

Supported by
**CROYDON
COUNCIL**

CROYDON COMMUNITY MEDIATION



**ANNUAL REPORT
2003-2004**



Investing in Volunteers



MEDIATION UK





COMPANY INFORMATION

TRUSTEES

Rosemary Cryle – Acting Chair
David Rees – Treasurer
Alan Whiting – Company Secretary
Barbara Ottaway
Cathy Pleasance
Graham Owen
Philip Webb

STAFF

Françoise Grimshaw – Co-ordinator
Geraldine Pirdue – Administrator

SESSIONAL WORKERS

Yvonne
Chris - since October 2003
Adam
Terry - until October 2003

OFFICE VOLUNTEERS

Daphne
Irene
CETS Administration Students

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COMPANY NUMBER
3973287

CHARITY NUMBER
1088222

INTRODUCTION TO CROYDON COMMUNITY MEDIATION ANNUAL REPORT 2003-4

Graham Owen, Assistant Director, Croydon Council Housing Department

Neighbour mediation offers council tenants a challenging alternative to resolving disputes that could otherwise wear them down and undermine their enjoyment of their homes. Many tenants are wary of entering into mediation at first, fearful of the need to address the issues within the dispute. A key skill of the mediator is in trying to facilitate the client in making the decision whether to proceed or not. CCM's volunteers receive training to a high standard, which gives them the confidence to negotiate with clients on how to move towards a joint meeting.

The importance of mediation as an alternative way of resolving disputes is being recognised more and more. This is reflected in the growth in demand from Housing Associations in the South London area – there are now about a dozen Associations using CCM regularly. There is also a demand from within the Croydon Housing Department to find innovative ways of preventing homelessness amongst young people, and to deal with teenage anti-social behaviour on Council estates. Two projects, MEDYP and MAGYC, were undertaken with this purpose in mind over the last year.

The service's summary of its client work during the year, and clients spontaneous comments (pages 11/12), demonstrate that in some situations mediation is the ideal, practical solution.

Mediation is a subtle process and has outcomes that are difficult to measure. We are continuing to look at ways of assessing the impact of mediation and approaches to conflict resolution, present or future, with our partners.

REPORT FROM CCM CHAIR

Rosemary Cryle

I have been involved with the Croydon Community Mediation Service since its inception. I trained as a mediator on the first training course and joined with others on various working groups to decide how the mediation service should develop. Others in those groups were instrumental in creating the right paperwork to gain our current Charitable Status. Many of the existing Trustees have supported the Service in the same way from inception to its current position.

The Trustees and Company members work in subgroups to look at Staffing and Personnel issues, Finances, Health and Safety, Standards and Service Delivery, Training, Youth Matters, Publicity and Projects. Barbara Ottaway and myself are the Trustees representing the Mediator and Trainee viewpoints.

Last year we lost Norman Owen as Chair, and John Flouch as Company Secretary, who had supported the Service from the beginning. I have since been Acting Chair for the service, and Alan Whiting took on the task of Company Secretary during this last year.

I have now moved away from Croydon to Ramsgate and so am standing down as Trustee. I do however hope to stay involved in training for a while.

We gained a new Trustee last year in Philip Webb, who took the place vacated by Diane Madden previously. Both have worked for Croydon Police. We will need more Trustees this year to spread the tasks, as I know that other Trustees will be required to stand down in the near future. It is in our Memorandum and Articles that at each AGM one third of Trustees should stand down by rotation. The service could not function without the wisdom and support offered by the Trustees to the co-ordinator.

This year we have improved our training presentation, and have become a member of the London Open College Network. This has helped our nine new trainees to excel themselves and complete their units on time, ready to start to mediate.

We are already an Accredited Service meeting Mediation UK standards, so it is known that we offer first class mediation. Since, we have been encouraged to work to Community legal Service Guidelines and our co-ordinator has put her efforts into updating and streamlining our systems and procedures to meet these guidelines. Trustees and other members of the various subcommittees have supported and worked with our co-ordinator in this task, as well as thinking through, and writing our next 3 year strategy.

It has been very rewarding to see the Service grow with our tireless co-ordinator. The Service has consolidated its good practice by good administrative support from Geraldine, the sessional workers and office volunteers. All the volunteer mediators have gained useful experience and several are working towards individual accreditation to demonstrate competence, which can only be gained after quite a time of successful mediation practice.

New projects have been undertaken too, so it has been an exciting and challenging year for all at Croydon Community Mediation Service.

TREASURER'S REPORT

David Rees

Since the start of the MAGYC project, CCM has received an additional commission from Croydon Council's Housing Department, to prevent homelessness in young people, the MEDYP project, together with a grant to meet the cost.

Some self-employed sessional workers were engaged and as we were not required to designate the Housing grants as restricted funds, it has been possible for sessional workers to help with the administrative aspects of mediation case work, as and when occurring, thus relieving some of the pressure on volunteers.

The figures appear to show an underspend, which could be attributed to the MEDYP and MAGYC projects. What they do not show is that there were considerable periods of absence through sickness among the sessional workers with the result that the Co-ordinator was required to put in extra hours in order to get the work done.

The level of the Council's Housing Department funding of CCM had been frozen in 2002/3 at the previous year's level, but was increased in 2003/4. In addition, our income from Housing Associations and other social landlords rose significantly. All this means that we start the new financial year with a much healthier balance than in previous years, which is giving us the confidence to negotiate a new lease with the owners of our premises.

**CROYDON COMMUNITY MEDIATION
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE
For the year to 31st March 2004**

			2004	2003
1 INCOME				
Income from Croydon Council	<i>2004</i>	<i>2003</i>	83,489	59,387
<i>Croydon Council Grant</i>	5,750	5,750		
<i>Housing Department Funding</i>				
<i>Neighbourhood mediation</i>	50,739	44,339		
<i>Previous Residual</i>		1,298		
<i>Medyp Project</i>	20,000	5,000		
<i>Magyc in Waddon project</i>	7,000	3,000		1,634
Social Housing Landlord Fees			8,370	4,600
Miscellaneous Fees and Donations			169	185
Gross interest received			312	243
			<hr/>	<hr/>
Total Income			£92,340	£66,049
			<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
2 EXPENDITURE				
Staff costs			44,400	37,955
Mediators Training & Supervision			1,755	2,350
Sessional workers fees			15,427	4,187
Insurance and subscriptions to membership			2,146	1,430
Office Volunteers expenditure			490	544
Premises costs			7,497	9,888
Printing, postage, stationery and telephone			2,715	3,001
Mediation expenses			390	328
Legal and professional			213	174
Publicity and fundraising			1,207	160
General Expenses			757	926
Repairs and Maintenance			1,234	510
Bank charges				5
Auditors' remuneration			604	588
Depreciation			436	96
			<hr/>	<hr/>
Total Expenditure			£79,271	£62,142
			<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

**CROYDON COMMUNITY MEDIATION
BALANCE SHEET
At 31st March 2004**

	2004 £	2004 £	2003 £	2003 £
Fixed Assets				
Tangible assets		1,396		1,511
Current Assets				
Debtors	2,725		4,549	
Cash at Bank and in Hand	12,047		9,517	
	14,772		14,066	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	-619		-13,097	
Net current assets		14,153		969
Total assets less current liabilities		£15,549		£2,480
Income Funds				
Unrestricted funds		15,549		2,480
Total Funds		£15,549		£2,480

SERVICE CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

Françoise Grimshaw

The 2003-4 financial year was the service's busiest year yet. We made in-roads in our work with young people, and in setting standards for the service. We have pursued our general aim of improving our practice, in line with re-organisation at national level in the monitoring of mediation training and mediation standards. Internal training and improvements introduced at the beginning of the year have already significantly improved our mediation results.

CETS regretfully had to notify us that due to funding changes we could not be supported by their administrative structure. We were advised to become a direct members of the London Open College Network ourselves –which we did, not without effort: we had to review our training practice, and present a portfolio before being accepted in the Summer of 2003. Then the work really started; I had first to re-apply to run our national internal mediators training programme which we have delivered since 1998. This was followed by an application to deliver our own package of short courses, to the college's requirements, in order to offer free standing units for other organisations and individuals, with a recognised qualification attached.

To date, our internal training is re-approved and moderated, but we are still waiting for full approval for 5 other units. We hope to be ready by the Summer of 2004, for a September intake. Since January, we have nine new trainees who will be ready to mediate in the Summer, replacing those we lost last year.

At national level, Mediation UK having renewed our status of 'Accredited Service' duly passed us on to the Community Legal Service, who was setting new national mediation standards. We were provisionally accepted by the CLS by the Autumn, and have been visited by an assessor in February. We hope to be fully approved in the Autumn of 2004. The new standards are promoting significant changes in the way mediation services administer themselves, with an emphasis on demonstrating how responsible their work is. Proving that one is working to a client's best interest is far more difficult than simply providing a service, and the level of documentation and supervision required can be time-consuming and costly.

We are still part of a culture where 'voluntary' means 'amateurish' and 'cheap'. Moving to being even more professional in our approach, and being expected to work at the same level as organisations with much more capacity and funding, is a tall order, but a necessary step.

We therefore appointed supervisors in November to provide better support and manage mediators records. We are currently running the new system in, to reach all volunteer mediators.

It is a pity that due to the amount of young people work we carried out last year, we were not able to publicise the service enough, or fundraise pro-actively, in order to receive more varied enquiries and referrals. We are attending to this in 2004, and hope that our improved success with mediation will be mirrored next year, with a larger amount of cases coming forwards for mediation.

The extra funding we obtained during the year to work with young people allowed us to support the administration of the client work and workshops, and building up our information resources. Terry, Yvonne, Adam and Chris came to us at different times each with unique skills and responsibilities. And they had their own share of personal difficulties and illness to contend with. There was also a lot to learn. But the difference was felt straight away: our response times improved, enquiries were dealt with more efficiently, leaflets became available and clients records were in a better condition. It has become quite clear however that variable and short-term funding which does not allow us to employ staff has its drawback:

*lack of realistic planning, (including funders, who can judge us too quickly)

*inability to prepare staff and work to a clear contract

*uncertainties about the near future, preventing efficient advertising and networking with referrers and 'first port of call' agencies.

By January and until March, our future MEDYP work with young people was uncertain, and in the end we found out that there would be no more funding for the coming year. However it is not a question of turning our back on that work. It was all good experience, young people who engaged with us took away something worthwhile to them, and so did we.

We need now a moratorium: a time to take stock of what works and what does not. It is also a time to concentrate on resources and fundraising for long-term solutions –some of which need not be costly. During this period of uncertainty we have spent time and energy developing our new funding targets with the help of two free-lance fundraisers, following our strategic aims of consolidating and diversifying.

During the last year, we have been like a yacht, adjusting our sails with the changing winds. We were alive, we moved on, dealing flexibly with the comings and going of events and life crises, ours and others, by using what we have learn to do so well: constructive problem solving, and a compassionate approach to each others and to our clients.

We help people pause and search for a wider view of conflict, one which takes into consideration people's needs and real concerns such as being understood and living in peace, and giving due regard to issues of fairness and self-agency.

Sharing a vision -the mediation ethos and principles- has a lot to do with our stability, because it gives everyone a common purpose, a way of dealing with internal and external issues, which encompasses our many roots, hopes and wishes.

Certainly being a volunteer brings something special to the type of giving and attention our clients receive, and with our new trainees, there is a new wind of enthusiasm blowing our sails.

I am thankful that so many people are prepared to give their best to make it all worthwhile.

MEDYP (MEDIation for Young People) PROJECT REPORT

Françoise Grimshaw

Our brief was to offer a mediation service to young people and their families when potential homelessness was an issue, and following referral from the Housing Department.

By April we knew that we would have funding to run this project until December 2003.

We had already spent the winter term setting the project up, but not knowing whether the future was certain, we had only appointed a sessional worker to promote the service and manage the casework, with the help of the service co-ordinator and mediators available on a standby basis.

We knew that our database system was not set up to record this type of work, and that we needed more access to records from different working stations. We therefore spent money and efforts to improve our systems, work which went on sporadically from March onwards.

We waited for referrals, as funding was restricted to serving the needs of the Assessment Team.

Some young people, or their parents, reached us by 'word of mouth' recommendation; we saw them in order to test the system. Referrals came in earnest from the end of May, and they poured until the end of September, when they started to dwindle. In September, when the referrals were at their highest, we lost Terry, our MEDYP sessional worker due to sudden ill health, but were lucky enough to find a mediator, Christopher, willing to replace her in the administration of the work. At some point in the Autumn, we were informed that we could have another 3 months funding, as referrals had arrived so late in the year.

We started the project thinking that we could work quickly, setting urgent appointments at the office and moving to face to face work within a couple of weeks. It proved to be different.

Young people were difficult to reach –often their telephone mobile number was not working and letters were left unanswered. Some had no fixed address or were in the process of changing address. Appointments were made, but they forgot to come. Some felt 'sent' against their will.

Many parents had reached the end of their tether and did not want to have anything to do with us –they had made their mind up, and saw our effort as an attempt by the Council to shirk responsibility. Some families, especially mothers and daughters were willing to talk, but stated clearly they had no relationship problems, it was only a housing problem, or clearly a case of overcrowded living. Some parents were working very long hours, and another meeting was just too much for them to manage. So what could we do ?

Firstly, when suitable, we relied more on the telephone to keep in contact with clients.

We helped young people talk through their housing situation and life options, often explaining how things worked. Young people and their families lived in a muddling world. We supported young people through changing circumstances, just in case things did not work out. Sometimes we contacted the Housing Department to highlight their difficulties. When relevant, we signposted young people to other agencies –especially pregnant young women.

We talked to parents too, and the parents who referred themselves clearly appreciated the chance to talk about discipline and growing up issues.

We organise some joint sessions, which on the whole were appreciated, but quite a few were cancelled too -the simple act of discussing what can be done at times leads people to take their own steps towards a solution.

Questionnaires were sent to the clients we had met, rather than only had telephone conversations with. (32 young people, 17 parents). We had a 25% response rate. The feedback received shows that the service was very much appreciated (10 reported clear improvements).

Of the 12 replies, all said that the contact persons were courteous, friendly, easy to talk to.

Those who saw a mediator said mediators were understanding, fair, impartial, and that it helped.

What made a difference for them was a chance to talk openly, help to think differently and feel good about oneself, being listened to and understood, receiving information. All but 2 would come again if needed, and all would recommend the service to a friend.

THE MAGYC PROJECT
Mediation Awareness Group for Young people in Croydon
Françoise Grimshaw

Our aim was to run a few workshops and deliver some interventions in Waddon to help improve conflict situations involving young people and adults, as a contribution to a set of measures that were taken by the Housing department to improve the estate.

Funding ran from January to August, and there were many uncertainties regarding this funding whilst we were actively networking and planning events. It was therefore extremely difficult to advertise accurately what we could do, or work to a reasonable and productive time scale.

Raising awareness, and delivering interventions is not an easy task. What we would like, or other people would like to see happen, does not necessarily raise enough enthusiasm in those who need it most, or do not grasp the benefits of getting involved in resolving disputes. Promotional efforts usually work in their own ways: requests for help may come, when funding is spent, or be related to other areas of mediation. We for example were still getting requests for training this year from people who had heard about our work last year. Some of the approaches we made enlisted young people's interest who were not living in the exact targeted area. Word of mouth, from a convinced third party is still the best way to help a young person or adult approach a service they do not know. The help and collaboration promised by such third parties did not always materialised.

So with the above in mind, what we achieved in this period, between myself and sessional workers is still worthwhile, and our young people's feedback shows just this, when they had decided themselves to participate.

Talking about what upsets you most is often overwhelming. But many young people and adults did, and said they felt awkward about it, but they also appreciated being present, listening, even when they did not say much at all. During this time:

1. We networked with various professional people in Waddon or connected with Waddon (estimated number of related professional contacts is over 40).

2. We delivered interventions related to issues of conflict, constructive communication, bullying, etc.: All who attended belonged to minority or disadvantaged groups.

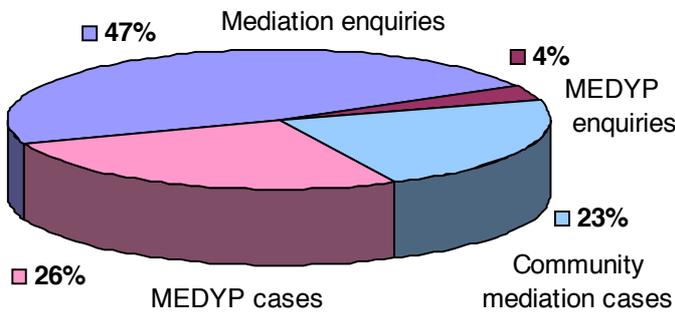
- workshop for young mothers at St George's run by Croydon Family Group (estimated no participants 20)
- workshop for disabled young people at Waddon Youth Club (approx. 12 participants)
- workshop at CCM office for young people (7 enrolled, 4 attending).
- Unrelated workshops elsewhere revealed that there were Waddon residents present (i.e. Get Connected Pupils Referral Unit, AAGPAG).
- 2 Summer workshops at the Waddon Together project Summer scheme (approx. 16 participants)
- 1 attempt to reach all young people in Waddon via a very broad independently leafleting led to a few contacts (around 10) but without enough in common to run workshops in the Summer sweltering heat.
- We are aware of 5 cases, under other service heading connected with our work regarding young people and conflict in Waddon.

Since, we have tried to keep in touch with young people, for example by sending Christmas cards to all we had addresses for, reminding them of what they had learnt.

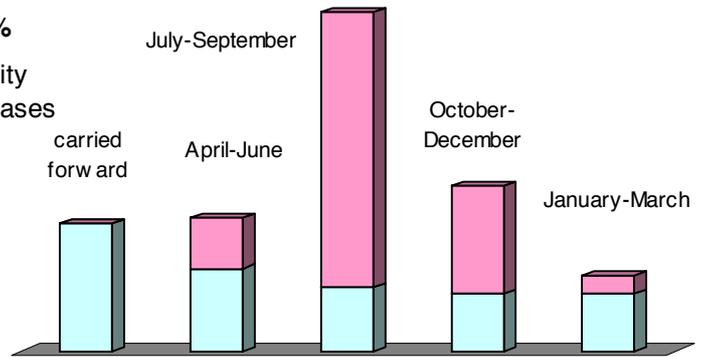
We are now keen to continue with this type of work but with secure funding, over a reasonable period of time.

Casework statistics 2003-4

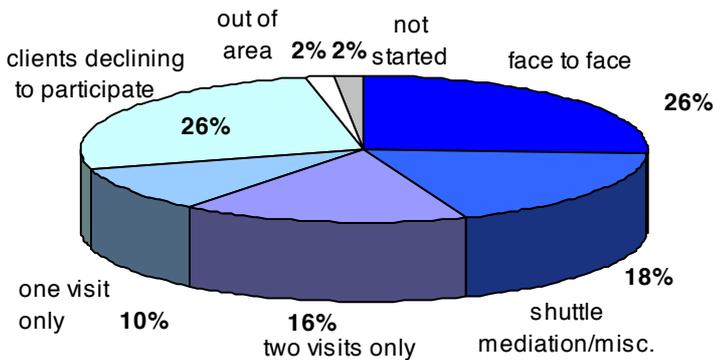
Mediation work 01/04/03 - 31/03/04



COMMUNITY MEDIATION CASES & MEDYP CASES

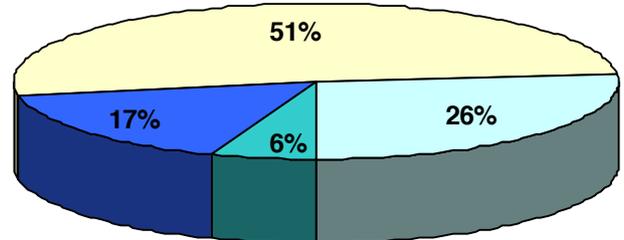


Community mediation cases outcome

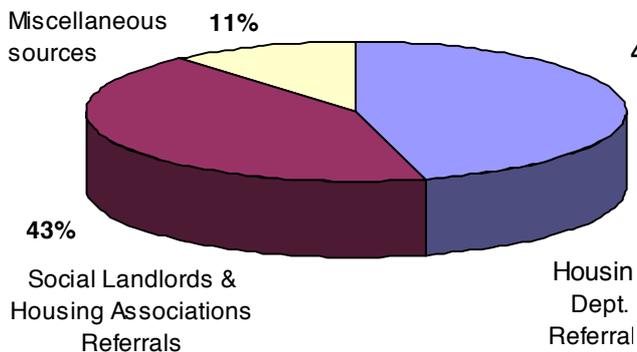


MEDYP referrals outcome (Jan 03-March 04)

telephone contacts work



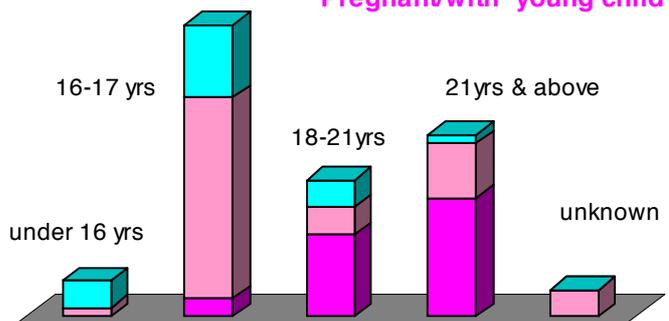
Source of community mediation referrals



joint work with parent & YP 46% work with parent only work with YP only

Medyp young people (Jan03-March04)

Males & Females
Pregnant/with young child



WHAT PEOPLE SAY ABOUT US

MEDYP clients:

- 'Thanks to you, my whole relationship is OK with my Dad, I keep in touch with them now'.
- 'Everything was spot on' (parent).
- 'I would like to say thank you to the people who tried to help but I am currently under the care of a doctor and a counsellor, thank you for all your support.
- 'Nothing has changed but it was worth a try. Thank you'.
- Talking to a third party always helps because they can look at the bigger picture and point things; I would prefer my son and I airing our grievances with support from a third party

From young people workshops (MAGYC):

- G's best wishes were to 'avoid getting into trouble', and 'handle arguments'. She comments that she would like to use what she learnt by 'using phrases when it comes to arguments', and she liked to watch a video about coping when bullied.
- J. learnt not to 'start back' if someone else starts first.
- B said 'It was a great pleasure to talk to P. she was a great listener and was very co-operative towards me'.
- C. liked to 'talk about difficult feelings', but it was difficult to 'separate reality from theory'.
- M' wrote: 'I wish everyone could participate, I wish everyone could speak the truth'.

Neighbours disputes

- What could be improved ? 'nothing else to be improved, a good service to be offered, I think maybe it has helped sort out my dispute, others should try it !'
- 'It was a very traumatic experience for both of us'
- What was arranged ? 'we agreed that we would communicate if a problem arises about the children's behaviour, we both agreed to explain to our children about what was discussed on the day of mediation, and we would encourage children to come to their own agreement on friendship'.
- 'The attention we received was very welcome and impartial, thank you for the interest shown. We hope your good work will continue to show your time was well spent'.
- How satisfied are you with this agreement ? '5 (out of 5 for 'delighted') if it was adhered to'.

Trainees say:

- You learn techniques, in a safe environment, when you can try them out on each other with minimum danger.
- There's a great team spirit !
- Cross-referencing the learning outcomes is like spaghetti junction; training is like going round spaghetti junction without a map !
- I feel safe to share personal details about myself, I feel respected and cared for.
- I now look at situations in terms of needs, the training has changed my perspective on the skills I have.

Referrers say:

- I think the mediation service gives us a good option to offer to complainants, particularly in respect of one to one types of disputes. In many cases of course people may not be willing to participate, but it remains a very good tool and I am always happy to promote it.
- Can you update me, what is going on ?
- I need a feedback report from you !