

Information for Volunteer Mediators

Volunteers are fundamental to the work of Mediation Hertfordshire. They provide the mediation service and are the public face of the organisation. The use of volunteers reflects the Management Committee's commitment to an independent and impartial service. The Committee recognizes the importance of supporting volunteers as a valuable resource.

1. Volunteers

Potential mediators need to have good listening and communication skills, be able to act impartially and be self-aware. You should be able to work and interact with a wide range of people from varying backgrounds. You must generally be over 16.

2. Time Commitment

Mediators are asked to volunteer for a minimum of 5 cases a year and to attend bi-monthly support meetings. Please note that the majority of mediations take place during the day or in the evenings and are rarely run at weekends. We therefore require volunteers to be available during the week: either evenings **or** daytime, **or** both.

Due to the needs of clients the service must be flexible in the times that mediation is carried out. This flexibility is achieved through a diversity of mediators, meaning that the exact timing of your commitment can be negotiated and renegotiated to suit your own individual commitments. We also ask that mediators stay with the service for at least one year following the training course.

3. Mediating

- Mediators will work in pairs to mediate neighbour disputes referred and accepted by the service.
- Volunteers can only begin to mediate once they have completed a basic training programme.
- The process of mediation first involves meeting the parties in the dispute separately. Then with all parties' consent a full, or round table, mediation can take place.
- Initial meetings occur in the client's home. Round table mediations occur in a neutral venue near the clients' homes.

4. Support

Support for mediators is an important part of the service's commitment to its volunteers. Both individual support and team support are given. Mediators will be expected to attend support meetings on a regular basis.

5. The Training Programme

Mediators will be expected to undertake both initial and ongoing training. The initial training programme will last approximately 35-40 hours over 6 days. Courses may be run at weekends or one weekday over a period of six weeks.

The training course will cover the following mediation skills and principles.

- Impartiality
- Creating Trust
- Problem Solving
- Flexibility
- Equal Opportunities
- Listening Skills
- Presentation Skills
- Self Awareness
- Confidentiality
- Management of the Interaction

More details of the training course will be given when recruitment is underway.

6. Expenses

Mediation Hertfordshire will pay mediators all reasonable expenses. This may include childcare costs and taxis, but please note that in these instances prior permission must be sought.

7. Quality Assurance

Mediation Hertfordshire offers appropriate training to mediators in order for them to provide a high quality and impartial mediation service. Mediators are asked to continually assess their own skills in order to provide a high quality service.

Mediation Hertfordshire has achieved the Community Legal Services Quality Mark. Individual mediators are encouraged to compile a portfolio of their cases and submit these for assessment. The service will support mediators in preparing a portfolio following their initial training. There will be regular opportunities to reflect on and talk about cases through individual supervision and team meetings.

8. Legal Issues

Mediators do not provide legal advice to clients.

Mediators are volunteers. Whilst we ask for a minimum commitment of time, this should not be understood to constitute any form of employment contract.