

MEDIATION NORTHERN IRELAND

ANNUAL REPORT  
2007 – 2008

## Contents

1. Foreword	Page 2
2. Introduction	Page 3
3. The Year's Headlines	Page 4
4. Programme Reports	Page 5
4.1. The Local Governance Programme	Page 5
4.2. The Neighbourhoods & Communities Programme	Page 7
4.3. Social Partnership Programme	Page 9
4.4. The Policing & Justice Programme	Page 9
4.5. The Beyond Northern Ireland Programme	Page 10
4.6. The Generic Programme	Page 11
4.7. The Organisational Development Programme	Page 11
5. Workload Statistics	Page 13
6. Funding	Page 19
7. Conclusion	Page 20

## 1. Foreword

It is with a sense of satisfaction and achievement that I present our Annual Report for the year 2007 – 2008. A dedicated team of volunteers, associates, staff, management and Board members have worked together to contribute to the ever strengthening peace and improved relations in Northern Ireland.

Whilst society is changing for the better, such change is never easy – necessitating good constructive engagement on difficult issues. Our organisation remains committed to playing its part in working with the community, public services and elected representatives toward an evermore just and peaceful order.

The world in which we work is local, regional and global and in various ways we have tried to maintain and share our learning, being a supportive presence to those looking for creative ways to deal with conflict and contention. Our ‘strap line’ has been: *sustaining peace, building good relations*. It is my hope that on reading this report, you will see that is the purpose we have been fulfilling. We plan to continue to do so into the future.

I would like to note the contribution made by our out-going Director, Brendan McAllister. He has dedicated seventeen years to bringing about and sustaining peace, using mediation. He has during those years been a skilled practitioner, insightful colleague, strategic thinker, concerned manager and friend to many other practitioners. On behalf of the organisation I would like to record our thanks and wish Brendan well in the important work he has moved on to do, as a Commissioner for Victims and Survivors.

I also extend my thanks to the volunteers, staff, associates and my colleagues on the Board for the dedication and commitment shown throughout the year.

Mediation Northern Ireland looks forward to the coming year in the knowledge that, as suggested by the Community Relations Council, Northern Ireland is a ‘work in progress.’ There is much more to be done.

*John Colgan*  
*Chair*  
*Board of Trustees*

## 2. Introduction

*“Our vision is of a peaceful society where conflict is handled well and there are good relations between citizens and across communities.”*  
(Corporate Plan 2005:2008)

This annual report marks not just the end of another year of work, but the end of a corporate plan. We feel that the organisation has made its contribution to the undoubted societal development, since 2005, toward our stated vision. Whilst our society is in many ways more peaceful, there remains much to be done to achieve good relations across communities.

Change and development have been happening at all levels – from the activation of agreed structures of government in May 2007 to the new daily activity of migrant families in the streets around our own building. The Review of Public Administration is impacting on all sectors of public service; the voluntary sector is preparing for a very different future; policing and justice systems are achieving more political support and community engagement; and economic development seems to be slowing down.

Times of change demand good leadership and skilled handling of concerns, contention and disputes. Mediation Northern Ireland has worked consistently to enhance the capacity of key individuals and organisations to meet the challenges of the times. This work has included conferences (such as “Challenge of Change”, 2006), interventions (both practice and training) at project (e.g. forums) and case levels (e.g. workplace or neighbour / neighbour disputes)

We have recognised that we have learned a lot from our work over the years and that learning can meet needs outside of Northern Ireland. To that end, we have continued our work in the North West of England and have been developing networks of relationships in Britain, Ireland and the rest of Europe. Our knowledge and experience will be of use to others and will, in turn mature as we continue to experience other contexts.

All of this activity demands the dedication and commitment of people who have the wisdom, understanding and strength to act for our best future. Mediation Northern Ireland has this in its Board of Trustees, Associate and volunteer teams and staff. I would like to thank them for the hard work they have done in the last year. In particular, I would like to thank Brendan McAllister for all of the foundational and developmental work that he has contributed over the years. We all wish him well in his new task.

It is my hope that this report proves useful to those who read it and does justice to the work of the year.

*Peter O'Reilly, Director*

### **3. The Year's Headlines**

Some of the headline developments of the year were:

- ❖ The End of an Era: News of the appointment of Brendan McAllister as one of the Commissioners Designate for Victims and Survivors meant the end of the tenure of the founding Director of Mediation Northern Ireland.
- ❖ New Programme: The Social Partnership Programme won Big Lottery funding and began in July. Its aim is to advance Community Cohesion in Northern Ireland by using mediation to strengthen social partnership. It will run in eight local government areas over five years.
- ❖ New Projects
  - The District Policing Partnership Problem Solving Project is a one-year project that aims to support the development of DPPs. It is a contract with the Policing Board for Northern Ireland, funded by the International Fund for Ireland.
  - The Transition Project aims to support the move to peaceful methods for dealing with grassroots conflict by training local activists. It is part-funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust.
  - The Guns & Gangs Project developed out of several approaches from England. It aims to develop mediative responses to youth gang crime in four cities. It is currently funded through the national Tackling Gangs Action Plan.
  - The Housing Executive Mediation Development Strategy Group is made up of four unit heads and is considering an integrated strategy for developing mediation in the housing sector.
- ❖ Board Members Complete Terms: We said good bye to two members of the Board of Trustees, Jimmy McClean and Brenda Callaghan. We are grateful for the years of voluntary service they have given to the development of mediation.
- ❖ New Staff: We welcomed two new members of employed, and two new long-term volunteer members of staff.
  - Brent van der Linde, Development Officer (SPP)
  - Rob Colwell, Development Assistant (SPP)
  - Maureen Lennox, part-time volunteer Administration Assistant
  - Stefan Oecklers, full-time volunteer Conference AdministratorThe quality of their work and commitment bodes well for the organisation!
- ❖ Management Improvements: The Board of Trustees engaged a consultant to support the further development of management structures and practice. He has worked with the Board and the Management Team to develop our management practice.
- ❖ The Second European Mediation Conference: Whilst the Conference event was just outside of the reporting period, the work that made it a success took place, in partnership with The Scottish Mediation Network, during this year.

#### **4. Programme Reports**

Simple statistical reports never fully represent how much skilled and patient work is involved in the development and delivery of programmes of work that aim to facilitate incremental societal change. There is considerable diplomacy, tact and timing involved in making sure that interventions have the support and commitment of the right people, develop in a way that ensures maximum credibility and relevance or are delivered to achieve real and positive change. This is to be integrated with the needs of those with whom we work to see positive impact and to be responsible and accountable to funders who need tangible 'product'.

As we came to the end of the 2005 – 2008 Corporate Plan, we began to restructure our operational Programmes. The work of the Local Governance and the Neighbourhoods & Communities Programmes has been maturing into the Social Partnership Programme.

##### **4.1. The Local Governance Programme**

*Purpose: to assist District Councils and other local authorities in their promotion of Good Relations and the resolution of local conflicts.*

The Local Governance Programme enters its final year at the end of the reporting period. Thus, the underlying theme of the work has been preparing to record learning and transition of the work into the Social Partnership Programme. The Council elections and ongoing Peace negotiations in early 2007 meant that a number of the civic leaders we have been working with were preoccupied and unable to commit to this work in the way we had hoped. We used the time and resources to further develop existing, as well as cultivate new, relationships.

##### **Newry and Mourne**

In Newry and Mourne we worked with key forum members and council officials on the shape, membership and focus of the forum to try to reinvigorate a long and sustained engagement. We also developed relationships further with the community sector through our work with the Newry and Mourne Rural Partnership. We hope this work will be in preparation of an engagement between civic leadership and community in the future.

The Newry Forum Steering Group has met on four occasions in October 07, December 07, February 08 and April 08 and topics included 'The Cost of Division', 'Community Cultural Events' and 'Flags and Emblems'. The Forum group has met once, in November 07 on the theme of 'Housing and Community Cohesion in Newry'.

We are currently in conversations with Newry & Mourne District Council on the themes and geographical area(s) for development of the Social Partnership Programme.

### **Larne**

Larne Borough Council is fully engaged with our work. We have had two seminars with elected members, in November '07 exploring the potential for Social Partnership Programme (SPP) work and in March '08 when we discussed with them the challenges for leadership. Council officials have been working closely with us to develop SPP and we have recently received confirmation of the elected representatives who will sit on the Steering Group. We are currently planning the first meeting of the Steering Group for SPP in Larne, including liaising with council officials on representation from the other sectors. We have completed the assessment of Good Relations in the town and will present this to the Steering Group at the first meeting.

A significant amount of work has gone into training and facilitating the strategic thinking of the YMCA's Community Relations Forum. This Forum includes representatives of the PSNI, Council, business and community activists from various constituencies. It has contributed significantly to the much improved situation in Larne and has enhanced relations and mechanisms in the town. We will continue working with Larne YMCA in support of the Community Relations Forum.

### **Ballymena**

In Ballymena we have received commitment from council officials and almost all of the elected representatives to long-term work in the Borough. There has been some difficulty engaging with some influential politicians, despite sustained efforts to meet with them. Our desire to have consulted as widely as possible with political groupings, before proceeding, means that this has caused significant delay. However, we have followed the advice of local officials with regard to being patient about building the work on the right foundations. Ballymena District Council have included MNI's proposed work in their strategic thinking.

### **North Down**

North Down Borough Council officials are interested in a seminar exploring the contemporary challenges to leadership with elected members. The Council has not, yet, committed corporately to long-term (SPP) work, but continue to work with us to develop an approach that suits the area.

With the assistance of the Council officials we have developed a programme of engagement that focuses on preparation for engaging with community and statutory representatives - elected members committing to one seminar as a group, with separate seminars for community and statutory representatives. We are currently engaged in an assessment of Good relations in North Down.

## **4.2. The Neighbourhoods and Communities Programme**

*Purpose: to support those working for peace and stability within neighbourhoods and across communities.*

We have continued with sensitive work with loyalists who are in transition from the use of politically motivated violence. This work is responsive to requests and reliant upon careful relationship building. We are increasingly seeing the value of contributing to the process of engagement between members of these groups and local community representatives. In addition we are seeking to build or strengthen healthy connections between these groups and statutory bodies (Council, police, CSP, Arts Council).

This year has also seen an enhanced focus of attention within those geographic areas identified within the Social Partnership Programme, which brings a new aspect to work amongst neighbourhoods and communities in Ards, North Down, Newtownabbey, Larne, Ballymena and Newry & Mourne.

Work in the Ards area has progressed well over the past year. The training package, developed for those who want to learn new skills for dealing with conflict during Autumn 2006, was delivered in a shortened version in Spring 2008. This training was complemented with support for changed practices for those participants who also engaged with the Bonfire Project (more below). Those receiving this training will hopefully join with others from the first delivery and receive mediation training in the coming year. In addition, we provided some support for strategic change thinking at a senior level with local loyalists. The relationship with Ards BC remains strong and productive, as evidenced by the Bonfire Project: Mediation Northern Ireland have worked closely with the Council, community and local bonfire builders to address concerns in relation to bonfires. This project extended beyond the 11<sup>th</sup> July 2007 as the 'bonfire committees' proved an excellent forum for developing relationships and addressing wider community issues and concerns. We have again been involved in mediation cases relating to the transition from old ways of handling community difficulties or issues of reintegration for those previously involved in the use of politically motivated violence.

In the same geographic area, Ards BC also brought us in to work with a group addressing tension between the host community and new migrant workers in Comber. This developed into work that brings members of the loyalist community into a cooperative partnership with representatives of the Lithuanian community, Ards BC and the Ards Community Safety Partnership. The model has generated interest amongst other loyalist communities who are seeking to learn from this piece of good practice. When a dispute arose locally, the work on this project also provided the opportunity for us to mediate between one loyalist organisation and the police.

In Newry & Mourne we facilitated an engagement of community and voluntary sector groups, Newry & Mourne Rural Partnership, helping them to overcome community relations difficulties so as to access funding for the area.

We have begun two interventions at the request of the Newry & Mourne Community Safety Partnership (in Annalong and Warrenpoint). Both of these relate to anti-social behaviour, one with sectarian undertones. Whilst the projects have met their targets, the success of the interventions has been limited in finding a way to support community in responding to the challenge of difficult behaviour. This is a challenge in the year ahead.

As reported above, Larne YMCA CR forum has continued to provide a useful point of contact with representatives of the community, in partnership with police, Larne BC and the churches (through YMCA). The impact of ongoing tensions and some conflict between elements of the UDA has been very evident in Larne during this year. We were pleased to have opportunities to increase communication between those involved locally and indirectly at a leadership level. We have also been contributing to an LSP funded project, led by the North Antrim Community Network Partnership, addressing community cohesion issues in the Larne area.

In Newtownabbey, after providing mediation training in the previous year, we provided significant support for those in the community involved as part of the Newtownabbey CSP mediation team. This included strategic level contributions, support for the establishment of local supervision systems and providing experienced mediators to mentor newly trained practitioners during their first cases. Mediation Northern Ireland engaged with representatives of loyalist and republican communities in order to ensure they knew about the CSP mediation team and recognised the potential value of this resource within their areas.

In North Down, we began work with the South Eastern Regional College to assess the potential for delivering conflict skills training for several community groups in the Bangor area. We also started the assessment process in preparation for the Social Partnership work, including conversations with representatives from neighbourhoods and communities.

In addition to continuing work on Community Cohesion issues in Mount Vernon, we continued low level support work to community workers in the Village area of south Belfast (on race relations) and, in the north of the city, we also facilitated a series of cross community meetings about the re-development of the Girdwood Barracks site.

Work within this sector is increasingly integrated within the Social Partnership Programme, providing a strengthened and comprehensive strategic intervention. In addition, we see growing opportunities to work on issues of transition for those previously involved in the use of politically motivated violence – particularly within loyalist communities.

### **4.3. The Social Partnership Programme**

*Purpose: to advance community cohesion in Northern Ireland by using mediation to strengthen social partnership.*

The Social Partnership Programme (SPP) began in August 2007. Brent van der Linde and Robert Colwell also joined the staff at this point, their posts funded by the Big Lottery Fund. This programme has four strands of work in each area:

- ❖ Building civic consensus on a vision for dealing with issues that threaten cohesion locally.
- ❖ Creating a light infrastructure to manage and support mediative work.
- ❖ Training local practitioners.
- ❖ Supporting the development of local practice.

SPP began running in five local government areas, namely, Newry & Mourne, Larne, North Down, Ballymena and Newtownabbey. In March 2008 Newtownabbey indicated that they the SPP programme would not fit into their Good Relations strategy at this time. We have subsequently have started exploratory conversations with Down District Council as a possible SPP area. In June of 2009 two other areas become live, namely, Dungannon and Craigavon.

Although the programme was started in each area at the same time, each area is moving at a different pace. This is due to different factors, for example, in some council areas this is our first piece of work with them, and therefore we are in a relationship-building phase. Other council areas, where we have done some previous work, have moved more quickly; with assessments and meetings with councillors already taking place. However, because this programme is pioneering new approaches locally, work has been necessarily slow as we gain understanding and commitment.

From the assessments and significant conversations with local government and statutory agencies we are confident that SPP will contribute to a culture in support of community planning - dealing with contentious issues in a constructive way. Comments we receive from organisations indicate that this programmes will give them an opportunity to build relationships with each other and provide a more joined-up approach to tackling issues that affect Good Relations in their area.

### **4.4. The Policing & Justice Programme**

The winning of the contract for the District Policing Partnership Problem Solving Project meant a return to significant work on policing; and indeed to a project which had been conceptualised several years ago. It has had a slow start, but was developing

satisfactorily as the period of this report came to an end. There is opportunity to contribute to the implementation of what Patten envisioned for the role of the Partnerships. There is significant support, and a perceived need, for the project in the community and in PSNI. However, the time limitations remain challenging and we will be continually balancing quality delivery with targeted outcomes.

We have continued to deliver the “Making It Right” course as part of the Youth Conferencing Service’s conference plans for some offenders. The course is facilitated by our Associates and helps young people to consider the implications of their behaviour, as well as the choices they may want to make in future. The course was run successfully six times during the year.

We have continued to provide critical feedback to police officers participating in the PSNI Critical Incident Training. This is a two-day ‘real time’ training in which officers are trained in determining / handling incidents which are significant for public confidence in the police. During the year we contributed to five training events and have agreed to six more in the first part of the coming year.

#### **4.5. The Beyond Northern Ireland Programme**

In the *North West of England*, our Good Relations Projects have continued to develop. In Oldham the Management Group struggled both to maintain the commitment of some key organisations and to find a viable sustainability strategy. At the time of writing, however, there are clear signs that those committed to the work are finding ways to overcome these difficulties. In effect there will be a core of people who will continue the developmental work, with the continued support of Mediation Northern Ireland’s strategic advice and fieldworker’s activity.

In Burnley, Elevate East Lancashire and the Council continue to be committed to the development of mediation for Good Relations. We have developed the plan for the next three years of work, taking available funding and Mediation Northern Ireland’s resources into account. This project continues to develop very well.

A champion of the work in England has been lobbying government for regional sustainability strategy, which would see the setting up of a regional “Hub” to oversee standards and development activity. We have actively supported this in our dealings with the Department for Communities and Local Government.

What was a disparate selection of approaches from various cities in England, seeking help in developing responses to ‘Guns & Gang’ activity, developed into a project we can design. The most significant work has been developing in Liverpool and in Manchester. We are in communication with the Home Office Advisor on Guns and Gangs with a view to developing a more coherent strategy. There is an opportunity for Mediation Northern Ireland to make a significant contribution, here.

#### **4.6. The Generic Programme**

The Housing sector has seen two main areas of delivery. We have delivered a support package to the residents and project managers of the Enniskillen Shared Future Housing pilot. This was an innovative package for an award-winning initiative. There was a lot of learning that came out of the project, which will be implemented in the Housing Executive's (IFI funded) roll out of the concept, over the next three years. The second significant development has been the formation of the Mediation Development Strategy Group – made up of the Unit heads for Community Cohesion, Community Safety, Community Development and Housing Regeneration. The aim of the group is to design an integrated strategy for developing mediation in the housing sector. The Group is being facilitated by Mediation Northern Ireland.

There was a very significant piece of work done during the year in the Health sector. The Southern Health and Social Services Board commissioned us to mediate the community, health professionals and the Board in regard to the provision of out of hours services. This process was delivered successfully and has been noted as the kind of intervention which may well be used again in the future.

We have continued to provide a service for interventions in neighbour –neighbour disputes. We dealt with thirty-eight enquiries and delivered on a voluntary basis.

Referrals dealing with 'neighbourhoods and communities' (beyond neighbour disputes) amounted to forty-four. Work on such cases has often had a community relations significance (e.g. several successful cases dealt with flags and emblems). A number of these cases also related directly to the implementation 'on the ground' of the A Shared Future policy.

Our delivery of mediation in the workplace also continued. Despite the fact that we have not yet developed this service (no marketing has been done), we have taken sixteen referrals. Some of these were from returning clients. This remains an area of significant opportunity and one we plan to develop.

#### **4.7. The Organisational Development Programme**

At the beginning of the period of this report the Board of Trustees identified some developmental needs for management and engaged external support to work with the management team. The recommendations of the resulting report have been implemented. There has been, for example, improvement in the structure and recording of management meetings. There have also been improved internal reporting mechanisms. Finally, work has been done on integrating the financial and services systems.

Our work often depends on having the right relationships at the right times. The staff, Board and Associates have attended, throughout the year, to maintaining a good network of relationships with key people. This happens at many levels – from international

mediators and policy makers, to local politicians, to strategic community leaders. We have attended, and addressed, conferences. We have provided strategic support to leaders, both at home and abroad. We have maintained relations with decision-makers (e.g. Foreign Affairs, Home Office, DCLG, and SEUPB)

There have been ongoing staff development processes and training events, both internal and external. Training attended by staff has covered such topics as: mediation, finance for non-finance personnel, media and public relations, Sage, Excel.

Throughout the year, with the support of the Invest NI funded Social Enterprise Programme, we have explored the feasibility of establishing a trading arm separate from the charity. No decision has yet been made on whether this would be beneficial to the organisation and those it serves.

## **5. Workload Statistics**

The following pages give some statistics about the work of the year. It should be noted that the figure of 404 records includes all pieces for which we opened a file. It includes not just case and training referrals, but also such things as trainings and events Mediation Northern Ireland staff have attended as participants.

116 referrals became active pieces of work (facilitation, mediation or training). The breakdown of these, and the results of the work, are on the second page of statistics – entitled “Method of Work with Outcomes”.

The latter pages, with pie charts, are simply a repeat (more visually) of the information contained in the initial two pages of tables.

## Cumulative Statistics - 1st April 2007 - 31st March 2008

### Field of Work

Beyond NI	45
Church & Faith	2
Diversity	5
Education	8
Generic - Neighbour/neighbour	38
Generic - Other	114
Generic - Workplace	16
Health	4
Housing	3
Local Governance	19
Neighbourhood & Community	44
Organisational Development	19
Policing & justice	58
SPP	29
	<b>404</b>

### Referred by

<i>Private Company</i>	1
Associate	2
CAB	9
Credit Union	1
District Councils	5
DPP	
GRO/CRO	2
Housing Association	2
NIACRO	1
NI Court Service	1
NICVA	1
NIO	7
<i>Voluntary Organisation</i>	1
OPONI	1
PSNI	8
Self	157
Sunderland	1
WMMTS	1
YCS	6
Data unavailable	197
	<b>404</b>

### Outcome

Assistance Given	33
Closure for other reason	15
Improvement	2
Inquiry only	50
Not mediation, not amenable	6
Objectives met	150
Objectives not met	6
Objectives partially met	2
Other	2
Referred on	5
Enquiry / on-going	133
	<b>404</b>

### Status

Assessment	10
Case Development	
Closed	235
Complete	30
Enquiry	34
Exploration	5
On Hold	3
Pending	
Ongoing	87
	<b>404</b>

### Method of Work

Attendee	57
Conference	1
Civic Diplomacy	7
Consultancy	1
Facilitation	47
Mediation	32
Meeting	28
N/A	151
Project	20
Support & advice	5
Talk	16
Workshop	2
Training	37
	<b>404</b>

## Method of Work with Outcomes - 1st April 2007 - 31st March 2008

### Facilitation:

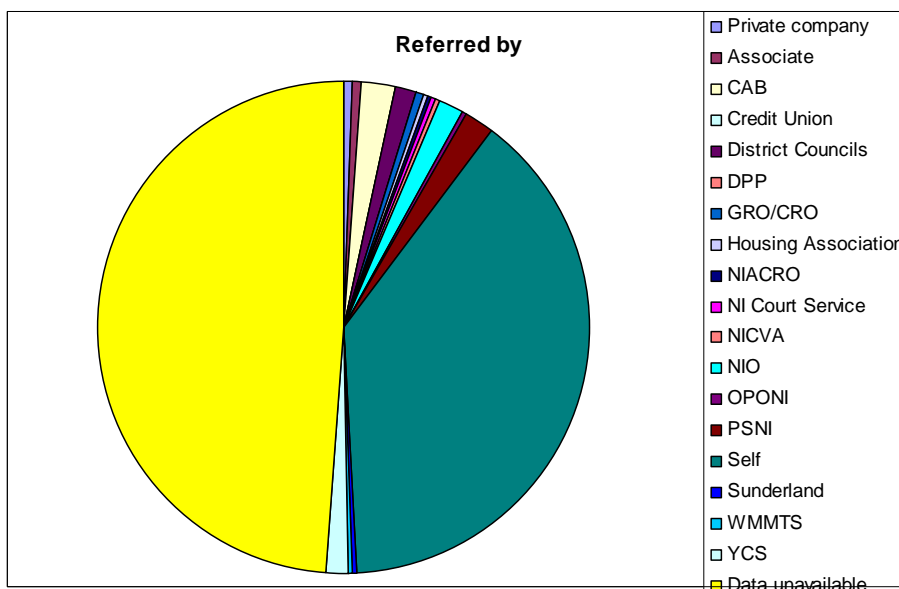
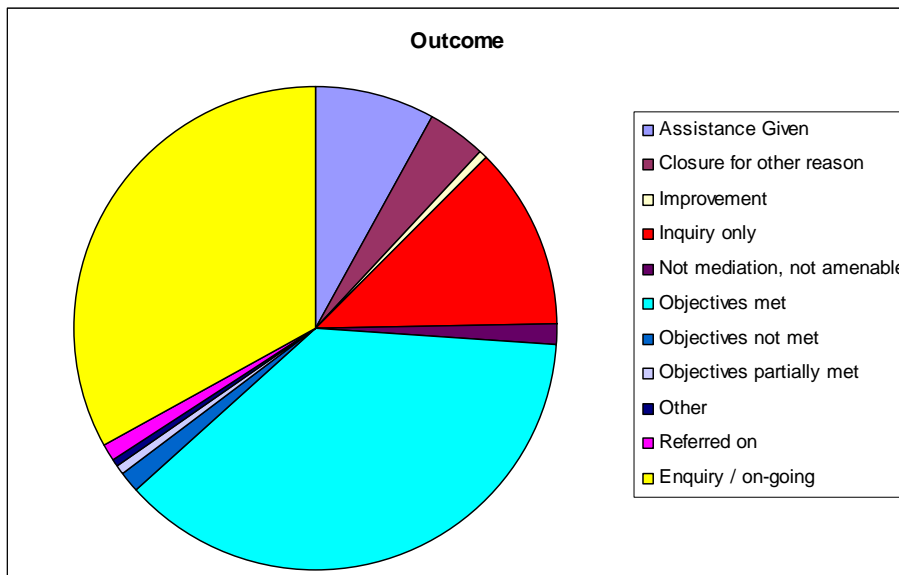
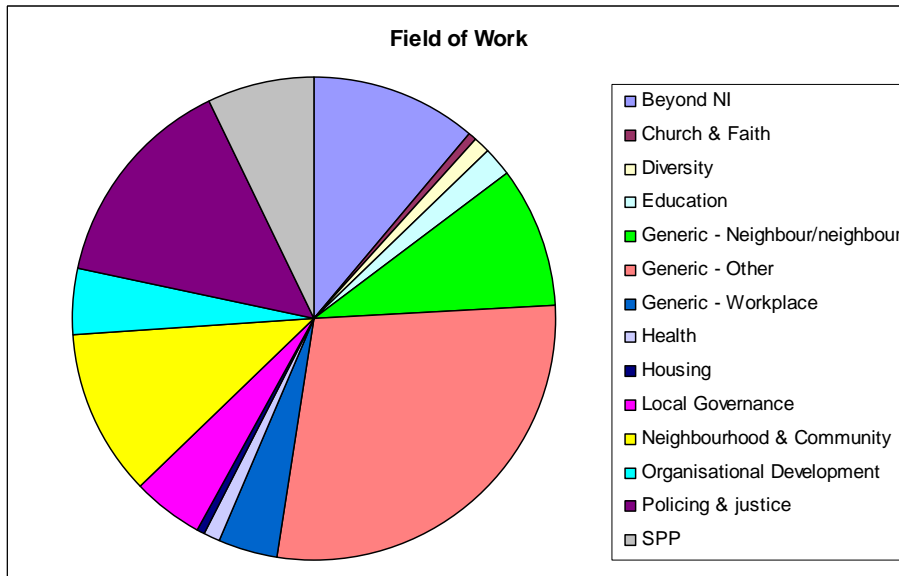
Closure for other reason	1
Inquiry Only	3
Ongoing	16
Objectives met	26
Objectives not met	1
	47

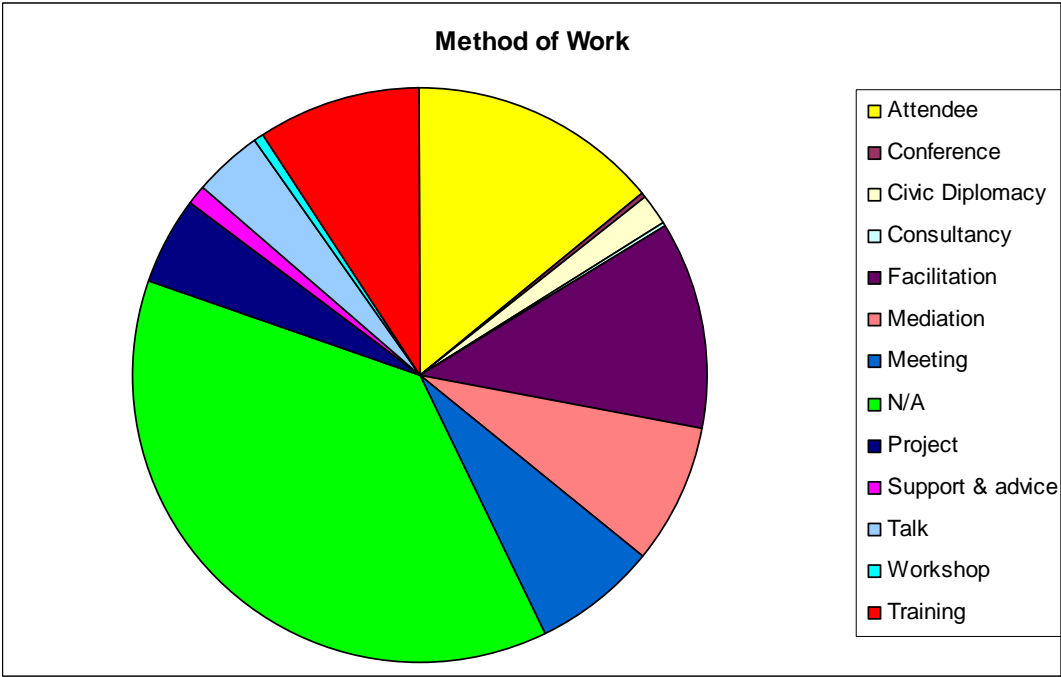
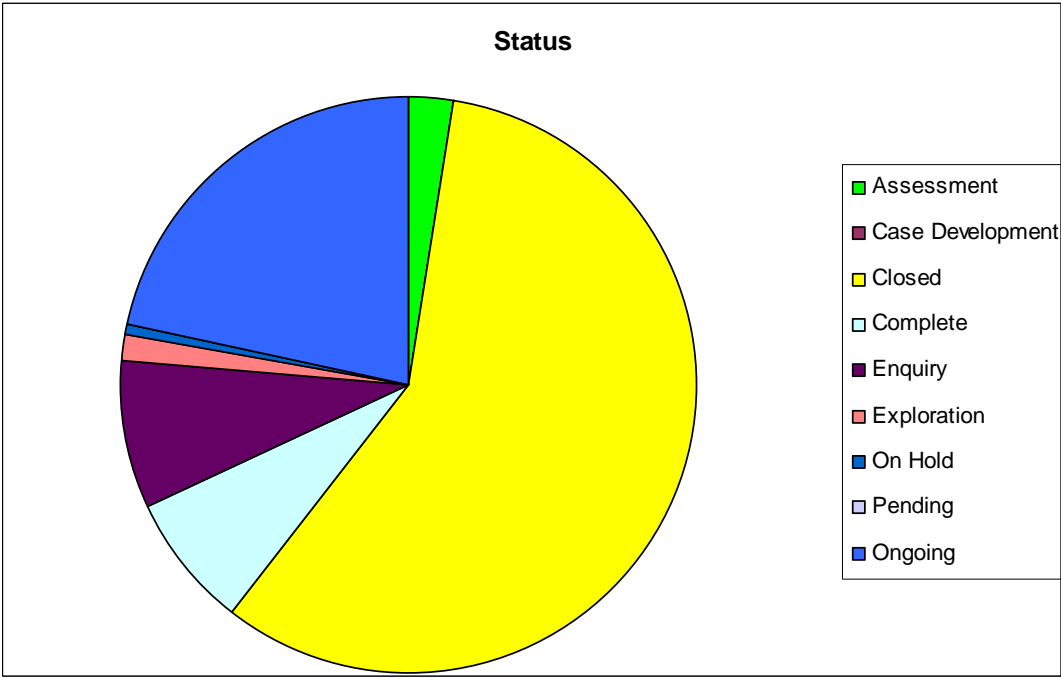
### Mediation:

Ongoing	14
Closure for other reason	1
Assessment	
Improvement	2
Case Development	
Not mediation, not amenable	4
Objectives met	9
Objectives not met	
Objectives partially met	2
	32

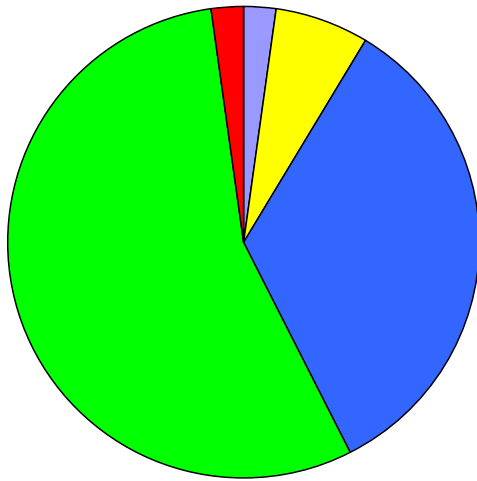
### Training:

Ongoing	17
Closure for other reason	2
Assessment	
Objectives met	18
Objectives not met	
	37



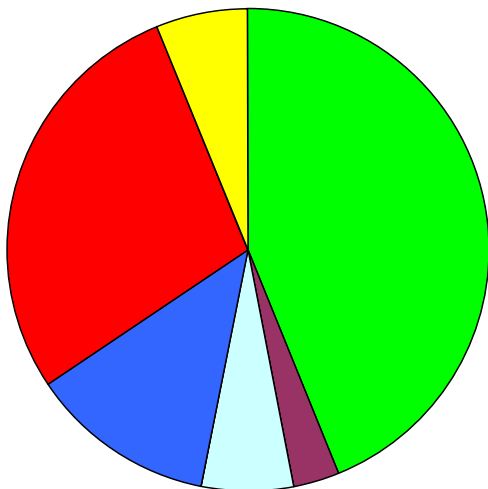


### Facilitations



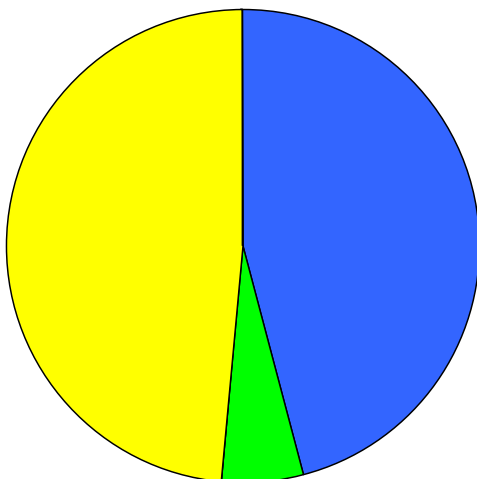
- Closure for other reason
- Inquiry Only
- Ongoing
- Objectives met
- Objectives not met

### Mediations



- Ongoing
- Closure for other reason
- Assessment
- Improvement
- Case Development
- Not mediation, not amenable
- Objectives met
- Objectives not met
- Objectives partially met

### Training



- Ongoing
- Closure for other reason
- Assessment
- Objectives met
- Objectives not met

## **6. Funding**

Mediation Northern Ireland appreciates the support of a range of national and international donors and supporters.

During the year we received financial and other support from the following organisations.

- The Big Lottery Reaching Communities Programme
- The Community Relations Council Core Funding Programme
- The EU Programme for Peace & Reconciliation (Peace2) administered by the Community Relations Council.
- The International Fund for Ireland
- The Lloyds TSB Foundation for Northern Ireland
- The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust
- The St Stephen's Green Trust
- Irish Aid (Department of Foreign Affairs)
- Belfast City Council
- Newry & Mourne District Council
- The Allan & Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust
- The Special European Union Programmes Body
- Elevate East Lancashire
- Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
- Burnley Borough Council
- Neighbourhood Renewal Fund
- Greater Manchester Police
- Liverpool Multi-agency Gangs Strategy Group
- Specialist Mediation in East Lancashire
- The Youth Justice Agency's Youth Conferencing Service
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive
- The Policing Board for Northern Ireland
- The Southern Health & Social Services Board
- The Eirene International Christian Service for Peace
- The Brethren Volunteer Service
- The Scottish Mediation Network
- The European Mediation Network Initiative
- Creative Events
- Workwest & the Social Economy Programme
- Invest Northern Ireland
- NICVA.

A full copy of the charity's audited accounts is available on its website.

## **7. Conclusion**

Mediation Northern Ireland, in reporting on another year of work and Corporate Planning period, can be proud of the contribution it has made to the quality of life for many in Northern Ireland and beyond.

We are satisfied that we have a healthy organisation with a healthy portfolio of work. We also recognise and are ready for a changed funding environment, with plans for an improved business-like approach.

We are of the opinion that there is much work to be done in continuing to develop the understanding of and capacity for mediation activity in Northern Ireland, particularly contributing to the building up of peace and enhanced, dynamic relations.

We are in the process of preparing our new corporate plan for the 2009 – 2012 period and are doing so with a continued sense of mission and commitment.