

To: Jane Graham  
Project Manager (Mediation)  
Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland  
New Cathedral Buildings  
St Anne's Square  
11 Church Street  
Belfast City Council  
BT1 1PG

From: The Community Relations Council  
6 Murray Street  
Belfast  
BT1 6DN

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**Issue: DRAFT MEDIATION MODEL - Using Mediation to Resolve Complaints Against Police**

The Community Relations Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft Mediation Model. CRC's aim is to lead and support change in Northern Ireland towards reconciliation, tolerance and mutual trust. We work by promoting constructive and relevant dialogue, by actively supporting those taking real risks for relationship building, by acting as a practical bridge between groups in society and between the public, private, voluntary and community sectors and by promoting wider learning through developing better practice. Our overall aim is "to lead and support change towards a peaceful, inclusive, prosperous, stable and fair society founded on the achievement of reconciliation, equality, co-operation, respect, mutual trust and good relations".

The proposed model provides an opportunity for open and honest dialogue between the complainant and the police officer, which will encourage new discussions and help promote good relations. The programme commits itself to voluntary participation, confidentiality, independence and impartiality – all core values of CRC. Furthermore, there is growing evidence that mediation is an appropriate method for handling certain types of complaints; it is quick and effective; allows individuals to try and understand behaviours and attitudes, and mediates a positive outcome to a complaint.

CRC agree that staff from the mediation unit who have specialist training in conflict resolution/mediation should act as mediators, but also welcome the proposal that external mediators can assist in exceptional circumstances.

It is essential that complaints made against the police are investigated and resolved by an independent body and CRC acknowledges the growing awareness among the public of the independence of the Police Ombudsman's office, and believe that this growing trust will encourage people to use the option of mediation to solve complaints.

CRC principles and values dictate that models/schemes have to ensure respect, fairness, equality, co-operation and reconciliation. Furthermore they need to have appropriate safeguards and protections for the participants. The Community Relations Council is supportive of this draft model and believes that this new model is positive addition to handling complaints made by the public against the police. It has the potential to provide a better understanding of why things happen and also challenge different perceptions of one another, and over time play its part in helping to deliver a 'normal, civic society.....where there is equity, respect for diversity and a recognition of our interdependence'.

CRC looks forward to building its relationship with the Office of the Police Ombudsman and is willing to assist with this important work.

Yours sincerely

**Dr Duncan Morrow**  
**Chief Executive**  
**Community Relations Council**