

# Travellers in Prison Initiative

## **Midland Traveller Conflict Mediation Initiative**

Peer Mediation Pilot Initiative in Castlerea Prison  
Evaluation report

Report completed by Tanya Lalor May 2017

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# FOREWORD

On my first visit to Castlerea Prison 'school' I was impressed by the posters on the walls of the Red Cross room filled with thoughtful reflections on the effects of violence and ways to manage anger and reduce conflict. These had been designed by prisoners as part of their Red Cross Conflict Awareness course.

After some discussions with the Castlerea staff and management, and the Travellers in Prison (TPI) representative, and in response to requests from some of the Red Cross prison group for further training in developing skills around conflict, my colleague Chris McDonagh and I agreed to develop a Peer Mediation programme on a pilot basis.

We had not run a peer mediation programme in a prison setting before, so we adapted a schools' mediation programme. As it was being developed primarily in a prison with a high Traveller population (in Castlerea), we ensured there was a focus on Traveller culture and conflict through the programme. The two teachers who had been delivering the Red Cross Awareness Programme supported and participated in the delivery of the course for the duration. This was very much welcomed, and I believe it will be an important factor in the future sustainability of the initiative in Castlerea.

We explained to the group of prisoners who signed up for the programme that we were all embarking on uncharted territory together. We highlighted the fact that the programme had never been delivered in an Irish prison setting before, and that, as it was new and innovative, we would appreciate if the participants could engage fully and pro-actively with the programme.

From the beginning, the students engaged wholeheartedly and were very forthcoming in their ideas of what would work best within a prison setting. The group engaged with real commitment and honesty and showed their sincere desire to contribute to reducing conflict and improving relationships within the prison environment.

We have greatly appreciated the support of the prison management and staff members in this initiative, and their participation on the initiative's Advisory Group meetings. Also valuable have been the contributions of prisoner peer mediation group representatives in the Advisory Group meetings. We believe that the role of the Advisory Group will be critical in sustaining the momentum of the initiative in Castlerea in the future, and in ensuring that peer mediation is supported to become a fully recognised mediation service in the prison.

The proposal to track the process and to gather the learning through the commissioning of an evaluation report was funded by the St. Stephens Green Trust, through the Travellers in Prison Initiative.

The research was aided, and the course enhanced, by the assistance and involvement of two Traveller men who were in the process of completing the Traveller Mediation & Conflict Training accredited programme in Maynooth.

I would like to thank Tanya Lalor for her sterling work in clearly conveying the process and the key components of this truly collaborative and innovative journey in this comprehensive report.

I would strongly encourage that the recommendations of this report be given careful consideration, and that the learning from this pilot project is included in the formulation of a strategy to roll out the initiative to other prisons.

Above all, I would like to acknowledge and applaud the Castlerea prisoner group who have participated so wholeheartedly in this project. They have shown that peer mediation can significantly contribute to reducing conflict and enhancing relationships within the community.

May this be the beginning of the establishment of a sustainable 'Peer Mediation in Prisons Service' for the benefit of prison communities across Ireland!

*Aileen O'Brien*  
*MTCMI Coordinator*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researcher would like to acknowledge those who contributed to the evaluation:

Frank Kavanagh and Hugh Nevin for their work in assisting with the research and holding focus group sessions with the programme participants;

Castlerea Prison management and staff, including Governor Flavin, Governor Shally, Chief Perry and Governor Reilly;

The staff of the Education and Training Board, including Bernie Downes, Karen Donaghue, and Pete Fleming;

Margaret Connaughton, Chaplain of Castlerea Prison, and Brendan O'Connell, Senior Psychologist, IPS;

The St Stephen's Green Trust, and in particular Anne Costello of the Travellers in Prison Initiative;

The Midlands Traveller Conflict Mediation Initiative, in particular Chris McDonagh and Aileen O'Brien;

And to all of the men who took part in the peer mediation programme.

# SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1

Travellers are over-represented in Irish prisons. While they account for approximately 0.6% of the total population (census 2011), they account for an estimated 15% of the male prison population, according to the Irish Prison Service (IPS), even though official IPS figures state that Travellers account for approximately 5% of all the prison population. Castlerea prison has a capacity for 340 prisoners, and it is believed that the majority of the prison population are Travellers.

Conflict escalating into violence has been identified as an issue in Castlerea prison by both staff and prisoners. Prisoners engaging in conflict are frequently placed on protection wings. This limits their access to prison-based services and can have a detrimental impact on their health and well-being. Through their involvement in the Red Cross, Travellers have developed and delivered workshops on conflict and violence. Travellers have expressed an interest in acquiring further knowledge and skills to enable them to effectively and safely mediate in conflict situations.<sup>1</sup>

Arising from this initiative, a peer mediation programme was initiated in 2016. This programme is a partnership between The Midlands Traveller Conflict Mediation Initiative, the Red Cross (Conflict Mediation programme in Castlerea prison), Travellers in Prison Initiative (St Stephen's Green Trust), and Castlerea Prison.

### 1.1 The Midlands Traveller Conflict Mediation Initiative

The Midlands Traveller Conflict Mediation Initiative (MTCMI) was established in 2009 and works in partnership with Travellers and other relevant people or organisations to develop plans to help prevent conflict before it becomes serious and to intervene effectively where conflict is already an issue. The initiative is supported by Restorative Justice in the Community (RJC), funded by the Department of Justice and Equality, and hosted by the HSE Dublin Mid Leinster Health Promotion & Improvement Service.

The service promotes and delivers conflict prevention and intervention skills training and capacity building to MTCMI stakeholders. MTCMI works in the following ways:

- By pro-actively responding to, and working to resolve, conflicts using mediation and other conflict intervention strategies where appropriate.
- By engaging with, building and strengthening relationships with Traveller families, Traveller organisations, and with organisations in which Traveller participate.
- By interacting and engaging with all the relevant statutory agencies.
- By implementing alternative dispute resolution through capacity building and training of Travellers and those working with them.
- By raising awareness, and promoting and disseminating MTCMI information to the wider community.
- The MTCMI held a number of workshops in 2014 on the subject of conflict, and looking at different ways of managing/resolving conflicts. There was general agreement from the group who attended that the best people to resolve conflicts within the Traveller community were Travellers themselves.

<sup>1</sup> The Red Cross has developed Community Based Health and First Aid (CBHFA) in Action programmes through groups of special status Irish Red Cross Volunteer Inmates in a prison setting (starting in 2009, it has been extended to all fourteen prisons by 2014). The programme operates under a partnership between the Irish Red Cross (IRC), Irish Prison Service (IPS) and Education Training Boards (ETBs). Groups of 12 - 24 IRC volunteer inmates in each prison attend a weekly CBHFA training session with the full duration of the course taking place over 4 - 6 months.

It was recommended that specific training should be developed to enable Travellers to get the skills and knowledge to act as mediators in their own community.

The MTMCI has also linked with the Kennedy Institute, Maynooth University and Kildare Wicklow Education and Training Board (ETB) to develop a one year accredited training programme for Travellers interested in developing skills in mediation and conflict management. The training programme started in February and runs for 1 day per week.

## 1.2 Travellers in Prison Initiative (TPI)

The Travellers in Prison Initiative (TPI) was developed in 2014 as a response to the particular needs and circumstances of Travellers within the 14 prisons in Ireland (and is funded by the St Stephen's Green Trust, the Irish Prison Service and the Irish Probation Service).

An inter-agency Steering Group has been appointed to guide the direction of the TPI which includes representatives from Pavee Point, the National Traveller Women's Forum, the Irish Traveller Movement, the Irish Prison Service, the Probation Service, the Irish Penal Reform Trust, Mincéirs Whiden, Exchange House, Traveller Counselling Service, the HSE Social Inclusion Unit, IASIO (Irish Association for the Social Integration of Offenders), the Irish Red Cross, the Education and Training Board and Midlands Travellers Conflict Mediation Initiative.

The overall aim of the TPI is to embed positive change in policy and practice. The TPI has identified five key action areas that have the potential to inform policy and practice in a pragmatic and sustainable manner. They are:

1. Building a knowledge base about Travellers in prison
2. Increasing and improving access to prison-based services for Travellers
3. Strengthening supports for families of Travellers in prison, and after prison, using a multi-agency approach
4. Strengthening self-identity and self-advocacy for Travellers in prison by main-streaming a peer-support model
5. Increasing awareness and capacity through training and learning programmes to prison service and probation service staff.

## 1.3 The Castlerea peer mediation pilot

Staff and inmates at Castlerea prison have identified the high levels of conflict and violence amongst prisoners as an issue of concern. Travellers who are Red Cross volunteers in Castlerea prison implemented a project to raise awareness about the issues of 'conflict and violence'. This entailed the facilitation of workshops with the support of teaching staff on the issue of conflict awareness. The workshops were attended by fellow inmates, Irish Prison Service (IPS) staff and external agencies.

The Education and Training Board (ETB) head teacher approached MTCMI and the St Stephen's Green Trust's Travellers in Prison Initiative (TPI) to explore possibilities for Traveller inmates in Castlerea to access the accredited training course in mediation currently being delivered in National University Ireland Maynooth (NUIM) for Travellers interested in becoming mediators.

When the ETB, MTCMI and TPI considered the proposal, they decided that it was possibly too ambitious to access the accredited course at this time, and instead recommended that peer mediation may be

more appropriate initially. A subsequent meeting with senior staff in Castlerea secured a commitment to support the delivery of the training and its implementation.

## 1.4 The programme

The aim of peer mediation training was to empower inmates with the skills and confidence to effectively communicate through peer to peer interaction with inmates who are experiencing conflict and violence in the prison.

In partnership with the 'school' (the ETB), the IPS, and with the support of the TPI, MTCMI designed and delivered a six week training programme in peer mediation: the training was delivered for 3.5 hours per day, one day per week. The design and development of the pilot programme was also assisted by UK schools' Peer Mediation Trainer Rosemary Games.

The programme operated as a pilot initiative, with a plan to use the learning from the pilot to roll-out similar peer mediation programmes in other prisons.

## 1.5 The evaluation

This evaluation is undertaken as a 'process evaluation', and is focused on the roll-out of the training and peer mediation programme. The purpose of the evaluation was to document the process as it unfolded.

The evaluation included desk research (research and models of practice) and data gathering from the programme (outputs, programme detail, etc). It included a combination of one to one interviews and focus groups, and attendance at some meetings of the advisory group established to oversee implementation of the pilot programme. The evaluation sought to

- Describe and locate the training from its theoretical, policy and service elements
- Assess the setting up, recruitment and implementation of the training programme
- Identify the self-reported effects of training on participants' quality of life
- Reflect the views of stakeholders involved (all stakeholders including prisoners)
- Assess the wider impacts of the programme in areas such as community building and collaboration
- Identify factors contributing to or detracting from the use of peer mediation in a prison setting
- Make recommendations for the future roll-out of peer mediation training in prison settings in Ireland.

# SECTION 2 INTRODUCTION TO PEER MEDIATION

Peer mediation is a dispute resolution process in which a neutral mediator assists the parties to a dispute in resolving a dispute between them (Kaufer et al, 2014). In peer mediation, the parties (to the dispute), with assistance from the peer mediators, consider possible ways to come up with their own solutions to manage or resolve issues. By exchanging information, expressing feelings and listening to each other's perception of the situation, parties are able to better understand another's point of view (McWilliam et al, 2016).

The Mediation Institute of Ireland (MII) adds to this by describing mediation as 'a voluntary process of conflict resolution that allows the parties in dispute the opportunity to address their issues in a confidential and private environment'.

Mediators help the parties to communicate with, listen to, and understand each other, and if possible, to come to a mutually satisfactory agreement. They do not take sides or make decisions about what solutions ought to be implemented - instead they help disputants to come up with an agreement of their own.

Peer mediation programmes emerged in the US - predominantly in schools - in the late 1960s. One of the principles of peer mediation is that disputants can relate to the peer mediators better than to figures of authority (in this case, prison staff). In the case of prison, Kaufer et al describe the reasons why prisoners are likely to place faith in a peer mediation process:

"First, there is the issue of trust. Inmates are typically distrustful of authority, often for good reason. For many, the system has failed them repeatedly. Inmates often fear getting in trouble (either with other inmates or with prison staff) if they bring a conflict to the attention of the authorities. It can feel safer to reveal personal information to a peer than to an authority figure, someone who has power over them. Second, inmates understand prison culture and values, which can aid in coming up with a workable solution to the conflict. Inmates are far more likely to understand the complex social structures that exist within prisons and the types of conflicts that can arise as a result. This makes it easier for inmate-mediators to understand which potential solutions are actually viable for the parties." (Pp 195-196)

Peer mediation (in schools) has been valued because students learn valuable skills of conflict resolution, which is at odds with typical school or institutional environments, where those in authority 'manage' students' behaviour. Close and Lechman (1997) noted that teaching students conflict resolution 'empowers them to resolve their own disputes without adult intervention which results in effective decision-making, a valuable life skill.'<sup>2</sup> They also stress that those involved in the delivery of peer mediation should be involved in the planning and design of peer mediation, but also point to some important requirements for peer mediation, namely a 'stringent training requirement'.

They also state that at the outset, peer mediation programmes encounter scepticism from parties. Roeger<sup>3</sup> (2003) states that staff in prisons may question the value of referring disputants to mediation, noting that some 'may see it as implying failure on the part of staff to successfully resolve prisoner disputes'. However, she goes on to state that mediation is not an indication of staff deficiency, rather a 'matter of staff 'holding back' and enabling prisoners in a way that helps the successful re-entry of

2 Cited in Gauley (2006)

3 Roeger D (2003) 'Resolving Conflicts in Prison', *Relational Justice Bulletin*, Issue 19, November 2003



prisoners into society'. In Marion Correctional Institute in the US, prisoners reported initial suspicion of the peer mediation initiative, interpreting it as a prison-authority led initiative "some believed that this was just another way for the administration to shove resolution down our throats". But this changed as their involvement in the programme led to them believing that "we came to realise that we could openly share our problems and find our own solutions..."

While engagement was demonstrated in the above example, Gauley (2006)<sup>4</sup> makes references to critics of peer mediation who assert this is not always the case. One study on peer mediation in schools (Emerson, 1990) found that some peer mediators were not properly trained, viewed as 'policemen' and were frequently disliked by other students'. This points to the importance of ensuring that there are clear boundaries for peer mediators and their role and function is clear and well understood.

Schrumpf et al (1997) cited in Gauley, noted the importance of training taking into consideration diversity and cultural differences that effect values and communication styles (in schools).

One study (Johnson, Johnson and Dudley, 1992) reported that peer mediation had positive impacts on reducing the number of disputes referred to teachers (again, the example has been in schools).

Jason and Rhodes (1989) outline the proposed benefits of peer mediation, namely that peers serve as potential role models, demonstrate pro-social behaviours, create and reinforce norms that certain behaviours are not acceptable, and promote alternatives to those activities. The benefits of peer mediation was found to extend beyond an institutional environment into the wider community and home settings in a number of studies, arising from the acquired skills and experience of negotiation of those engaged in peer mediation (Johnson, Johnson and Dudley, 1992 and Araki, Takeshita and Kadamoto, 1989). According to Kaufer et al (2014) prison facilitated mediation empowers prisoners to address conflict and disputes before they escalate, and has the potential to reduce prison violence and lower recidivism in a cost-effective manner.

## 2.1 The 'Sorting it out' prison programme in New South Wales

The 'Sorting it out' programme is a prison mediation programme that has been developed in a therapeutic correctional facility in New South Wales, Australia.

The evaluators of the pilot stage of this programme explored the impact of the programme not only in terms of the mediation and conflict coaching skills, but also in terms of how the programme itself could result in improved relations and a sense of 'well-being' amongst the community in the facility. The programme is based on the premise that the way a community approaches and manages conflict can affect the well-being of the individual and the entire community.

The pilot of this programme involved a training programme attended by both staff of the facility and prisoners (60 individuals comprising 39 staff<sup>5</sup> and 21 inmates).<sup>6</sup> The structure of the programme involved a six module training mediation programme (much like the Castlereagh pilot, even though each module was shorter, being only two hours in length, compared with 3.5 hours in Castlereagh).

At the start of the programme, the evaluation examined views and perceptions about the degree of safety, cohesion between inmates, and 'therapeutic hold' (the extent to which the institution is perceived

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4 Gauley M (2006) Evaluation of Respectful Conflict Resolution and Peer Mediation Programme, Community University Institute for Social Research, University of Saskatchewan.

5 78% of the staff population.

6 100% of the eligible inmates.

as being supportive of inmate needs), with prisoners generally reporting a higher rate of cohesion amongst the first two of these, and staff having a higher perception of the degree of institutional support of inmate needs.

At the end of the pilot programme, perceptions and views of all three aspects of the social climate in the prison (inmate cohesion, experienced safety, institutional support for inmates) had improved significantly from the point of view of both the inmates and the staff. Moreover, the improvement was still evident at the follow-up three months later, the evaluators noting that this is consistent with other studies.

In terms of attitudes towards conflict, it was found that there were staff and inmate differences in the extent of conflict between inmates, with staff perceiving there to be more conflict than prisoners. There was an equalisation of these perceptions after the programme, with an increased number of staff perceiving inmates as having a higher rate of talking through disagreement.

Staff who took part in the programme responded positively to it, with 92% saying that they would use the skills to assist in disagreements and 62% saying that they had used the skills, even though a smaller proportion (21%) reported having tried to use the mediation procedures, acquired in the workshops.

From the perspective of inmates, their attitudes changed and they reported a greater awareness of the efforts of staff in the facility in assisting with conflict. 61% of inmates reported they had tried to sort out issues using skills learned in the workshops and 80% would use the mediation procedures to sort out issues, with only 28% having tried to use the mediation procedures. Inmates were overwhelming positive about the programme in the qualitative discussions, and all participants said they would recommend the programme to others.

From the results the evaluators conclude that it was clear that participants understood that the programme is more about community understanding of points of view and respectful listening and communication rather than an actual solution to an issue. Respondents seemed to recognise that application of conflict management skills not only reduced tension in the prison, but that the skills were positive life skills that could be applied in many situations outside prison.

## 2.2 Practice issues and conditions for success

Other research undertaken (in schools in the US) has shown that peer mediation was most effective when mediation started the same day as the referral. Where mediation programmes were not successful, this was due to lack of continuity and support, including delays between referrals being made and mediation starting. Haft and Weiss (1998) report that in order for a peer mediation programme to work, it must be implemented properly, and evaluated for performance and results. They identified continuity, buy-in, administrative support, and 'cheerleaders' (i.e. champions or those calling for support for a programme) as important requirements for success (Haft and Weiss, 1998). Meanwhile, peer mediators may only be available on a short-term basis, and this was identified as an obstacle in successful peer mediation programmes.

Other practice issues (in the Marion Correctional Institute) involved the use of two peer mediators rather than one. Under this programme mediators were provided with an initial two day training programme but were followed up with advanced mediation training throughout the initiative (Roeger, 2003).

## 2.3 The stages of mediation

The most common model of mediation involves a five step process, summarised below. This is the model used in the Castlerea pilot.

Stage	Examples
Introduction	The mediator introduces him or herself and explains the mediation promises and the rules. The mediator tries to make the disputants feel comfortable.
Hearing the stories of the disputants	The mediator listens to each party describe the problem and reflects back to the disputants their stories.
Identifying feelings	The disputants each describe how they feel about what happened, and the mediator repeats back to the disputants (reflects back).
Generating solutions	The mediator asks both parties to brainstorm about how they might solve the problem. The mediator notes down all the solutions but does not offer the solutions themselves. In some instances, individual sessions with each disputant and the mediator may be necessary.
Agreement	Both parties to the dispute agree a solution and the mediator confirms that both agree to the solution.

# SECTION 3

## THE PEER MEDIATION PILOT PROGRAMME IN CASTLEREA

### 3.1 Description of the programme and its background

The programme developed as a follow-on to a conflict resolution programme, which has been developed in Castlerea in collaboration with the Irish Red Cross, the Education and Training Board (the 'school'), and the prison itself. The conflict resolution programme is an ongoing programme involving volunteers who are prison inmates. This is one of a number of programmes which has operated in the prison as an attempt to address issues of conflict and communication in the prison setting. Others include the Samaritans Listeners programme (where volunteer inmates are trained to become Samaritan listeners)<sup>7</sup> and Alternative to Violence Project (AVP).<sup>8</sup>

The programme started with a six week training programme delivered by both the MTCMI, and the Education and Training Board ('the school') in Castlerea. The training course focused on training in conflict resolution and the five step peer mediation programme, as described in table 2.1 above).

- The topics covered in the training programme included:
- Listening and communication exercises
- The meaning of conflict
- Exploring Irish Traveller culture
- Exploring Traveller related conflict and how it is different from other conflict
- Group work using questions to explore the nature of conflict and its impact and consequences
- Role play and exercises
- Personal responses to conflict, individual conflict styles and triggers
- How conflict escalates and de-escalation techniques
- Restorative practices in managing conflict/ building relationships and role play exercises

A total of 21 participants started with the programme, of whom 11 were Travellers (52%). This proportion of Travellers to non-Travellers is believed to be fairly reflective of the general composition of training courses, given that Travellers are believed to be the majority population in Castlerea prison.

Of these 21 initial participants, 16 (76%) completed the initial six week programme. However, of those who completed the programme, the proportion of Travellers was much higher - 11 of the 16 (69%) participants who completed the programme were Travellers.

Each training session was held one day per week.

While the programme was not a Traveller-specific course, it did involve a strong involvement of Travellers: the training was delivered jointly by the MTCMI, with a strong involvement of Travellers who are studying mediation in National University of Ireland Maynooth (NUIM), as well as by the ETB (the teachers in the school in Castlerea).

7 <http://www.samaritans.org/your-community/our-work-prisons>. Castlerea prison was the first Irish prison that the listeners' scheme was introduced.

8 The Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) is a volunteer-run conflict transformation programme. Teams of trained AVP facilitators conduct workshops to develop participants' abilities to resolve conflicts without resorting to manipulation, coercion, or violence.

By the end of the programme (November 2016), participants indicated a need for more training, and the programme was extended on this basis to provide a further four week training programme, between November and end of January, mainly involving role play and practice of mediation. Staff in the ETB delivered most of this additional training, with the MTCMI undertaking a support role and attending every second workshop. Eight of the original group expressed an interest in maintaining involvement and taking part in this more advanced training. All but one of these eight participants were Travellers (88%).

In February 2017, an independent mediator (who is accredited by the MII) assessed the competencies of six of the eight trainee peer mediators (for their suitability as peer mediators). This was to determine the readiness of the participants to start the delivery of peer mediation in the prison. Six course participants took part in the assessment, four were deemed as ready to take on the role of peer mediators in the prison, and all four are Travellers. A further assessment was undertaken two months later, and between the two assessments, seven participants took part, of whom six passed their assessment (86%). Five of these are Travellers (83%)

### 3.2 Overview of Traveller participation and outcomes

The table below provides an overview of the participation rate and outcomes for participants arising from the programme. The table indicates a high completion rate for all aspects of the programme, as well as a high participation rate of Travellers. The participation rate of Travellers increases as the programme becomes more advanced. Moreover, the high completion rate amongst the Traveller men who took part in the programme is particularly of note.

	Started course	Completed initial 6 week course	Started advanced training	Completed advanced training	Underwent assessment <sup>9</sup>	Passed assessment
Total participants	21	16	8	8	7	6
Completion rate (all participants)		76%		100%		86%
No of Traveller participants	11	11	7	7	6	5
Travellers as a % of all participants	52%	69%	88%	88%	86%	83%
Completion rate (amongst Travellers)		100%		100%		83%

<sup>9</sup> A 'P.19' is a written report, made by any prison officer, to the Governor, which alleges that an inmate has committed a breach of discipline set out in the Prison Rules. It briefly sets out the details of the alleged breach. It should be signed by the officer. Examples of breaches are: possess/receive prohibited article (knife/mobile phone); being violent, abusive etc.; disobey order to name a few. The entire list set out in Schedule 1 in the Rules 2007. Sanctions can be administered following a hearing with the prisoner.

### 3.3 Project outputs

While the purpose of this evaluation is not to consider the outcomes of the peer mediation programme at its current stage, it is worth noting the outputs to date are significant at this early stage. The peer mediators with the ETB staff collated the following data. At the start of March 2017, it was reported that at least 32 incidents were averted as a result of informal peer mediation undertaken by the peer mediators; 31 conflict coaching sessions had been undertaken; and one formal referral to peer mediation was made (which resulted in a mediation session successfully undertaken by two peer mediators and two participants). As a result of the above, it is estimated that the peer mediators have impacted upon 100 people, which is likely to result in a reduction in conflict, sanctions and P19s occurring in the prison.<sup>10</sup>

As a result of the above, it is estimated that 100 people have been impacted upon by the peer mediators, which is likely to result in a reduction in conflict, sanctions and P19s occurring in the prison.

From the perspective of those consulted, the programme has exceeded expectations, and officers' are now requesting the use of the inmates to mediate between feuding parties and prisoners are aware of the role of the mediators; which has resulted in prisoners arranging meetings to resolve their issues and disputes.

It is noted that over 60 hours of training has been provided to the peer mediators, which would be consistent with accredited training for MII accredited trainers.

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<sup>10</sup> A 'P.19' is a written report, made by any prison officer, to the Governor, which alleges that an inmate has committed a breach of discipline set out in the Prison Rules. It briefly sets out the details of the alleged breach. It should be signed by the officer. Examples of breaches are: possess/receive prohibited article (knife/mobile phone); being violent, abusive etc.; disobey order to name a few. The entire list set out in Schedule 1 in the Rules 2007. Sanctions can be administered following a hearing with the prisoner.

# SECTION 4 THE SELF-REPORTED EFFECTS OF TRAINING ON PARTICIPANTS

As part of the evaluation three focus group discussions were undertaken with the men who participated in the programme: one at the outset of the programme, one at the end of the first phase of training, and one in March 2017 (undertaken by ETB staff).

## 4.1 Baseline exercise – conflict in prison and expectations for the programme

The first focus group discussed conflict in prison and their expectations for the programme and reasons for taking part. This occurred as a baseline exercise as the programme was starting, and 15 men took part in this focus group.

### CONFLICT AND PRISON LIFE

According to the men, conflict is often part of prison life, and often arises from the smallest of incidents or misunderstandings. It is often at the times when the outside world intersects with prison life, that tensions will arise. For example, the most common prison experience associated with tension and conflict was when prisoners are either using or queuing to use telephones to contact family and loved ones.

In other instances, small events can lead to conflict *“it could be a ‘dirty look’”* that is misunderstood, as a result of a game of cards, and the point was made by prisoners that *“prison is a hostile environment where conflict and tensions can easily arise.”*

However, conflict is also associated with more serious issues, such as debts.

Certain groups can be impacted upon to a greater extent (for example, new prisoners, young prisoners) in an environment where pressure to appear ‘hard’ can be intense. Certain times of the year (summertime) and certain spaces in the prison (the yard) are associated with increased tensions and conflict.

### LINKS BETWEEN CONFLICT IN PRISON AND ON THE OUTSIDE

For Travellers, the impact of conflict can be particularly hard, as issues from the outside within the Traveller community can carry over into prison. According to the men consulted, sometimes existing conflicts from outside are family related, and can be inter-generational or long-running and can influence relationships in prison. Conflicts within prison can also impact on family members on the outside, as events that occur in the prison are carried out into the community.

*“Your name can bring you into it, then drag others into it...makes it bigger”*

However, in spite of the prevalence of conflict and tension, it was noted that in Castlerea, the incidence of extreme violence (for example, stabbing), is far lower than in other prisons.

Likewise there are spaces within the prison that are associated with a lack of tension and conflict, namely the ‘school’, which the men said was viewed as a safe space in the prison (arising from the Red Cross programme which implemented an initiative to make the school a safe zone).

At the initial baseline exercise undertaken at the early stages of the training programme (October 2016) the men also spoke of their experience in handling and resolving conflict as part of prison life. According to the men, conflict diffusion and informal mediation activities were occurring, and involving prisoners who were trusted and respected within the prison community. As a result, the men were keen to develop their understanding of how to mediate conflict situations (following on from their participation in the Red Cross training programme).

## OBJECTIVES FOR THE PROGRAMME

The men referred to the skills they had gained from the Red Cross programme in relation to conflict resolution, including communication skills, and an understanding of assertiveness. They were keen to develop listening skills, a greater understanding of body language, and to be able to read a situation before an incident arises, *“to be more aware of tension and when it will kick off”*. As to what they wanted to achieve by taking part in the programme, the most commonly arising hopes were:

*“To make jail a safer place”*

*“More work to happen...certification and accreditation”*

*“Development in the prison of a peer mediation programme”*

*“I want the prison officers to support it”*

## DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF SKILLS

The men were confident and enthusiastic about the programme’s ability to improve how conflict could be managed in prison, and were keen to use the knowledge within their community outside of prison.

*“I want to be able to run courses (like ‘train the trainer’) at the end of this”*

*“...prisoners training prisoners and peer to peer needs trust, and it can build trust.”*

*“I want to be able to develop skills and bring them back to my own community”*

## 4.2 The experience of the training – skills and learning points

Throughout the programme, the men registered their feedback at the end of each of the weekly sessions. It is clear from the feedback that the men gained significant skills in addressing conflict. These included such techniques as negotiation, listening skills, communication which were rated amongst the men as the most helpful skills and aspect of the course:

*“Gaining the technique to be able to bring parties together for mediation”*

*“..learning to negotiate and communicate better...learning to negotiate with more than one party”*

*“Knowing the difference between position based and interest-based negotiation”<sup>11</sup>*

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<sup>11</sup> Interest-based bargaining is a method of negotiating that focuses on meeting the underlying concerns, needs or interests of the parties involved in the negotiation. This type of bargaining allows the parties to understand where the other party is coming from and is cooperative. Position-based bargaining is the traditional method of bargaining. The parties each commit to a position early in the process and focus only of their own wants and needs.



*“Most helpful [was] knowing the difference between punitive ways and restorative ways of dealing with conflict”*

*“Listening skills and understanding others”*

*“To learn how to handle different conflicts without the use of violence...”*

*“Practicing how to mediate, thinking of what to say”*

The sections of the programme – at the earlier stages – which discussed Traveller culture, as well as the causes of conflict in general, were also highly rated by participants.

Practice issues were also rated highly by programme participants, such as role-play, but in particular group work was consistently identified as one of the most helpful learning points:

*“Getting together in a group and talking things out”*

Participants were asked about the least helpful parts of each session. There were no negative comments about the course, with the exception of a small number of comments about the need for the wider group not to talk over each other. The main comment arising in this section was the limited time available for the sessions (which were 3.5 hours one day per week).

Some suggestions were made about particular tools that could be used, and these included worksheets to undertake work in between sessions, as well as the use of videos or audio-visual materials.

As to suggestions for the development of the course, early on in the process, the need for a continuous programme was identified as a suggestion, both for others and for the participants themselves:

*“Keep it running, it is very helpful, it would suit the young lads”*

*“Further mediation courses and hopefully furthering our education”*

...as well as the potential for the skills to be used outside of the prison environment

*“Bring skills out into the community”*

### 4.3 Impacts of the training

At the end of the first six weeks of the training, in November 2016, a follow up focus group took place with the men, to gain their views on how their expectations were met. Eight men took part in this session. In this discussion, the impacts of the training were discussed, and the men were asked whether their expectations were met, and what they felt needed to happen next.

The enthusiasm for peer mediation and the programme remained high, and the men’s expectations were met or exceeded. There was an appetite and request for additional time. Even though the men felt that they needed more training, their confidence levels had increased significantly, and they reported a strong sense of achievement.

*“Peer mediation is happening anyway...we just need more time in training”*

*“Six weeks is definitely too short...we need longer sessions”*

As to how much more time, this ranged from three-four months, to nine months, while others said *“the longer, the better”*.

The group acknowledged that they were not yet at the point where they could advance through the five stages of mediation, and were most comfortable at the stage of diffusing tension and de-escalation of conflict situations. It was agreed that the group needed more time to develop practice around active listening, and getting to the root of the problem.

As with feedback throughout the first six weeks, the group expressed a preference for ongoing training and support, not only for themselves, but to ensure that more prisoners would be trained as peer mediators (after the focus group, one prisoner in the corridor approached one of the peer mediators, enquired about what the training involved, and then asked if he could take part in it).

#### AWARENESS RAISING AND RESPECT

One of the peer mediators spoke about the level of activity that surrounded the peer mediation programme - the training, focus groups, advisory group meetings, and made the point that these events in themselves were important in raising awareness and the profile of the programme.

They also believed that the peer mediation programme could change how prisoners deal with conflict, not simply because a risky or conflict situation was addressed, but *“because sometimes the respect shown [to those taking part in mediation] would not be shown elsewhere.”*

The need to raise awareness of the programme amongst the prisoners was noted and is referred to elsewhere in the report. At this session, the men spoke about new committals, and in particular young people (including those committed for short periods of time). They made the point that a ‘meet and greet’ type orientation with the peer mediators could orient them to prison life, support them to avoid conflict and tension, and make them aware of the programme and supports available.

The group were keen for formal accreditation, and expressed an interest in gaining Fetac Level 5 accreditation. Again, they spoke about their interest in using their skills in their own community on release.

#### 4.4 Impact of the programme as mediation practice started

At the end of the programme, a focus group took place with three of the certified peer mediators (which was facilitated by the ETB). This sought to identify the successes (or lack of successes) about the programme; its impact on participants, on prison life, and impact on how conflict was viewed.

#### PERSONAL IMPACTS

Personal impacts were wide ranging, in terms of the accreditation achieved (‘the certificate’), and views towards conflict:

*“It has changed my view in that things can be talked out instead of conflict....I look at it in a different light”*

Personal impacts also related to how to handle a situation of conflict

*“Yes, I’d look back and assess a situation before going in to try and stop it or whatever”*

In terms of suggested changes to the programme, the point made earlier about accreditation were also made in these consultations:

*“I would like to see this programme being introduced as a Fetac Level 5 in the prison”*

## IMPACT ON THE PRISON

The impact on the prison was noted in relation to the participants in the programme, but also in the wider prison population, and how a willingness to take part in mediation had resulted in fewer incidents, and less conflict.

*“A major impact, stopped getting people P19s, gives people an option...they go looking for peer mediators and they will assist them”*

*“I think it has. We had our first peer mediation on paper a few weeks ago. It went very well”*

*“I think there is less violence than there was”*

## RELATIONSHIPS WITH PRISON STAFF

The co-operation between the programme and the prison staff was regarded by one peer mediator as the most successful aspect of the programme

*“People working together, prisoners and staff, a lot were behind it”*

The need for it to be across the whole prison staff population was also noted:

*“...the officers on landings, it’s alright the governors and chiefs knowing but it needs to filter down”*

## AWARENESS RAISING

Again the role of awareness raising was noted. Peer mediators stated that they would like better communication between peer mediators and staff

*“Maybe an open morning once a month to be informed of peer mediation”*

*“I’d also like to see this programme being rolled out in all 14 prisons”*

## THE WIDER COMMUNITY

The link to the wider community, outside of prison life, was also noted, as in earlier consultations. This link to the wider community was noted in terms of how the programme could have minimised external conflict, reflecting earlier comments made at the start of the programme, about how conflict in prison can lead to conflict on the outside:

*“We were able to prevent trouble starting on the inside and escalating to the outside”*

The link to the outside was also spoken about, because of the opportunity that peer mediators felt could be available outside of prison

*“Links to the outside so mediators can further their mediation practice and hold down a job, stop them reoffending and coming back to prison”*

*“When I leave this place and turn a negative into a positive and say that my time in jail was used for something good”*

## PARTICIPATION IN TRAINING AND EDUCATION

As outlined in section 3.1 and table 3.1 above, Travellers comprised a high proportion of the group, and accounted for an increasing percentage of participants as the programme became more advanced. Travellers accounted for five of the six men assessed as peer mediators in the programme. A particularly high completion rate amongst Travellers is also outlined in table 3.1 above.

In a workshop with MTCMI staff, the men spoke about the impact and relevance of a Traveller organisation and Travellers leading out on the training. The men considered these to be crucial factors in the participation of Traveller men in the course, particularly in that it reflected the Traveller community’s experiences and cultural context:

*“More Travellers will engage with the training if Travellers are involved in delivering it”*

*“Traveller prisoners liked that Traveller culture and conflict was part of the course, and that the course was aimed at Travellers”*

# SECTION 5 EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAMME AND NEXT STEPS

In this section, the development of the programme, and its good practices are considered (drawing on the principles of peer mediation as explored in section 2). The future development of the programme based on stakeholder views is also considered.

## 5.1 The methodology of the training

The methodology of the programme was flexible, evidenced by the ability of the programme to continue providing a further four weeks role play and training after the initial programme. The programme was delivered in a collaborative approach, involving the MTCMI and the ETB ('the school'). This was very important, as it utilised the skills and availability of the on-site training and education function.

- The first four weeks were led by the MTCMI, with support from the school, but the school took a greater role in the role play exercises and the extended programme.
- Travellers were very involved in the process and in the delivery of the programme: three facilitators involved in delivering the programme were members of the Traveller community. Two of the facilitators were completing the Fetac Level 5 accredited mediation programme in Maynooth<sup>12</sup> and the other is an employee of MTCMI. The involvement of Travellers in the programme was important as it provided an opportunity, and the space, to focus on Traveller identity and how conflict impacts on individual Travellers and on the community as a whole. It also enabled participants to gain an insight into the potential of peer mediation through the experience of other Traveller mediators.
- After the first six weeks of the programme, an identified need to provide further support and training was met, with additional resources provided by both MTCMI and the school.
- All participants who completed the six week programme received certificates at a ceremony which was attended by the prison governor, senior prison staff, the ETB, MTCMI, and the TPI. In addition, the independent assessment of the competencies of the men to practice mediation in the prison and the provision of certification of graduates provides a strong basis for rolling out the programme in the prison.
- The methodology was practical and inclusive, and in fact one of the barriers to formal Fetac accreditation (e.g. literacy) proved no barrier to participation for the men. The point was made that while there was an acknowledged need for ongoing training as part of the practice of peer mediation, the training that was received was akin to a certified mediator training programme, with an approximate 60 hours training and role play engagement.
- While the programme covered all of the five steps in mediation, it was designed in a flexible manner in order to allow additional support and discussion to take place. The flexibility of the programme provides a sound basis for its future development, as both the school and the MTCMI have indicated their availability for supporting a further mediation programme.

## 5.2 The delivery of the wider programme

An advisory group was established to oversee the development of the programme, which considered

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<sup>12</sup> The Maynooth programme is a partnership between three agencies - MTCMI, Kildare Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB), and Kennedy Institute, Maynooth. It consists of two QQI Level 5 modules accredited by the KWETB, followed by a Mediation Institute of Ireland (MII) accredited mediation training run in collaboration with the Kennedy Institute, MTCMI, and an accredited trainer)

the future implementation and sustainability of the programme.

This group met approximately once every 4-6 weeks to review the programme to date, and to plan for its roll out and implementation post-training. It included representation from senior prison staff (including governors), the Chaplain, MCTMI, the ETB, the IPS Psychologist, the TPI, and crucially, included two representatives of peer mediator trainees. The participation of the peer mediator trainees in the advisory group acknowledged their insight of the prison community and the importance of their participation for the effective design, implementation and communication of the programme in the prison. Also, the positive working relationship between prisoners and prison staff could be seen to reflect the potential for wider (prison) community ‘well-being’ and positive community impacts as identified by McWilliam et al.

The work of the advisory group was effective and efficient at planning the implementation of the programme. Relationships between those present were positive, and barriers and obstacles were discussed in a clear and pragmatic manner. Crucially, the commitment of senior management to the programme was evident from the outset.

### 5.3 Evidence of good practice

To summarise the best practices of the initiative, a comparison is made with the key elements of successful mediation as identified in section 2.

**Table 5.1 Summary of key components of peer mediation and practice of the pilot**

<b>Key component</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Individuals resolve their own disputes without external intervention	While the roll out of the programme is only starting, there are 32 examples of mediation undertaken on an informal basis and 1 scheduled and planned peer mediation process has been undertaken.
Peer mediators are trusted and respected by prisoners	This is evidenced by approaches made by prisoners to the peer mediators during the evaluation process enquiring about the programme. Informal mediation was reported by peer mediators who support others. This was reflected in the feedback by peer mediators.  The work of conflict resolution provides a sound basis for the work.
Reticence around participation (peers viewed negatively by prisoners)	This is not determined or evidenced at present. However, it may remain a risk for peer mediators and should be monitored.
Students should be involved in the planning and implementing programmes	The programme was responsive to the needs of the men, in terms of training needs and consideration of implementation issues. The advisory group involved the peer mediators.
Students should also be involved in the delivery of the training	Students of peer mediation who were Travellers (National University of Ireland Maynooth) co-facilitated some of the sessions. These men noted their experiences of peer mediation with the participants at the evaluation focus groups. The trainee peer mediators expressed an interest in being engaged in the delivery of future training programmes. The follow up programme which has started in March 2016 involves the participation of the four peer mediators in the delivery of the training.

Buy-in, support and commitment, monitoring and evaluation	<p>The programme was developed by an advisory group comprised of multiple stakeholders, including senior prison staff and representatives of the peer mediator trainees. The advisory group worked very well and gained the commitment and support of all participants.</p> <p>Senior management in the prison have demonstrated their commitment to the process. It is acknowledged that prison staff ‘buy in’ needs to be developed. Raising awareness and future training for prison officers will be important requirements in the future.</p>
Continuity / sustainability	<p>There will be an inevitable loss of peer mediators as prisoners are released or move to different settings or burn out. The second training programme will provide an opportunity for training and support for additional peer mediators.</p> <p>It is recommended that opportunities to link the programme with partners outside of the prison environment be explored, e.g. MTCMI, TPI, Traveller groups, to identify ways for peer mediation to be sustained (to enable the skills of the peer mediators to be used on release). This would also likely lead to benefits to the prison system, as conflict from the outside also generates conflict in prison.</p>
Stringent training	<p>The programme facilitated additional training and role play exercises, extending the duration of the programme by four weeks (almost doubling its duration). This was supported by the School as well as MTCMI.</p> <p>The peer mediators underwent a competency assessment with a MII accredited mediator.</p> <p>Support and debriefing will be offered, and there is ongoing support for the peer mediators through the Chaplain and through the school.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to opportunities for accredited training within the prison environment (advanced mediator training) as the project develops.</p>
Building self-esteem, empowerment, and learning life skills.	<p>The men have reported positive outcomes from the process. There has been a good working relationship between the prisoners and prison management in the process, reflecting a potential for wider community ‘well-being’ and positive wider community impacts arising from the programme (as reflected in McWilliam et al).</p>

# SECTION 6

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAMME

While the programme is at its initial stages, all those consulted believed that the programme had already impacted upon conflict in the prison, and it had exceeded expectations. At the time of the evaluation, by the end of March, there were reports of over 32 incidents that had been addressed by peer mediators, 31 cases of conflict coaching, and one formal mediation session had been undertaken. 100 people involved in conflict situations have been affected by these supports.

Peer mediation and conflict resolution is being rolled out across the prison, with the support of the school and the Chaplain, as well as with the ongoing support of the advisory group. A second training programme is currently taking place, and arising from the learning from the first training programme, modifications in the sessions are taking place.

The dominant view was that the programme should be implemented slowly and with care. There are a number of themes arising, which give rise to this view, and these are considered in this section.

### 6.1 Determining the scope of mediation

The extent to which mediation can address all areas of conflict was considered in consultations. There are two points to consider here: what sorts of disputes or conflicts are appropriate for mediation, and what sorts of disputes are appropriate at this point in time in the programme's development.

The prison makes the point that issues to do with criminality would not be appropriate referrals for mediation, nor would it be appropriate that breaches of prison discipline can be addressed through the programme.

In earlier discussions, there was a proposal that sanctions arising from 'P19's could be suspended if the prisoner agreed to participate in mediation - however, it was concluded that this was not a suitable means of incentivising participation in mediation, not least because P19s are concerned with a breach of prison rules, rather than interpersonal disagreement. Other reasons for this is that there would be a risk that participation in peer mediation as an alternative to sanctions imposed as a result of P19s, would undermine the voluntary aspect of mediation, and could also undermine the independence on the peer mediators, who may be viewed as agents of the prison system of discipline through this connection.

It was also suggested that as conflict in prison can arise from small events, that these should be the focus of the mediation process, particularly in its initial stages. It was noted that almost 90% of conflict arises as a result of minor incidents. Clear boundaries are required to establish what types of events and activities should be eligible for mediation: for example, in situations where there is exploitation, use of power or intimidation - these may not be suitable or appropriate to mediation, as a neutral position may be difficult to be held in these circumstances. Therefore the grading of incidents and their suitability for mediation would need to be clear.

How might the programme 'grade' incidents that are suitable for mediation? It was suggested that issues could be discussed by the mediators as a group and the facilitator, as part of their ongoing work together in rolling out the programme. The trainers and facilitators of the programme, the ETB, as well as the Chaplain could have a role in supporting and liaising with the peer mediators at weekly practice meetings, where referrals for mediation would be considered. The MTCMI could provide ongoing



support as the programme is implemented at key junctures.

## 6.2 Protecting boundaries of prisoners

There are four peer mediators who have been successfully assessed as peer mediators, and are actively working in supporting dispute and conflict resolution within the prison.

There are challenges for mediators in the prison environment: these include judging the scope and boundaries of mediation in the prison as mentioned above. They also include maintaining a role as a neutral party, separate to the prison authorities, and listening, and holding confidential information from parties to a dispute.

Maintaining the role of peer as well as mediator may present challenging, and ongoing support and debriefing will be very important. It has been agreed that the Chaplain and the school will play a role in providing ongoing support and debriefing to mediators, and the mediators themselves will also play this role, in a group capacity.

However, in time, the burden of undertaking a mediation role was believed to have potential risks for prisoners: as outlined in the literature, mediators can be perceived by other prisoners as figures of authority, and can be resented by other prisoners. For example, this could potentially arise if they either refuse a referral, or if they need to withdraw from an incidence of mediation that is not working. Safety issues for the mediator need to be monitored on an ongoing basis. Confidence in this will take time to develop, which is why a slow and cautious start to the programme was advised in the consultations.

## 6.3 Sustaining the programme

The turnover of prisoners, whether for reasons of release, or transfer, will mean that there is a need for ongoing programme development. According to prison staff, even where there is not a turnover of prisoners, maintaining the role of mediator over a long period is too much of a burden for prisoners. At any time having four mediators is likely to be sufficient, but a succession strategy is required.

Sustaining the programme could be undertaken by repeating the training of the programme on an ongoing basis: the school staff could support this with the ongoing involvement of the MTCMI. This has already started with the new group of trainees. The four peer mediators have a role in the delivery of the training, which is likely to play an important role in sustaining participation.

Prison staff suggested that peer mediation should be an add-on to the Red Cross conflict resolution programme, on an ongoing basis. This could sustain the programme in terms of participation.

## 6.4 Referrals to the programme

The consultations indicated that there are three potential sources of referrals to mediation:

- Observations by mediators of tension and conflict situations in the prison
- Self-referrals by disputants and informal approaches
- Formal referrals: it has been agreed by the advisory group that the Chief will be the initial person to make referrals on a formal basis (and will brief other staff as required, who can then make referrals)

As the programme develops, other routes for referral may be required.

Another issue that may arise is the need for mediation shortly after the referral is made. In order to avoid dispute escalation, same-day mediation may be required in some cases, which may present a challenge in a prison environment. For example, space or time to complete mediations may not be available shortly after a referral is made. This could potentially require protocols or particular provisions by prison authorities. However, it is noted that when the first official mediation took place in February 2017, that the session took place almost immediately after the referral was made: mediators stated that the first session took place within half an hour of the referral.

## 6.5 Recording of incidents and outcomes

At present staff of the ETB have been recording incidents and their outcomes. After the training programme, it is not clear whether this role will be maintained, or whether the Chaplain will undertake this role.

## 6.6 Monitoring and oversight

The oversight advisory group should meet on an ongoing basis (every 4-6 weeks) and review the progress of the roll out of the programme. The advisory group should include current membership, and consideration should be made to including prison officers who are supportive of the measure, and who could act as champions of the service with other prison officers.

## 6.7 Raising awareness and training for prison staff

Raising awareness is important amongst both prison staff and prisoners. This should include clarity on what the process will involve, as well as its limits. Suggestions that arose in the course of the training and advisory group meetings included use of the prison TV channel ('The Loop') to introduce the concept, and the production of a DVD/short film to raise awareness.

The men also did some design work on posters, and it is agreed that cards and posters will be used as a means of raising awareness about the peer-mediation programme.

There is also a view that it is too soon to launch the initiative (as it is still in the process of rolling out across the prison), and to provide more formal training to staff in the form of induction training or workshops.

Nonetheless, there is a need for absolute clarity about the initiative and for all of those who are engaged in it to be aware of its scope, boundaries, and what it will require, and also to manage expectations as to what it can achieve.

## 6.8 Wider potential for peer engagement

The men suggested an orienteering of new prisoners to prison life (by peer mediators) or information on the process on committal. Boothby (2011) refers to the 'The Insiders Scheme' which consists of volunteers called Insiders, who aim to provide basic information, reassurance, and practical support (although not emotional support) to prisoners who are new to prison system. This scheme supports the prisoners shortly after their arrival in prison and operates only during the early days of incarceration. Unlike the Listeners, Insiders do not operate on the basis of the rules of confidentiality.

Within the context of offending behaviour, the Differential Association Theory (Sutherland and Cressey 1960), the Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger 1957), and the construct of social support can help to explain how these and other peer programmes work. Differential Association Theory argues that,

through interacting with people who can teach the skills and techniques involved in offending, one can learn offending behaviour (Milburn 1995; Turner and Shepherd 1999). Similarly, offenders acting as peer supporters can also help other offenders to change their offending behaviour and lifestyles (Turner and Shepherd 1999). Cognitive Dissonance Theory postulates that, when prisoners assume the role of peer supporters, they change their own beliefs and values and, in turn, contribute to their own rehabilitation (Keller 1993; Maruna 2001). Therefore, these programmes acknowledge that prisoners do not have to be passive recipients of rehabilitation and consider them as important resources within the prison system to contribute to prisoners' rehabilitation (Cressey 1965; Kerish 1975).

## 6.9 The wider impacts of the programme in areas such as community-building and collaboration

As the project is a pilot, and is starting its implementation stage, this evaluation objective is too soon to report on its long-term impacts. However, on the basis of the discussions held to date, the programme has shown potential in this regard for the reasons below.

The process of its development has been very positive. It has been flexible in supporting the needs of the men through extending the training; it has involved the men in the programme implementation through the advisory group; commitment of prison, ETB, MTCMI staff and TPI has been demonstrated, and relationships of all parties involved has been positive. A strong and pragmatic approach to rolling out the programme has been evidenced, with consensus and co-operation as to how the programme might be implemented during its pilot phase. Careful consideration has been given to the risks as well as the opportunities for delivering the programme, and a strong partnership approach is evident between all parties involved.





The men have reported increased confidence in peer mediation and a sense of empowerment. There is some evidence that the programme has itself generated interest amongst prisoners in general, and it is reported that the prisoners involved in the programme have the support and respect of their peers in the prison. This can be evidenced by the outputs to date: as at March 2017, it was estimated that 32 incidents have been informally mediated, 31 conflict coaching has taken place, and one official mediation has taken place involving two mediators and two participants.

It can also be evidenced by the interest generated in a second programme. In March 2017, an information session was provided on the programme, and 13 prisoners (eight of whom are Travellers) have signed up for the programme. The graduates of the first programme are involved in the delivery of the second programme, as are the ETB and MTCMI. It is planned to continuously run the programme to ensure an ongoing source of peer mediators. At the same time, there is a new Red Cross volunteer programme starting, with 22 participants signed up (of whom eight are Travellers).

It will be important to capture the impacts on the peer mediators, the incidence of prison conflict but also the views and perceptions of the wider prison population (as well as the prison staff) about the programme, and the extent to which it can avert conflict and disputes, and build relationships, community 'well-being' and contribute to the overall rehabilitation environment.

Finally, the programme offers significant potential beyond the Castlerea prison, in other prisons, and discussions to this effect have been initiated. A key provision in any roll out of the programme nationally will be to maintain Traveller involvement and mediation training expertise in its delivery. This will require additional resources, for example, it is likely that the MTCMI will need to scale up its operations and seek additional funding for staffing and resources.

## 6.10 Practical issues for consideration

Table 6.1 Summary of steps involved and considerations	
STEPS	CONSIDERATION
<b>Referral to peer mediation</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional awareness-raising for prisoners and prison staff. Role of mediators and scope of mediation needs to be clear</li> <li>• There will need to be an orientation for both prisoners and prison staff to enable referrals to occur</li> <li>• Source of referrals (at present informal or through the Chief) may need to be extended as the pilot develops</li> <li>• The question as to whether disputants have a choice of mediator should be considered. Likewise, a process for enabling mediators to excuse themselves from mediation where there may be a conflict of interest.</li> </ul>
<b>Review the referral</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The group of mediators discuss the referral and its suitability for mediation (with support). Frequency of meetings will need to be decided (weekly, twice weekly or daily if required). Consideration as to what happens if a dispute needs immediate resolution (e.g. if referral is made once an issue has already escalated)</li> <li>• A system for grading the dispute would be needed in order to ascertain whether it would be suitable for mediation</li> <li>• Once a decision is made to accept the referral, a decision about who to mediate (and whether there should be one or two mediators) needs to be considered</li> </ul>
<b>Secure resources</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before the process of mediation takes place, space and time to proceed needs to be supported by the prison authorities.</li> <li>• A protocol for this would need to be put in place (when mediation can take place, where, timing, exceptions, etc). This protocol would need to be clear for all parties, including prison staff</li> <li>• As the sessions are underway, clarity for disputants and management of expectations (e.g. that not all disputes will be resolved)</li> </ul>
<b>Review and monitoring of the process</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debriefing for the mediators both individually and as a group is essential to identify issues arising and risks, and to support reflective practice</li> <li>• This should identify further training and support needs</li> <li>• This should identify the resources and commitment required (how many hours per week are available for the process, what capacity for the number of referrals)</li> <li>• Monitoring and recording of outcomes needs to be ongoing</li> <li>• Follow-up and review with prisoners around the process (including general group and those who have engaged) around their understanding of what the service can offer</li> </ul>
<b>Ongoing review and oversight</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The advisory group should meet every 4 weeks initially and then every 6 weeks to review and monitor outcomes and issues</li> </ul>
<b>Ongoing support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A support role on an ongoing basis around debriefing, follow up and data collection will be required - in Castlerea this could be undertaken by the Chaplain with the input of the school.</li> </ul>

# SECTION 7 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The process identified above in terms of implementing the programme should be pursued. An incremental approach should be explored given the pilot nature of the programme, to allow for ongoing modification where this is required.
2. As the programme is now beginning to be implemented, the structure for its support and implementation is successfully being rolled out. This includes
  - Weekly meeting of the men as a group to review cases and debriefing with the Chaplain as well as with the teachers in the school
  - Monthly or six weekly meeting of the advisory group
  - Monitoring and documenting of the type and outcome of disputes on an anonymous basis
3. The safety issues and risks associated with the process for the men will need to be monitored on an ongoing basis, both by the weekly meeting with the men and the advisory group. Experience gained as the process rolls out should allow for grading of disputes, techniques for 'backing off' or strategies if other prisoners respond negatively to mediators.
4. An ongoing support role is required – at present it is anticipated that the Chaplain and the teachers in the school will undertake this role. While this may require ongoing support, it is clear that all parties have demonstrated a commitment and availability for this to take place.
5. The success to date of the initiative should be explored in terms of good practice prisoner engagement and in particular Traveller engagement with training and planning of pilot and education programmes, and its potential to be used as a model for other training initiatives explored in time (such as the participatory nature of the planning and oversight processes).
6. With regard to future peer mediation training programmes in Castlerea prison, there should continue to be Traveller culture element incorporated into them, led by Traveller men or women.
7. Once the pilot has been implemented and reviewed, it should be launched wider within the prison. This will require a more extensive awareness raising and training process, including the following:
  - Consideration of developing a short film/DVD for broadcast on the prison's TV channel
  - Peer mediation induction workshops for prison staff to encourage support and buy-in
  - Exploration of options where peer mediators could provide orientation or information to new prisoners
8. The outcomes and impacts of the programme on the wider prison community should be captured in time, as more groups of peer mediators are trained and the programme becomes launched. This would include prisoners (both those who have participated in peer mediation and others who have not) and prison staff, and should consider how conflict is perceived and how the prison community relationships have been impacted. It would also consider how the impacts already generated have been sustained over time.
9. The roles of the parties involved in terms of debriefing, ongoing support, training, monitoring and recording and review will need ongoing engagement from the Chaplain, IPS, MCTMI, the ETB/ the school, and the TPI.
10. The programme has started discussions with the IPS Psychologist, the Red Cross and others as regards continued roll-out of the process. A programme for implementing the peer mediation programme across the prison service as a whole should be considered by the advisory group and partners in Castlerea, who should devise a proposal and time-line to the IPS for its roll out. The MTCMI should seek funding to cover the costs of the roll out throughout prisons in Ireland. This should be sourced through the Department of Justice and Equality, or through the IPS, as appropriate.

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