



College of Mediators Response to the 'Keep Britain Working' report 16 February 2026

We are writing on behalf of the **College of Mediators** in response to the *Keep Britain Working* report, published on 5 November 2025 by Sir Charlie Mayfield, and to offer our support for the proposed vanguard phase and subsequent rollout.

About the College of Mediators (COM)

The COM is an independent professional body and regulatory organisation for mediators across multiple fields, including workplace mediation, with 380 members. Founded in 2006, but with origins going back to 1996, COM sets high professional standards, approves training providers, and maintains a register of qualified and insured practitioners committed to best practice. Our purpose is to improve mediation provision, increase public awareness, and promote high standards of practice and training. We currently have **90 workplace mediator members** operating across the UK.

Support for the 'new deal' and fast-tracking ADR

The COM welcomes the report's clear recognition that addressing sickness absence and economic inactivity requires a **new deal** in which employers, employees and government each play an active and shared role. We particularly support the recommendation to **fast-track alternative dispute resolution approaches alongside wider reforms**.

Mediation helps both parties reflect on and articulate of their needs, creating a safe space for all voices to be heard and agree a way forward. Communication can feel difficult for many reasons, intergeneration differences, personal challenges or conflict between colleagues. Mediation empowers both parties to take responsibility, creating a sense of hope and agency.

Addressing the culture of fear and humanizing the workplace

The report's **first Principle for Change to 'rehumanise the workplace'** closely aligns with the values and practice of workplace mediation. Irrespective of the cause of sickness absence, the report clearly identifies the difficult position of both employee and employer. The employee grappling with deeply personal issues and the employer often a sense of fear, exacerbated by periods of minimal or no communication. This creates distance between parties, discourages safe and early conversations, and prevents timely support at the point when it is most effective. Workplace mediation creates a structured, confidential and supported environment for early and constructive dialogue.



Mediation within Workplace Health Provision (WHP)

We also welcome the recommendation to include **third-party mediation support within the WHP's Stay-in-Work Plans**, particularly where sickness absence is linked to conflict. Evidence from mediation practice consistently shows that without personal responsibility being taken to address underlying conflict, a timely and meaningful return to work is unlikely to be sustained.

Supporting the Vanguard Phase

We believe our workplace mediator members could provide practical and scalable support to several of the report's recommendations, initially within the **vanguard phase** to help maximise its success. We note Sir Charlie Mayfield's recent BBC Radio 4 interview and the decision to fast-track this phase over the next 12 months.

Suggested Next Steps

We would welcome the opportunity to be involved in the vanguard phase; to share our impartial expertise with the relevant advisers or contribute to working parties.

Martin Ellis FCA,

Chair, College of Mediators

martin.ellis@collegeofmediators.co.uk

mobile 07745 849207

Louisa Spicer,

Board Member, College of Mediators,

ls Spicerconsultancy@gmail.com