety. It was interesting to note that while 90% of head teachers and secondary school leaders rated their school's behaviour as 'good', just 64% of classroom teachers and 47% of pupils felt the same. It is easy to imagine how the loss of time in lessons dealing with behavioural issues has an impact on morale.⁶

A government response to the Education Committee published on 9 January 2025 advised of a **£233 million investment in teacher recruitment and retention initiatives**, with much to attract and retain individuals but little to address the underlying cause of the exodus.⁷

Teacher retention is critical to school and pupil success and while reasons for departures may be wide-ranging, a school that does not have a restorative philosophy to support conflict resolution may find itself with more vacancies to fill and with more time and resources needed for recruitment.

Youth mental health crisis

A 2025 report from Future Minds Campaign highlights the growing challenges posed by mental health issues in England. It also outlines the financial, healthcare and educational costs of failing to address mental health conditions early. The report states that more than one in five children and young people now have a diagnosable mental health condition, but that the NHS is currently only able to support around 40% of those in need. The authors estimate that poor mental health in young people costs the economy at least **£300 billion annually**, while childhood mental health problems alone are projected to result in over **one trillion pounds in lost earnings** across the current generation.⁸

A 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) conducted by the National Foundation for Educational Research found that among 31 cohorts from OECD countries, English teenagers rank among the bottom ten for socio-emotional skills such as emotional control, empathy, assertiveness, perseverance, and stress resistance. The study has called on the government to explore what more it could do to incentivise schools to develop socio-emotional skills such as communication and collaboration among children.⁹

Emotional dysregulation in adolescence is linked to serious outcomes, including depression, anxiety, self-harm, substance abuse, eating disorders, PTSD, bipolar and mood disorders, risky sexual behaviour and suicidal ideation. Evidence from Cambridge University using long-term cohort data shows that early struggles with emotional regulation, especially alongside bullying or caregiver emotional challenges, are strong predictors of adolescent self-harm.¹⁰

The data outcomes from our report demonstrate the wellbeing benefits for young people of training to be a peer mediator, and while reasons for poor mental health are complex, there is no doubt that peer mediation training contributes to resilience, connection with others, and self-esteem. Peer mediation also supports friendship, and adolescents who enjoy high-quality friendships – marked by companionship, emotional support, security, and closeness – report higher self-esteem, lower anxiety, greater resilience, and improved coping responses to social rejection.

The 2011 report *Mental Health Promotion and Mental Illness Prevention: The Economic Case* sets out some statistics on the payoff per child of social and emotional learning (SEL) programmes such as peer mediation.¹¹ These are defined as programmes to help children and young people to recognise and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, appreciate the perspectives of others, establish and maintain positive relationships, make responsible decisions and handle interpersonal situations constructively. The report tells us that the net payoff of SEL programmes is **£6,369 per child** after five years and **£10,032 per child** after 10 years. It is likely that the cost benefit today is far greater now than was identified in 2011.

The comparative cost of peer mediation

In an ideal world all schools would benefit from peer mediation programmes through the curriculum, with teachers trained to support the implementation of the scheme and its sustainability. The reality of the grass roots environment for peer mediation in the UK is that schools currently tend to benefit from peer mediation in one of two ways; they either fund a peer mediation programme from their own budget or they benefit from a charitable or philanthropic donation to set up a programme, either directly or via those who provide the training.

From the peer mediation providers who contributed to primary research for this report we know that the cost of delivering peer mediation training can vary from £750 to £5,000. This range reflects differences in delivery approach: key factors include items such as the number of days of training, the number of pupils trained, the number of trainers used, whether the organisation delivering the training is not-for-profit, and whether any of the trainers are volunteers. For an example of a simple budget for peer mediation training delivery, see appendix 2.

Conclusion

Peer mediation has a role to play to support schools to be better at managing conflict and preventing the adverse consequences of classroom disruption, suspension, and permanent exclusion. Enabling pupils to work together and learn the life skills of conflict prevention and resolution aids resilience and good mental health. A calmer learning environment promotes better learning outcomes and teacher retention. The new data in this report signals how peer mediation can prevent the costly outcomes of conflict in education. Its potential to support cost savings is another reason why peer mediation warrants a higher profile in policy focus.



5

What happens elsewhere?

While peer mediation is increasingly recognised as a powerful tool for cultivating restorative cultures in schools, its adoption and implementation varies greatly around the globe. This chapter provides a brief comparative overview of peer mediation programmes in other countries, focusing on two of the more robust examples, and exploring models of funding, implementation, and long-term vision.

Global overview

Peer mediation initiatives have emerged in many countries since the 1990s, often seeded by civil society organisations or pilot projects, and in some cases supported by government funding. However, many early programmes referenced in international reports are no longer active or accessible, often due to discontinued funding. Strong examples can be found in Finland and New Zealand, which are considered below.

Finland: VERSO programme

Few nations have taken a top-down approach to peer mediation, which is what makes Finland such an interesting study.

Finland's VERSO programme, running since 2001 and now operated by the Finnish Forum for Mediation, is by far the most comprehensive and well documented peer mediation system globally. The programme offers children structured experiences in resolving conflict, exercising rights, and learning social responsibility.^{1 2}

VERSO key features

- mediation is viewed as a learning opportunity, not just a behaviour management tool
- emphasis is placed on child participation, agency, and understanding of justice from an early age
- backed by government through the Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (STEA), which is linked to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health
- results have been very positive: about 95% of mediations result in an agreement, and around 88% of those agreements are respected. Most student mediators say the experience is meaningful, and they feel proud of their role. Schools report fewer small conflicts and better student communication
- VERSO supports the Finnish National Core Curriculum, which includes goals such as teaching students to express themselves, work with others, and take care of themselves and their communities; peer mediation is recognised as a practical way to meet these goals

The word VERSO comes from the Finnish term *vertaisvittelu*, which means peer mediation. The programme is supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture and is used across Finland in primary schools, secondary schools, vocational schools, and even in kindergartens under the name Mini-VERSO.

VERSO is designed as a whole-school model; that is, it is not just for students but involves everyone in the school community, including principals, teachers, staff, students, and sometimes parents. The aim is to create a restorative and supportive school culture where conflicts are resolved constructively rather than through punishment.

The first step in bringing VERSO to a school is staff training. Teachers and other adults in the school are trained in mediation skills and restorative practices. They learn how to support student mediators, how to identify which cases are suitable for peer mediation, and how to act as mediation advisors who oversee the process. We found no specific cost data for the VERSO programme, but Finland's general education funding indicates substantial public investment in inclusive, rights-based schooling environments.

Peer mediation is deeply embedded in the National Core Curriculum as part of Finland's broader commitment to equity and democratic participation.

New Zealand: Cool Schools and Leadership through Peer Mediation

New Zealand's model is community-driven, spearheaded by The Peace Foundation, which has led peer mediation work since the 1990s. Its Cool Schools programme (primary level)³ and Leadership through Peer Mediation (secondary level)⁴ are longstanding initiatives that train teachers to support student-led peer mediation programmes in conflict resolution and leadership.

Peer mediation in New Zealand: funding and structure

- historically supported by the Ministries of Education, Health, and Social Development
- currently operates on a fee-paying school membership model, supplemented by donor support from a variety of funders and grants
- not formally embedded into the national curriculum, but has maintained scale and presence due to community engagement and cross-sector support

Other examples and emerging models

- Poland: countries such as Poland rely heavily on committed individuals like Marzena Korzonek, a judge who takes time out from her judicial duties to deliver peer mediation training within young-offender institutes or to children with specific learning needs.
- South Africa: organisations such as the Conflict Dynamics Empowerment Trust, established in 2021 and supported by UK mediator Felicity Steadman, are seeking to develop peer mediation in townships to support schools with a conflict management and mediator skills programme called the Peacemaker Project.⁵
- Sweden: a report refers to Nordic countries being heavily influenced by the work of Nils Christie, a pioneer of restorative approaches, with programmes resulting in increased pupil self-esteem and more time available for staff who are freed up from managing conflict. The challenges referenced, including parental scepticism and teachers being unwilling to 'let go of conflict', point to this being a grassroots environment rather than policy-led.⁶
- In Scotland, About Education, a Scottish government executive agency, publishes information on its website to support schools and parents to find out more about peer mediation.⁷

In 2016 information was gathered by Liz Lawrence and the Mediation in Education Officer of the Scottish Mediation Network to examine global approaches to peer mediation.⁸ Then as now, it is the case that save where peer mediation is well established, the landscape globally for peer mediation continues to change as focus and/or funding comes to an end or begins.

Summary and reflections

Peer mediation globally is marked by variation in scale, funding, and integration, but several key trends emerge:

- sustainability often depends on whether programmes are integrated with goals in the national curriculum (e.g. Finland) or robustly community-supported (e.g. New Zealand)
- data transparency remains a challenge. Few countries offer detailed costings or long-term impact evaluations
- it is harder to embed peer mediation in educational culture where programmes are dependent on intermittent funding
- in terms of future focus, Finland and New Zealand offer rich case studies for further exploration: Finland for its systemic integration, and New Zealand for its grassroots longevity and collaborative approach



Conclusion

The current landscape for young people presents complex challenges that demand an immediate and innovative response. Students today are facing unprecedented levels of poor mental health, exacerbated by social media pressures and increasingly fragmented communities. Schools, traditionally seen as safe and stable environments, are now also grappling with growing classroom conflict, teacher burnout, and a worrying rise in behavioural issues. At the same time, teacher retention is in crisis, with staff citing unmanageable workloads and persistent disciplinary issues as key factors pushing them out of the profession.

This social context is further complicated by the increasing polarisation of views among young people, influenced by online echo chambers and divisive digital discourse. Technology, while offering many benefits, has also contributed to reduced face-to-face interaction, diminished empathy, and a weakened sense of belonging for many students. These changes are impacting students' mental health and social development, and are eroding the traditional fabric of school life.

In this environment, peer mediation emerges not only as a conflict resolution tool, but as a deeply curative practice that addresses many of the root causes of disconnection, hostility, and misunderstanding. The research presented in this report makes a compelling case for the value of peer mediation, particularly when embedded as a sustained, school-wide initiative. Peer mediation fosters a culture of listening, empathy, and accountability – qualities that are urgently needed in our education system and society at large.

The benefit of peer mediation to young people

Students trained in peer mediation consistently report increased self-confidence and improved interpersonal skills. From the new research in this report we learn that 89% of young people trained as peer mediators say they are better at understanding other people's feelings. Students learn to manage emotions, listen actively, and reflect critically – all essential elements of emotional literacy. The experience also provides a powerful sense of agency and belonging, as young people take on meaningful roles within their school communities.

These skills are not only relevant to school life but carry forward into adulthood. Being able to stay calm under pressure, resolve disputes constructively, and engage with others' perspectives are critical competencies for life, work, and citizenship. As highlighted by the World Economic Forum, the most in-demand skills by 2030 include resilience, leadership, creativity, and empathy¹ – all nurtured through peer mediation.

Stories from former mediators, such as those supported by CALM Mediation in London, show long-lasting impacts. Some have become teachers who now implement mediation programmes themselves, while others continue to volunteer in the mediation sector. These ripple effects highlight the deep and enduring personal growth made possible through peer mediation.

The benefit of peer mediation to schools

Schools today are under immense pressure. Peer mediation offers a practical strategy to alleviate some of the challenges faced. The new data in this report shows that 96% of school staff say that peer mediation has had a positive impact on their schools. The data also reveals that over three-quarters of school staff have found that a peer mediation programme has enabled students to resolve disputes among themselves, reducing the time teachers spend managing conflicts, allowing them to focus more on teaching and student development.

The culture of schools is also strengthened by peer mediation. When students feel heard, valued, and empowered to resolve their own issues, school communities become more inclusive and respectful. A better learning environment not only benefits students but also helps retain teachers by reducing the emotional toll of unresolved conflict and disciplinary breakdown.

Moreover, peer mediation builds a shared understanding that complements the broader aims of education. Instead of relying on punitive measures, students engage in restorative dialogue, developing a deeper sense of responsibility and community.

The wider societal benefit of peer mediation

The impact of peer mediation extends well beyond the school gates. It plays a crucial role in shaping the kind of citizens we need in a complex, divided world. Mediation teaches young people to value dialogue, empathy and collaboration – values that are vital in every area of society.

As mediation becomes more integrated into the justice system, early education about its principles helps build public understanding and trust. When young people understand how mediation works, they are more likely to seek non-adversarial solutions in adulthood, potentially reducing the social and financial costs of conflict.

Peer mediation also supports civic development.

Research indicates a significant link between school exclusion and serious crime among children.

Children who are excluded from school are more than twice as likely to commit serious violent crimes compared to their peers who have not been excluded.² These findings underscore the importance of finding effective interventions.

From this research we know that 80% of young people trained say they feel more confident, and that 82% say that being a peer mediator has improved their lives. Two-thirds of school staff also notice increased empathy

and understanding between children when a programme has been implemented. It is clear that peer mediation has the power to help cultivate emotionally literate, socially responsible individuals who are equipped to contribute positively to their communities. Whether in the workplace, in families, or in public life, these skills enable better communication and stronger, more resilient social bonds.

In summary

Peer mediation is not an optional add-on for schools – it is a vital, future-focused practice that addresses some of the most pressing issues of our time. It supports the mental health and development of young people, strengthens school communities, and fosters the socio-emotional skills needed for thriving societies.

As mediation will increasingly be a feature of the justice system that governs and supports the lives of future citizens, peer mediation in schools is key to bringing about a culture change in how we resolve conflict.

And as young people grow into the next generation of parents, neighbours, colleagues, and leaders, their ability to understand others, resolve conflict, and build connection will be key to creating a more peaceful, cohesive world. Investing in peer mediation is, ultimately, an investment in the future we all share.



Compassion, empathy, care, respect, kindness all build connection. Life is about connection.

Richard Stevens, The Resolution Centre

Young people are more than capable and want to resolve conflict. We as adults owe it to them to give them the chance.

David Walker MBE, CALM Mediation





Recommendations

The following recommendations are designed to support the wider adoption and effective implementation of peer mediation programmes, as well as to promote a long-term cultural shift in approaches to conflict.

1 Recognition by the Department for Education in England and the Welsh government

Formal recognition of peer mediation as an evidence-based, effective tool for conflict resolution that supports youth mental health and positive learning environments. This could include:

- signposting schools to CMC-approved peer mediation training providers on webpages and in guidance
- guidance for schools on implementing peer mediation programmes directly

2 Embedding conflict resolution in teacher training

Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes to include training on restorative practices and conflict resolution, including peer mediation frameworks. Equipping new teachers with these skills from the outset to help create restorative school cultures and support the long-term sustainability of peer mediation programmes.

3 Integrating conflict resolution training into education and youth settings

Greater emphasis on conflict resolution skills, including peer mediation, across all key stages of the national curriculum, from nursery education to Higher Education.

Consideration should be given to further extending the scope of conflict resolution training to:

- youth organisations (e.g. Scouts, Guides, youth clubs)
- apprenticeship programmes
- home education environments
- violence reduction units
- NHS mental health initiatives for young people

4 Building the evidence base through research

Longitudinal research into the impact of peer mediation, including outcomes relating to mental health; academic performance; career progression and interpersonal relationships for students; and levels of teacher retention. This recommendation to be reviewed by platforms such as the CMC Academic Forum and ADR Researchers Network.

5 Enhancing promotion and public awareness

Continued promotion through existing channels to include policy advocacy; the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT); the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL); social media; and recognition at the National Mediation Awards. Further efforts should include:

- media campaigns and arts-based initiatives depicting mediation as a constructive response to conflict
- celebrating schools that sustain programmes, with national recognition as centres of excellence
- acknowledging the achievements of individual peer mediators
- developing awareness of peer mediation for parents

6 Sustainable funding models

The documented costs of conflict in education justify investment in preventative strategies such as peer mediation. Recommendations for funding include:

- central government investment in curriculum development and teacher training (as modelled in Finland)
- school-level budgeting where feasible
- philanthropic and community foundation support for local delivery by accredited peer mediation training organisations and individuals
- national funding bids by organisations such as the CMC to develop regional 'train the trainer' programmes and to grow delivery capacity

7 Cross-sector collaboration and knowledge-sharing

Peer mediation's growth in the UK has been driven by interdisciplinary collaboration – including mediators, educators, and peacebuilders – with growing contributions from psychologists, restorative practitioners, and academics.

The CMC Peer Mediation Working Group remains a key platform for ongoing collaboration. Teachers, schools, local authorities, charities, businesses, and education bodies are encouraged to engage with the group to help advance peer mediation nationally.

For more information or to get involved, contact secretariat@civilmediation.org

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It's all about case studies really. Promotion of positive peer mediation stories to media, education decision-makers, politicians and other bodies that work regularly with children, e.g. Duke of Edinburgh Award, uniformed groups e.g. Scouts, Guides, Boys Brigade, sports coaches, in order to not only inform, but also maybe to run courses for their young people as part of their training.

Michele Wheeler,
Mediation Hertfordshire

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In Wales, the biggest opportunity is the alignment between peer mediation and the aims of the new Curriculum for Wales, which emphasises wellbeing, healthy relationships, and developing ethical, informed citizens. Peer mediation offers a practical, student-led way to embed these values into everyday school life, supporting key priorities such as anti-bullying, emotional literacy, and pupil voice. There is also strong potential for peer mediation to complement the Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing and contribute to early intervention under the NYTH/NEST framework. With the right investment and national support, peer mediation could become a core part of restorative practice in Welsh schools.

Lynne Hughes-Williams,
Newport Mediation

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Appendix 1: Excerpts from case studies, 2024–25

The case study excerpts below were collected in 2024 and 2025: schools that had recently implemented a peer mediation programme were invited to reflect on their aims for the programme and its implementation, challenges, and impact.

We launched peer mediation after training the whole of Year 6 in the autumn term and rolled it out before Christmas. The aim was to give children tools for resolving low-level conflict independently, and to build a greater sense of responsibility and empathy across the year group. While not every child was enthusiastic at the start, others really embraced the role, and it gave them a real sense of purpose. The impact was noticeable – fewer minor disputes reached adults, and pupils became more reflective in their problem-solving.

Even if schools don't roll out a full programme, I would recommend teaching the conflict resolution elements as standalone lessons. It was powerful for our Year 6 pupils and helped develop key skills for secondary readiness.

Joe Melville, Deputy Head Teacher, Coton-in-the-Elms C of E Primary School

The primary motivation for the school was to provide students with a constructive way to resolve conflicts. Before we put peer mediation into place, we were having quite a few conflicts between the children at breaktimes.

The goal was to create a more positive and peaceful school environment for children and staff.

I can honestly see a change in behaviour, a noticeable decrease in conflicts and disciplinary issues. Students have developed better communication and problem-solving skills. Some students emerge as leaders, taking on more responsibilities within the school.

I would recommend peer mediation as it brings about positive changes in the school environment. Students gain valuable life skills that extend beyond the classroom. It empowers students to handle conflicts independently and responsibly.

Martine Wynne, Teacher, Ysgol Caersws Primary School

I was approached by the school to attend peer mediation training as it aligns with our Quaker values and ethos. The idea of empowering children and giving them the tools to support their peers as well as themselves in emotional regulation should be the future of every educational environment. Going into the training I was hoping it would offer practical ways to deliver engaging, powerful lessons in which children would be eager to get involved. (Which it absolutely did!).

Like any school, timetabling was always going to be the most difficult element but after a sit-down, a lot of ideas shared and discussion around what year group would be delivered the training, a weekly slot was allocated. This 'little and often' approach has really benefited the children, and the weekly timetabled session has given it a level of importance to children as well as parents.

Our Year 4s are beaming with their new sense of responsibility.

Daisy Sanson-Harris, Teacher, Ackworth School

Children today are facing huge challenges: AI, social media, unemployment, poverty, parental mental health, family trauma and war conflict can all negatively impact young people. At Gorse Hall Primary and Nursery school, our holistic approach to education and wellbeing means teaching pupils to have the necessary knowledge and skills to adapt to this ever-changing world and find peace within themselves and others. Peer mediation aligns with our 'relational inclusion' approach to behaviour. It seemed the perfect match!

We had a large number of Year 5 wanting to become peer mediators after the initial assembly. The guidance given by Ben was very useful and helped me to plan, involve parents and raise the profile with all stakeholders. I really enjoyed training the peer mediators and the pupils loved it. The training I completed with Ben made me reflect on my own teaching practice and how I manage conflict within the school setting. Our peer mediators are more successful at managing their own conflict at school and home.

One of the bigger challenges was having the opportunity to observe the peer mediators in action. Having another adult involved during the peer mediation recruitment and training, such as the year group LSA [learning support assistant] will really help next year and lessen the workload. Frequent catch-up sessions; refresher training; support and encouragement by all staff; and a high profile across school, e.g. through assemblies and awards, has had a positive impact in maintaining the programme.

The biggest impact has been the skills developed by the peer mediators. They have been amazing and, although we had a large number of peer mediators initially, the final 20 pupils have consistently carried out their role with pride, diligence and resilience. I would thoroughly recommend that all schools invest – together we can make a real change to our future generation!

Jane Evans, Deputy Head Teacher, Gorse Hall Primary School

Our school decided that we would like to take part in the peer mediation training as we found that adults were dealing with a lot of problems during breaktime. These were usually squabbles that were easy to resolve but proved to be time-consuming. We took part in the peer mediation training in the hope that these issues could be resolved in a different way in order to free adults that were required to support the behaviour of a difficult year group. After completing the training, we were both keen to set it up as soon as possible. In order to do this, we planned two full days to train up our year 4/5 class (26 children) in two separate groups. This allowed the two of us to spend time with both groups and made it easier to train them as the group sizes were more manageable. The children absolutely loved the training and most of them were keen to get started. Before we introduced the programme in a whole school assembly, we knew it was important to introduce the scheme to all adults in school and to get them on board. We also sent out a letter explaining the scheme to all parents and had no negative responses towards it.

After speaking to the adults in school, they have been really positive and feel that the programme does work as long as it is consistent. They are having far less problems to sort out as the children will speak with the peer mediators instead. The challenges we've faced is that some children no longer wanted to be peer mediators after taking part in the training. We have also found that it can be hard to motivate the peer mediators and sometimes takes some encouragement for them to do it during their playtimes. To combat this, we have decided to reward the peer mediators for the amazing job they are doing during a whole-school assembly and are planning on arranging a meeting with Ben the trainer to encourage them to carry on their hard work. On the whole, we would absolutely recommend taking part in the programme as it has had a really positive impact on the behaviour during breaktimes. Most of the children love being able to help and enjoy helping with the younger children's problems.

Molly Whiffen, Teacher, Guilsfield Primary School

We introduced peer mediation in our school because we wanted to give children the tools to resolve minor conflicts independently and respectfully. We hoped it would empower pupils to take greater ownership of their behaviour, develop their listening and empathy skills, and reduce low-level disagreements during unstructured times. We also wanted to create a more positive and peaceful playground environment.

To get the programme up and running, we worked closely with external trainers to deliver sessions to a selected group of Year 5 pupils. The training was engaging, and pupils were enthusiastic about taking on this new responsibility. We adapted the GLIDE script early on, shortening and simplifying it to make it feel more natural and easier for children to use confidently.

One challenge has been keeping mediators motivated when there are fewer conflicts to mediate, especially when

staff haven't consistently directed pupils to use the service. We've addressed this by reminding staff of the benefits of peer mediation and regularly checking in with our mediators.

The impact has been overwhelmingly positive. Our mediators feel equipped not only to help others but also to use the skills in their own lives. We would highly recommend peer mediation to other schools – it fosters independence, responsibility, and emotional intelligence in children.

**Lisa Birkett, Year 5 Class Teacher,
Littlecoates Primary Academy**

In September 2025, following the newly appointed head teacher arriving the previous term, we embarked on the Peaceful Schools programme with our three Year 5/6 classes, targeting 85 children. We immediately saw the ripple effect from this in terms of patience and resilience to deal with conflict resolution.

In November 2024, we were then given the opportunity for two members of staff to attend the two-day peer mediation course run by Ben Harper. We were immediately inspired and knew that this was a natural progression from the Peaceful Schools programme that we needed to do in our school.

We were equipped with the overview, resources and enthusiasm to go back to school to begin to plan for how we would implement peer mediation.

We were very lucky to have the invaluable support and time given by Fleur, a Peaceful Schools programme volunteer, to help to guide us step by step on the way.

We have delivered two teacher-staff meetings due to job-share teaching commitments, an LSA and some dinner staff training for those that could attend.

We have delivered approximately 12 hours of pupil training across seven sessions to initially 31 children. Twenty-seven children completed the training.

The pupils thoroughly enjoyed the team games, learning the skills needed to be an effective peer mediator, and how to work alongside others to deal with conflicts that may arise in our setting.

Since completing the training we now have a room for the peer mediators to access that is set up with posters, GLIDE scripts and resources that they need to deliver a mediation. The children chose to have lanyards with a badge to distinguish them when they are on duty.

We have currently completed four weeks of the peer mediation timetable, targeting the Year 3/4 lunchtime.

So far we are seeing success in terms of children seeking out the mediators; the mediators being confident and able to mediate the conflict; the mediators referring in instances that staff need to know about; and the instances that staff need to be dealing with lowering.

**Tammy Crees, ALNCO and Mental Health and
Wellbeing Lead, Penygloddfa School**

Appendix 2: A simple budget for peer mediation training delivery

Table 3 shows an example of a simple budget for peer mediation training delivery, and it makes the following assumptions: day rate comparable with a supply teacher, training delivered by a not-for-profit organisation, and that the trainer lives locally. This information is supplied with the caveat that some trainers will provide a longer five- or six-day programme (rather than the three-day programme illustrated here). More expensive programmes may use up to four facilitators, supply tabards for the peer mediators and manage mediation rotas, as well as providing check-ins and support in the year following the training to help sustain the programme, all items which this budget does not include.

Aspect of training	Days	Unit cost (£)	Subtotals (£)
Liaising with school	0.5	225	112.50
Planning and preparation	1	225	225
Introductory workshops to target cohort*	1	225	450
Days delivering peer mediation training*	3	225	1,350
Twilight training for staff + launch day assembly*	1	225	450
Evaluation visit	0.5	225	112.50
Travel to the school	6 hrs	20	120
Printing materials	1 time	25	25
Admin and on-costs	1 time	50	50
Total			2,895

* Based on delivery by two peer mediation trainers

Table 3 – Example of a school budget for peer mediation training provided by Quakers in Britain

Notes

Preface

- 1 *Churchill v Merthyr Tydfil BC* [2023] EWCA Civ 1416 – ADR by court order

Introduction

- 1 Peer Mediation Training for Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (Peer Mediation Network)

1 The history of peer mediation in the UK

- 1 Memorandum submitted by the Department for Education and Skills (UK Parliament Select committee on Education and Skills: Minutes of Evidence, October 2006)
- 2 *Transforming Community Conflict* (Mediation Hertfordshire, 2021)
- 3 CMC Membership Rules: Peer Mediation Training in Schools – Individual (Civil Mediation Council)
- 4 'Quaker-led Mediation Scheme Honoured in Parliament' (Quakers in Britain, 17 December 2024)

2 Current landscape

- 1 'Record 170,000 children in England missed at least half of classes in 2024' (*The Guardian*, 20 March 2025)
- 2 'School suspensions: England set for highest number in school year' (BBC News, 18 April 2024)
- 3 'Teacher Wellbeing Index 2024' (Education Support, November 2024)
- 4 'Special educational needs in England' (www.gov.uk, 12 June 2025)
- 5 'Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2023 – wave 4 follow up to the 2017 survey' (www.digital.nhs.uk, 21 Nov 2023)
- 6 'Beyond Z: The Real Truth About British Youth – Speech by Alex Mahon, Chief Executive, Channel 4' (www.channel4.com, 1 November 2022)
- 7 'Press Notice: Children's Commissioner calls for urgent action to tackle waiting times and inequality in mental health care for children' (Children's Commissioner for England, 18 May 2025)
- 8 *Peace at the heart: A relational approach to education in British schools* (Quakers in Britain, 2022)

- 9 Doug Lemov, Hilary Lewis, Darryl Williams and Denarius Frazier, *Reconnect: Building School Culture for Meaning, Purpose and Belonging* (Jossey-Bass, 2022)

- 10 State of the Restorative Sector 2025 (Restorative Justice Council, 2025)
- 11 Simon Jenkins, 'Another way we are failing an entire generation: we must teach young people to speak' (*The Guardian*, 24 July 2025)

3 New data

- 1 Ron Unwin, 'A Summary of the Effectiveness of Peer Mediation in Schools from the Research Literature' (unpublished report, drawing on: 1. Turnuklu, A., Kacmaz, T., Sunbul, D. and Ergul, H., 'Does peer-mediation really work? effects of conflict resolution and peer-mediation training on high school students' conflicts' (*Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2009); 2. Lýdia Lešková and Lenka Haburajová Ilavská, 'Peer Mediation as a Means of Eliminating Conflict in the School Environment' (*The Journal of Education, Culture, and Society*, 2023); 3. Burrell, N.A., Zirbel, C.S. and Allen, M., 'Evaluating peer mediation outcomes in educational settings: A meta-analytic review' (*Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, 2003); 4. Ibarrola-García, S., 'Peer relationships: school mediation benefits for sustainable peace' (*Pastoral Care in Education*, 2023))

4 Measuring the value

- 1 Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England (www.gov.uk, 10 July 2025)
- 2 'Excluding a pupil "costs taxpayer up to £370k"' (*TES*, 10 October 2017)
- 3 'Teenagers excluded from school "twice as likely" to commit serious violence' (*The Guardian*, 22 March 2025)
- 4 School workforce in England: Reporting year 2024 (www.gov.uk, 5 June 2025)
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5 What happens elsewhere?

- 1 FFM develops society through mediation (www.sovittelu.com)
- 2 Mediation in education (www.sovittelu.com/vertaissovittelu/in-english/)
- 3 Cool Schools: Peer Mediation Programme (The Peace Foundation/*Te Rōpū Rongamau o Aotearoa*)
- 4 *Leadership through Peer Mediation* (The Peace Foundation/*Te Rōpū Rongamau o Aotearoa*, 2018)
- 5 Conflict Dynamics: Training & Dispute Resolution Services (Conflict Dynamics Empowerment Trust)
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- 7 'Restorative approaches – Peer mediation' (Education Scotland, 2025)
- 8 'Peer Mediation Profile around the World' (Scottish Mediation Network)

Conclusion

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