

**MEDIATION SURREY – APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

**Executive Summary**

Mediation Surrey CIO was formed in July 2019 to implement the proposed merger of West Surrey Mediation (previously funded by Woking Borough Council), East Surrey Community Mediation (ESCM), Mid-Surrey Mediation, Mediation North Surrey and the Alliance of Surrey Mediation Services. Between July and December 2019 each organisation merged into Mediation Surrey CIO, with the Group fully operational as one organisation from January 2020 onwards.

The Service aims to help neighbours find solutions to difficulties which suit all the parties involved without the need for the involvement of statutory services or enforcement agencies. Disagreements can be sorted out quickly and confidentially, without the expense and trouble of going to Court. The mediators are impartial and have no formal or legal authority and represent no official body. They are well trained and experienced, and willing to attend lectures and extra training to support work with specific members of the community, younger or older people, and those with mental health issues.

The main areas of dispute are in relation to noise and anti-social behaviour, with around 20-25 new cases taken on each year. Over the past year, around 220 people made use of the service with no charge levied, with just over half based in Woking. The Group notes that although it may help two families in a neighbourhood directly, the indirect effects may be felt more widely in the surrounding area. Some mediations may only involve two or three people but may have a deep and lasting consequence for a person involved, for example an elderly person feeling vulnerable and threatened in their home may feel happier and supported after mediation and able to stay in their own home and community for longer. Not all the cases can be resolved successfully if one party refuses to mediate or there is no agreement established.

The applicant saw a significant increase in Community Mediation referrals and the Support Coaching Service since the beginning of May 2020, and had to adapt quickly to the pandemic and consider potential risks, adopting procedures to ensure clients were provided with the same services they would normally receive outside of lockdown.

The Group has applied to continue its funding of £4,000 towards the running costs of the mediation service provided to residents of the Borough. It is recommended that the Council's support of £4,000 continues for the 2021/22 financial year.

**Recommendations**

The Executive is requested to:

**RESOLVE That**, subject to the outcome of the Council's budgetary process, a grant of £4,000 be awarded from the Community Grants Budget towards the running costs of the mediation service provided to residents of the Borough of Woking.

Reason for Decision

To enable the mediation service to be available for residents of the Borough.

Legal Authority

S142 Local Government Act 1972  
S111 Local Government Act 1972

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Confirmation of funding	<p>This award is provisionally made on the expectation that the Council's budgets for revenue and capital projects remain at the same level allocated for the current financial year. The Council's overall budget, including the sums allocated for community grants, will be determined by Council at its meeting on 11 February 2021. In the event the grant budgets are set at the anticipated levels, confirmation of the Council's support will be sent to successful applicants. Groups should not plan for the 2021/22 funding until this confirmation has been received.</p> <p>Should the budgets be reduced as part of the Council's efforts to achieve savings to offset the impact of Covid on the Council's financial position, a special meeting of the Executive will be held to review the provisional awards and allocate the funds available on a priority basis.</p>
Conditions	<p><b>Accounts.</b> The Organisation must submit accounts for the year in which the grant is awarded, including an income and expenditure account and balance sheet. Please note that accounts for other years may also be required.</p> <p><b>Monitoring Information.</b> The Organisation must submit quarterly monitoring information as a measure of its achievements. Failure to provide details will jeopardise the award. E-mail requests will be sent to the applicant on a quarterly basis.</p> <p><b>Publicity.</b> Where possible, the Organisation is required to publicise the support received from Woking Borough Council, including on websites and literature / leaflets produced.</p> <p><b>Payments.</b> Unless exceptional circumstances exist all invoices must be received quarterly with monitoring information for the previous quarter.</p> <p><b>Payment Period.</b> Final quarter claims must be made by the second week in April. Unclaimed awards will not be available at a later date unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated to the Council before the end of the award year.</p> <p><b>Joint Working.</b> WBC expects the Organisation to engage positively on health and wellbeing multi-agency joint work affecting Woking. Groups which refuse may place their Council support at risk, e.g. grant, concessionary rent and other assistance.</p> <p><b>Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.</b> Following the introduction of new legislation from April 2018, the Council expects the support of partner agencies in identifying people at risk of homelessness as early as possible to maximise the opportunities to prevent such. Partner agencies / organisations are expected to be engaged in joint working arrangements to assist in finding suitable housing and support solutions, and where appropriate to undertake and respond to the new 'duty to refer'. Groups which do not support this new legislation and way of working positively may put their Council support at risk.</p>
Performance Indicators	<p><b>Users.</b> The Organisation to provide a breakdown of the users.</p> <p><b>Publicity.</b> The Organisation to advise how the Council's support has been publicised.</p> <p><b>Statement of Use.</b> The Organisation to provide a statement stating the use to which the grant money has been put.</p>

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Future Support	<p>Due to the impact of Covid-19, the financial pressure on the Council's budgets is higher than ever and is expected to continue in the coming years. Accordingly the overall level of support available in future years may be reduced. The applicant is therefore to be advised that the award of funding for 2021/22 does not imply that a similar application in 2022/23 would be supported. In particular, it is emphasised that the Council is extremely unlikely to be in a position to award any sums above the 2021/22 levels.</p> <p>In view of this, the applicant is to be advised to ensure that contingency plans for the Group's operations for 2022/23 have been drawn up in the event that the Council is unable to continue its support beyond April 2022. All applicants are strongly recommended to pursue alternative sources of funding and are encouraged to approach Woking Borough Council's Community Support Team for advice and support.</p>
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**The Executive has authority to determine the above recommendations.**

### **Background Papers:**

2021/22 Application Form.

### **Reporting Person:**

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### **Shadow Portfolio Holder:**

Cllr Will Forster  
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### **Date Published:**

2 December 2020

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<b>1.0 Summary of Application</b>											
1.1 Status and Aims	<p>Mediation Surrey CIO was formed in July 2019 to implement the proposed merger of West Surrey Mediation (previously funded by Woking BC), East Surrey Community Mediation (ESCM), Mid-Surrey Mediation, Mediation North Surrey and the Alliance of Surrey Mediation Services. The Group has been operational as one organisation from January 2020 onwards.</p> <p>The Group’s aims are to help neighbours who are in dispute with each other. They provide an independent, impartial and confidential mediation service, dealing with issues like sexual abuse, boundary disputes, vandalism and anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>There is also a Family Mediation service for couples separating. This is a low-cost fee-paying service which is fully self-funding and not covered by grant funding.</p>										
1.2 Employees	7, comprising Director of Services (25 hours per week), Secretary (7 hours per week), 5 Casework Co-Ordinators (various hours equating to 1.88 FTE).										
1.3 Volunteers	<p>110, including 8 Board members who responsible for the management of the charity, meeting quarterly to discuss strategy, governance and the managing of the charity.</p> <p>Around 100 volunteers have completed 5 or 6 day training as community mediators and provide the mediation service to clients referred to us. Many of our volunteers have completed additional specialist training in coaching and intergenerational mediation and volunteer within our coaching and IG mediation services.</p>										
1.4 Clients/Users	<p>1,295, comprising:</p> <p>518 male</p> <p>777 female</p> <p>120 resident in Woking</p> <p>No charges are made to the users.</p>										
1.5 Members	N/A										
1.6 Sum Requested	£4,000 (Revenue)										
1.7 Project	The funding would contribute towards salaries, office and volunteer expenses, hall hire for meetings, insurance and training.										
1.8 Cost breakdown:	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding-left: 20px;">Salaries</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£10,494</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-left: 20px;">Staff Expenses</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£827</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-left: 20px;">Volunteer Expenses</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£1,304</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-left: 20px;">Office Costs</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£2,147</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-left: 20px;"><b>Total -</b></td> <td style="text-align: right;"><b>£14,772</b></td> </tr> </table>	Salaries	£10,494	Staff Expenses	£827	Volunteer Expenses	£1,304	Office Costs	£2,147	<b>Total -</b>	<b>£14,772</b>
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<b>Total -</b>	<b>£14,772</b>										
1.9 Community Benefit	The merger of the Surrey Mediation Services has allow them to offer services more efficiently and cost-effectively through an integrated staff team, a cloud-based case management system. The need for support in Woking would not be reduced because of the merge, but										

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	<p>would indeed allow the Group to be in a position to deliver a higher level of service with the support given.</p> <p>Not only are those who contact the Charity benefitting from its services, but also the wider community by mediating an issue that has an impact on other residents, particularly if the dispute has been longstanding. For example, mediating a parking matter might also ease an anti-social behaviour and noise issue in the surrounding area.</p> <p>The Applicant has stated that a high number of referrals are from Woking Borough Council and that their services reduce demands on the Council and Surrey Police. The Group note the high demand for services is shown through the increase in referrals for all services in 2020-21:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community mediation - 116 in 5 months (projected 278 in the year, compared with 137 in 2019-20)</li> <li>• Support coaching - 155 in 5 months (projected 372 in the year, compared with 224 in 2019-20)</li> <li>• Intergenerational - 22 in 5 months (projected 53 compared with 64 in 2019-20).</li> </ul> <p>The services offered can have a deep and lasting positive impact on residents that have been supported after long-standing disputes.</p>
1.10 Covid-19 Impact	<p>The applicant saw a significant increase in Community Mediation referrals and the Support Coaching Service since the beginning of May 2020, and had to adapt quickly to the pandemic and consider potential risks, best practise moving forward and procedures to ensure clients were provided with the same services they would normally receive outside of lockdown.</p> <p>Training and briefings were conducted online with volunteers and clients who could work remotely. In June 2020 volunteer mediators hosted over 30 initial party meetings either online or over the telephone.</p> <p>As lockdown eased the Group worked with venues to implement safe processes for delivering face-to-face joint meetings for when it was deemed safe to do so.</p> <p>Offering services online and over the telephone has allowed more flexible working practises and the applicant would continue to deliver services in this way even after the lockdown restrictions were lifted.</p>

<b>2.0 Financial Background</b>									
2.1 Budget	<p>At the time of the application, the Group held £259,255 in the bank. The sum of £91,962 is reserved for the following:</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 80%;">Provision for wind-up and redundancy</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£50,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Woodhatch refurbishment</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£14,394</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Training</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£2,568</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Project development (inc. new projects)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£25,000</td> </tr> </table> <p>The Group has submitted a budget for 2021/22 which shows an anticipated income of £162,498 against an anticipated expenditure of</p>	Provision for wind-up and redundancy	£50,000	Woodhatch refurbishment	£14,394	Training	£2,568	Project development (inc. new projects)	£25,000
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	<p>£162,505, resulting in an anticipated deficit of £7.00.</p> <p>Anticipated income includes OPCC (£90,000), OPCC from training reserves (£2,528), fundraising (£25,000), interest (£1,500), and grants (£35,000). Items of expenditure include salaries (£115,434), staff expenses (£9,100), volunteer expenses (£14,350) and office costs (£23,621).</p>
2.2 Accounts	<p>The Group has not yet operated for a full year and accordingly accounts are not yet available. The sum of £9201,564 was carried forward at the end of the 2019/20 year.</p>
2.3 Support over the past five years	<p>West Surrey Mediation received the following support:</p> <p>2020/21 – £4,000 towards general running costs                  2019/20 – £4,000 towards general running costs                  2018/19 – £4,000 towards general running costs                  2017/18 – £4,000 towards general running costs                  2016/17 – £4,000 towards general running costs</p>

<b>3.0 Assessment of Application</b>		
3.1 Key Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Constitution</li> <li>○ Registered Charity</li> <li>○ VAT Registered</li> <li>○ Equal Opportunities Policy</li> <li>○ Safeguarding Policy</li> <li>○ Reserves Policy</li> <li>○ Quality Mark</li> <li>○ Other funding sources pursued</li> <li>○ Other support by the Council</li> <li>○ Fundraising</li> <li>○ Two quotes</li> <li>○ Regular monitoring provided previously</li> </ul>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>Yes</p>
3.2 Consultee Comments	<p><u>Elspeth Andrews, Development Officer for Volunteer Woking</u></p> <p>Mediation Service was established to attempt to resolve disputes between neighbours and instead promote community spirit and emotional wellbeing within communities, without the expense and trauma of going to court. The continued independent, impartial and confidential support the group delivers is of great benefits to not only the individuals but also the local community who may be affected by anti-social behaviour and the stress of an unhappy living environment.</p> <p>Funding will cover the day to day administration and running costs of the organisation. The Mediation Service has previously been funded by Woking Borough Council to support the service within the Woking Borough for Woking residents. I would recommend the Council support for this group continues.</p>	

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### 3.3 Assessment

Mediation Surrey CIO works closely with Woking Borough Council with referrals made to the Group as appropriate. Regular contact continues to be made with Surrey Police, housing providers and Woking Borough Council's Environmental Health and Community Safety officers. In addition to its work dealing with community disputes, the Group is now being asked to assist with more specialised areas, working specifically with families and different ethnic minority groups. The Group also works in the area of homelessness prevention for young people within Surrey County Council's Family Support Service.

The budget for 2021/22 sets out the income expected to be received from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Guildford Borough Council, Surrey Heath Borough Council and Woking Borough Council. In the current economic climate, other funding avenues are becoming increasingly difficult to obtain and the applicant has advised that the Group is unable to reduce its future requirement for support from Woking Borough Council, noting that costs rise with the increasing number of cases being taken on.

The Mediation Service has been funded by the Council since its inception in 1996 and the service remains free of charge to residents of the Borough. In Surrey, a county-wide comprehensive community mediation service has been established, and the Group collaborates with them to ensure training costs remain low. All Councils in Surrey now contribute towards their Mediation Service and it is considered a high priority on the Government's Community Remedy theme.

In view of the valued service provided by the Charity, it is recommended that the Council's support is continued into the coming year and that a grant of £4,000 is awarded for 2021/22.

REPORT ENDS