**Mediation Service - Building better workplace relationships.**

**Call for Mediators.**

**Summary**

1. As part of our plan to improve research culture, NDORMS set up an internal Mediation Service for all its staff and students in January 2022. Since then, the NDORMS Mediation Service has been available to all members of staff and students in the Department who find themselves in conflict with another member of staff or student. Mediation is a confidential, voluntary and informal process that helps you talk issues through with your colleague(s) and an impartial mediator/s to find a way forward. The mediators also provide short training sessions on topics related to conflict to support management and resolution of issues. Isuara Thomas, Louise Cotterell and Maria Granell-Moreno are the trained and accredited mediators to facilitate that. Check out our [Mediation Service webpage](https://www.ndorms.ox.ac.uk/about/working-with-us/mediation-service).
2. We have been carrying out this successful small-scale (single department-NDORMS) pilot using funds awarded through the Research Culture Enhancement Fund (which came from the Wellcome ISSF); the pilot provided evidence of the value and benefits of mediation. We are aware that there is great interest in offering mediation more widely (interest from MSD, MPLS, EDU). We have secured funding from MSD allocation of ‘Research England research culture funding’ for enabling a scale-up service to additional departments. That gives us the valuable opportunity to expand to a few additional departments (NDORMS, DPAG, Primary Care). This larger pilot would hopefully provide the evidence needed to consider sustainable longer-term models for delivery in MSD.
3. The project will use external, expert trainers[[1]](#footnote-1) to train 1 to 2 more internal staff members as mediators and to train Maria Granell-Moreno as a Supervisor for mediators. This call for mediators seeks 1 to 2 volunteers to be trained as professional workplace mediators to join our team and co-mediate, once trained, a number of cases between NDORMS/DPAG/Primary Care staff/students.
4. This project is jointly led by Maria Granell Moreno ([maria.granellmoreno@ndorms.ox.ac.uk](mailto:maria.granellmoreno@ndorms.ox.ac.uk) ) and Isuara Thomas ([isuara.thomas@ndorms.ox.ac.uk](mailto:isuara.thomas@ndorms.ox.ac.uk)) from NDORMS (MSD). Please do get in touch for further information. Maria and Isuara are already accredited Workplace Mediators trained by Consensio[[2]](#footnote-2). Please note that Isuara is on maternity leave up to September 2023.

**About the Project**

1. The project is funded by the Research England Research Culture Fund and, is an important initiative to improve our working environment and research culture by empowering individuals and teams to manage their conflicts efficiently, informally and constructively. Having an in-house mediation service is an efficient and cost-effective way to: 1. informally manage workplace conflicts and learn from them; 2.to resolve them internally and at an early stage; 3.to create an organisational culture of conflict management; and 4.develops employee skills in conflict resolution[[3]](#footnote-3). This project is initially aimed at NDORMS/DPAG/Primary Care staff and students. We aim to scale this up across other MSD Departments with future funding and a longer-term sustainable model.

**The Role of the Mediators**

1. We are seeking 1 to 2 volunteers (the future mediators) who are interested in widening their professional skills. Following the Workplace Mediation Training it is envisaged that the new mediators will prepare and co-mediate with Isuara, Louise and/or Maria. Preparation, mediation cases, mediators’ meetings, and delivering training, will take up to 5% of their FTE (funded by the project funds).
2. The volunteer-to-be-mediators will be required to attend 9 half days course online over 2 weeks, ending with an assessment on the 10th day. There is also a requirement to submit a written assignment after the training. See details of the Training course and official accreditation here: <https://www.consensiopartners.co.uk/training/courses/accredited-workplace-mediation-certificate/> . This course is accredited by the Open College Network (OCN) and focuses on the principles, the process and the practice of mediation. The course provides delegates with the practical tools and the necessary accreditation to work as in-house mediators.
3. Continuing support for mediators will be available from the co-leaders of the project. We plan to bring the group of mediators together, frequently in the early stages, and subsequently every term or 6 months, to reflect on practice, share experiences and refresh the training learnings as required.
4. The project aims to recruit the 1 to 2 mediators by the end of July-September 2023. Mediators should be able to commit to at least their 5% FTE up to end of July 2024.
5. The mediators we seek will need existing communication and inter-personal skills and a commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, but do not have to have formal training or mediation qualifications or experience. Experienced and trained Mediators are also welcome. We envisage that mediators will be, in order of preference:

* One from Primary Care Department.
* We also welcome those in NDORMS and DPAG and in other Medical Science Division departments who believe they meet the selection criteria;
* And those in other University departments/Units who believe they meet the selection criteria.

1. We welcome applications from:

* those in part-time roles
* those on fixed-term contracts, where their contract has an end-date of July 2024 or later: we will not be able to consider applications from those whose contract expires before that date because of the considerable investment in mediators and the hopefully long-term nature of the project.

**Knowledge, skills and experiences needed to be a mediator:**

A **Commitment to diversity**

* Demonstrates an existing commitment to an inclusive and diverse staff and student body and is willing to commit to this project
* Willing to acquire a good working knowledge of mediation, and to develop that knowledge.

B **Communications skills**

* Able to create a positive and non-judgemental environment
* Handles challenge and conflict with confidence and empathy
* Willing to learn and grow
* Empathic and non-judgemental communicators.

C **Professional skills**

* Excellent interpersonal and listening skills with the ability to relate well to staff at all levels
* Able to build relationships which engender trust and confidence and enable collaborative working.
* A willingness to reflect on and enhance your own practice over time.

**What will be the benefits for the mediators?**

1. The mediators will be carrying out mediations as a 0.05 FTE of their normal role so it is important to have line manager or equivalent support for this task. The role will bring personal and professional benefits.

At the training, new-Mediators will:

* Understand the key principles of mediation and the benefits of this approach in the workplace.
* Practice key skills and essential strategies of effective mediators by using various case studies and role play scenarios. All case studies and role plays will be practiced in a safe learning environment with constructive feedback from the trainer.
* Be given a structured process with which to resolve a variety of workplace conflicts.
* Discuss best practice and to apply this to mediation sessions.
* Develop the confidence to work as an in-house or consultant mediator.

After the training, the new-Mediators will:

* Develop communication skills
* Increase their understanding and knowledge of mediation
* Be part of a new project that will empower staff/students to manage their conflicts in a positive way.
* Be part of the building up of the project and see it grow.

**How will mediators be selected?**

1. It is suggested that all those who are interested first have an informal conversation with one/both of the project leaders.
2. Applicants will then be invited to provide a short statement – **by 13th June 2023**:
   1. Outlining why they wish to become a mediator.
   2. Demonstrating how they meet each of the selection criteria outlined above.
   3. Showing that they have the support of their line manager, supervisor or equivalent.

**We will not be able to consider applications from those who do not have line manager support, because of the time commitment required**.

1. The project leaders will hold:

* A short semi-structured informal interview with potential mediators to explore the role;

1. Final decisions on the selection of mediators will be made by the project team, taking account of the need to select a diverse group of mediators from across the Department/Division/University. We aim to have our final decision by 19th June 2023.

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May 2023

1. <https://www.consensiopartners.co.uk/training/courses/accredited-workplace-mediation-certificate/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.consensiopartners.co.uk/about-us/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Consensio’s definitions and mediation approach from: <https://www.consensiopartners.co.uk/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)