



complaints rooted in conflicts. These are affecting local churches, Synods and the General Assembly.

The complaints process (Section Q) works on the basis that initially mediation is used, where at all possible, to try to resolve conflicts before moving to formal investigation. However, those operating the policy have to seek individuals willing to take on mediation. We have no standing panel that either Synods or the General Assembly can draw upon, to bring expertise in this area.

The Business Committee believes this is something which could be of service to the whole church, and therefore invites General Assembly to initiate a process of consultation to test this, and if appropriate, to bring costed proposals to Assembly



to enable the gift of this work to reach more people. They now work in partnership with the Church of Scotland, the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Methodist Connexion.

Place for Hope has a long history of offering foundation training to people wishing to be equipped as mediators, leading to accreditation through Scottish Mediation. They also offer supervision and continuing professional development for their accredited mediators.

As well as training mediators, the charity is also committed to facilitating culture change in order that conflict is avoided wherever possible. For example, they offer a course, delivered online, called Living Well with Differences.

Place for Hope talk about conflict transformation, rather than conflict resolution.

## Proposal

There are many good reasons for entering a service-level agreement with Place for Hope:

### 1. Staffing

There would be no need for the URC to employ additional staff to administer the team, develop training or deliver training.

### 2. Cost

There would be no need for the URC to bear any additional costs in terms of buying in reconciliation and mediation from external contractors. The most recent (November 2023) engagement on behalf of the General Assembly with purchasing a mediation/facilitation service to address one situation in a Synod will cost £100 per hour for what is likely to >8 hours.

### 3. Objectivity

The pool of URC accredited practitioners could be added to the pool of accredited practitioners from the Methodist Church, Church of Scotland and Scottish Episcopal Church to ensure that people can be found for any situation which may arise who have no prior knowledge of individuals, their background, location or circumstances. Likewise, URC accredited practitioners might be available to other denominations for the same reasons.

### 4. Experience

Place for Hope has a proven track record of providing precisely the service we

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5. Mentored paired deployment of URC mediators, alongside a more experienced BAU

in URC and other areas. Online mediation is used by 24H where

acceptable to the parties in the case, but in-person mediation is always

available and encouraged by the URC. Online mediation is available

n, mediation and coaching support in

n across the URC in Britain.

ment (CPD) for all URC mediators, (in line

urses for ordained and lay people across

an agreed number of open online training

programme (in-person or online) or an agreed

of the two courses to select from include:

Well with Differences

Leading through Change and Transition

Scripture, Spirituality and Conflict

courses to be developed with the URCs.

workshops and events which may be

agreed between the partners

6. Phased provision of facilitated conversational

situations of conflict, change and transition

7. Ongoing continuous professional development

with annual accreditation requirements).

8. Delivery of a range of URC's foundation courses

the URC, either through direct delivery of

courses or through a Train the Trainer programme

9. Respoke training provision for specific ministries

- Growing through Change and Conflict
- Responding to Bullying and Harassment

We recommend that the programme or courses

training team on the basis of an analysis of need

9. Respoke training provision for specific ministries

## Duration

We recommend an initial 5-year programme to allow sufficient time for both foundation training and mediation provision to be made available across the whole United Reformed

Church in Britain. We envisage that this programme would run from September 2024 to

September 2029, with a review of the programme after the first three years.

However, the delivery of the programme may be extended in the Methodist

Church and other mixed-founded areas, but we recommend that the

programme be implemented in the United Reformed Church by September 2024.

The programme will be implemented in the Methodist Church by September 2025.

The programme will be implemented in the Baptist Church by September 2026.

The programme will be implemented in the Presbyterian Church by September 2027.

The programme will be implemented in the Congregational Church by September 2028.

The programme will be implemented in the Evangelical Church by September 2029.

Plan

... provide a detailed programme plan to support a voluntary agreed joint programme between the first four months of the partnership. The phasing over the 5-year life of the programme would be clearly set out in the programme plan and expectation management priorities

... infrastructure. Ecumenical deployment. The ecumenical aspect of our model of mediation support infrastructure is of benefit to

... ecumenical partnership. UBC mediators would join the PAH volunteer practitioner team

... range of cases and often partnered with a practitioner of a different denomination. This brings to cases both in-depth denominational and an outside perspective, while offering mediators a wider range of casework

... UBC practitioners would be able to benefit from a wider range of UBC cases during the period, with probable deployment to other cases too. Supervision, CPD and support infrastructure would all be provided by PAH throughout this 5-year programme deployment

Programme Management

... management of the programme in a



