

Why volunteer?

According to an extensive volunteer survey carried out by YouGov for the NCVO in 2019, most people volunteer because they feel they are making a difference.

96% said they found the volunteering experience to be a positive one.

Two thirds also said that volunteering improves their health and wellbeing.

Volunteering as a Smile Community Mediator provides you with the skills not only to help others, but to deal with challenging situations at your home or work too.

We provide quality training and ongoing opportunities to continue your learning. You will co-mediate Community cases at times that work for you according to your availability, giving you the flexibility to schedule times around your other commitments.

There are numerous reasons why volunteering is a great way to help yourself and others. We've listed just a few of those in the 5 steps to well-being below:



Source: YouGov - NCVO

Give to others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping people overcome what can seem insurmountable issues has to be one of the most rewarding things you can do
Keep learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mediation, along with regular skills practice and supervision sessions, will help enhance your practice
Pay attention to the present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being self aware is a key requirement when mediating as it helps us remain impartial. It is also vital if you are to truly listen to the person speaking
Connect with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will connect with the Smile team, your co-mediators and the people you will meet during mediations
Be active	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More mentally active than physical, you will need to be a creative thinker when mediating

What do you need to be a Volunteer Mediator?

Mediation can be very tricky; you will meet people who are angry or upset and feel their situation is unable to be fixed without outside intervention. A skilled and competent mediator will be able to put people at ease and help them to speak openly about the issues they are dealing with. Mediation requires excellent listening skills whilst remaining non-judgemental and willing to enable the people involved in the dispute find their own solutions.

QUALITIES

**Empathy
Honest
Integrity
Diligent**

**Impartial
Creative
Reliable
Focused
Non-judgemental**

**Approachable
Credible
Adaptable
Inventive
Professional**

**Fair
Flexible
Calm
Authentic**

Mediators need a combination of qualities and skills to carry out their role effectively. We will help you develop the skills needed to become a competent Mediator; do you have the qualities we are looking for?

SKILLS

**Active listening
Reflecting
Assertiveness
Planning**

**Communication
Questioning
Facilitation
Problem solving
Team working**

**Observing
Influencing
Negotiation
Self-Awareness
Building Rapport**

**Summarising
Tenacity
Time management
Written communication**

- ❖ An interest and understanding of people and ability to respond to other people's feelings and emotions
- ❖ Confident, tenacious and assertive and an ability to be flexible to suit the needs of the mediation process
- ❖ Self-aware: aware of your own strengths, weaknesses and prejudices
- ❖ Good at building rapport and developing empathy between people
- ❖ Prepared to commit to the standards of Smile Mediation
- ❖ A willingness to achieve continuous professional development (CPD) as a mediator

What does a Volunteer Mediator do in practice?

Hi, my name's Sam and I've been a volunteer mediator for Smile for about 3 years. I thought it might be helpful to tell you what it's like and describe some typical scenarios.



First off, I have just added my availability for the next month to the online system that Smile use. Whilst I've given quite a few times (mainly in the evening as I work daytimes), I know I won't be mediating for every single time slot. It helps Smile to offer a range of appointments when they can see when they have two mediators available (we always co-mediate) and have plenty of availability.

I have a case tonight, so I need to contact my co-mediator to discuss how we are going to structure the initial conversations. I've checked the details that I've been sent by the office so I know there aren't any conflicts of interest and I'll speak with my co-mediator 15 minutes before the first meeting to plan; one of the most important things we have to do is explain that we are offering confidentiality, impartiality and that we are independent. These first meetings are on Zoom and the office has emailed the joining codes and sent reminders by text to everyone, so everything's in place and we will meet both people this evening, one after the other.



Great news! Both people are willing to proceed to a joint meeting and we've got a couple of potential dates; we explained the features and benefits of mediation, assuring them of confidentiality. We spent about 45 minutes with each person, listened and summarised and this really helps people to feel they have been heard.



I'm also mediating a one-party case; this is when only one person is willing to mediate. We call this conflict coaching and we help the person to explore all possible options and imagine an alternative situation. We went through the options available and explored some 'what ifs' to help them find ways to resolve the issue.

Another thing that I find helpful is that after each meeting, we always have a quick debrief. It's good to give and get feedback to ensure we are sticking to process and develop our practice and competence as mediators. We then agreed I'd contact the office to let them know that both participants were willing to have a joint meeting and give them the date we'd all agreed.

I know the office will send emails confirming the date and time of the joint meeting. This one will be via Zoom so we don't need to consider a venue or seating arrangements. We still need to discuss the plan for the meeting though, so me and my co-mediator arrange to discuss our plan via email and a telephone discussion. We need to decide who will describe our ways of working and outline the process to the participants. We also agree who will lead with each person involved in the mediation.

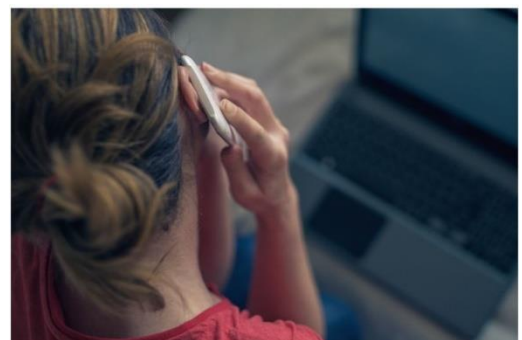


The joint meeting lasted for around an hour and a half. It's a very different way to help people to have a challenging conversation and the structured 5 stage process ensures everyone has a voice and equal time to speak about the situation as they are experiencing and perceiving it. This is sometimes a challenge when emotions are running high and people are upset or angry, but we use our mediation skills and the process to keep the meeting on track.

We identified the key issues that each person described and then worked through them, one by one, asking both participants to consider various solutions. As they addressed each issue, we drew up an agreement detailing the solutions agreed. We made sure the agreement was fair and balanced and asked for permission to share it with the referring agency.

Following a short debrief with my co-mediator I contacted the office to let them know the meeting had ended and the outcome. I'll send a scanned copy of the agreement to them so they can close the case and update the referring agency.

One other thing, Smile has arranged a group supervision session for a week next Wednesday at 6pm. I'm going to attend as I've had a couple of tricky cases that I need to debrief and reflect upon with my co-mediators.



Community Mediation Skills – Overview of Training Course

Smile's College of Mediator accredited Mediation Skills Training is a blend of pre-recorded Webinars, interactive Zoom workshops and a final in-person assessment day, followed by a written case study to be submitted for assessment. The course comprises 40 hours in total and is the equivalent of NVQ Level 3.

Course overview:

Conflict Theory and Interpersonal Communication within the Mediation Process

Introduction to the training course; learning about conflict, considering different conflict management styles; learning about and developing healthy communication and active listening; considering helpful and unhelpful behaviour in building rapport. Using mediation skills in a virtual mediation setting and in person.

Initial Meeting with Clients

Learning the skills and abilities needed to shape and facilitate initial meetings with clients; considering ways of encouraging people to mediation and how to enable clients to determine what use they will make of mediation; familiarisation with the mediation process, its role, limitations and unique strengths; considering ourselves as mediators, consideration of issues of perception, partiality and prejudice, acting impartially. Skills practice.

Mediation Sessions between Parties (Joint Party Mediation)

Purpose and structure of joint party meetings; overview and demonstration of process; mediator's opening statements; uninterrupted time; learning about advantages and limitations of working with co-mediators

Managing the structure and flow of joint party meetings; issue identification and defining mediable and non-mediable issues; maintaining objectivity; enabling people to find own solutions and come to agreement; writing agreements; skills practice.

Extended skills practice of the whole process: first and second party visits and joint mediation (some assessment).

Assessment

- Completion of exercises (optional) - to help learning but will not be 'marked'.
- Case study must be completed – it is an imaginative exercise and must demonstrate understanding of all aspects of the course.
- Skills practice on the final day will be assessed.

Volunteer Mediator information & agreement

At Smile, we value and appreciate the offer of your time, energy and skills. We aim to look after our volunteers and provide regular support sessions to help you enhance and grow your professional practice as a Volunteer Community Mediator.

Throughout the year, Smile provides regular opportunities to accrue Continuous Professional Development (CPD) points by mediating Smile community cases via Zoom or in person, and by attending group support and supervision sessions. We will do the very best we can to make your volunteer experience here at Smile a productive, worthwhile and enjoyable one and we encourage all our volunteers to provide feedback to help us continue to provide you with a rewarding and enriching volunteer experience.

What can you expect from us while you are volunteering at Smile Mediation Ltd?

We will:

- Train you to the standard expected by the College of Mediators
- Provide continuous support and supervision and give you feedback on a regular basis
- If your work as a volunteer causes you any stress or emotional involvement you can make an appointment with your mediation supervisor to discuss this and obtain support at any time
- Provide opportunities for further training and development within Mediation
- Treat you with respect as an individual in accordance with our Equality & Diversity Policy
- Encourage you to give feedback about your experience of volunteering with us
- Value your contribution to the organisation
- Provide adequate insurance for each mediator [but not for your belongings or car] whilst volunteering for Smile
- Keep you updated on Smile's current policies and practices which are relevant to mediators
- Give you feedback on the positive impact you have had as a Community Mediator
- Pay your travel expenses every month when you have submitted your Expense Sheet to the office
- Provide an exit strategy for mediators who wish to leave Smile
- Completion of the training does not qualify you to mediate. Practice with experienced mediators is an essential part of the training that Smile delivers to demonstrate a satisfactory level of competence, therefore certificates will be issued 12 months after completion of training

What we expect from you as a Volunteer Mediator:

- Provide availability each month so we can easily allocate you to a case
- Be available three hours per week to carry out mediations (this will equate to one case per month)
- Be committed to carry out the duties, outlined in the Volunteer Role Description
- Mediators will always work in pairs [or more] and are encouraged to support and give each other feedback on their practice
- The work of Smile is of a sensitive and confidential nature. You must not disclose any information arising from mediation at any time to anyone outside the organisation, either during or following your time as a volunteer with Smile (without express permission)
- If you take on a mediation, to be available to see this through to the close of the case
- Let the Office know as soon as possible if you are unable to keep an appointment with a client because of exceptional circumstances or an emergency
- Meet the minimum standards of Smile and the College of Mediators
- If you are inactive for a period of three months or more, on return, attend a Supervision Session and undertake any skills practice and/or training agreed with Smile
- Follow Smile's procedures and standards, including Health and Safety, Personal Safety for Mediators and Equality & Diversity in relation to volunteers and clients
- Notify Smile if there is a (potential) conflict of interest with case referrals

Signed:		Date:	
Volunteer Mediator			

Signed:		Date:	
Smile Mediation Ltd			