



**Hastings & Rother
Mediation Service**



**Volunteer
Information
Booklet**

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MEDIATION SERVICE

The Hastings and Rother Mediation Service was established in November 1995 to provide neighbourhood mediation to the residents of Hastings and St Leonards, and in October 2000 the service was extended to cover the district of Rother. In December 2000 the service was formally accredited by Mediation UK and in 2004 it was awarded the Community Legal Service's Quality Mark in Community Mediation – being the first mediation service in the country to achieve this status.

One of the very important things we can offer our clients is our time. This is something that our referral agency staff are frequently unable to give to the extent that the clients require in order to resolve their problems satisfactorily. Mediation is also very effective where no laws or regulations are being broken but, nevertheless, one or more parties are troubled by the behaviour of others.

We also provide Family Mediation (divorce and separation), Peer Mediation (in schools) and Intergenerational Mediation (within families).

WHAT IS MEDIATION IN THE COMMUNITY?

Mediation is a well-established process by which an impartial third party helps people in dispute reach a mutually acceptable agreement. Mediators help people identify their needs, clarify issues, explore solutions and negotiate an agreement. The parties in dispute, not the mediator, decide the terms of this agreement. Mediation focuses on the future with an emphasis on building relationships rather than apportioning blame for what has happened in the past. Many types of dispute can be settled in a prompt, confidential and inexpensive manner without going to Court.

Mediation is not about giving advice. One of the prime skills that needs to be learned is how to listen appropriately – there is a lot more to listening than people realise. Mediators act as a path of communication between parties, helping them to work out a solution that is realistic, practical and workable. The mediators' first job is to listen to both sides. They help the neighbours to say what they think and feel about a situation and what they would like to do about it. Mediators encourage people to understand something of the other side's view. The parties in dispute may feel better and more able to deal with the situation having let off steam to someone who is prepared to listen; or they may realise that, in fact, their neighbour is not the ogre they imagined and that much of the problem was down to misunderstanding rather than malice.

WHAT ARE THE AIMS OF THE SERVICE?

- To provide a free, independent, impartial and confidential service to help people involved in disputes.
- To reduce the potential of violence, harassment, stress and tension within the community as a result of conflicts.
- To encourage communication and understanding between people with different lifestyles or backgrounds and also within a family unit, thus reducing discrimination and promoting equality.
- To help neighbours and families find a way of living comfortably in proximity to each other.
- To complement and to reduce the work of statutory bodies, eg Local Council, Police, Housing Associations etc.

WHAT DOES THE SERVICE OFFER TO THE COMMUNITY?

An independent, impartial and confidential service is offered to anyone living in the local area. The Service deals with a variety of neighbour problems including noise, boundary disputes, children's behaviour, vandalism, harassment and abusive behaviour, pet behaviour and parking. We also undertake Intergenerational Mediation between young people and their parents/guardians either where the young person is estranged from their family or where they are at risk of becoming estranged. The Service is provided by trained mediators working in pairs.

The mediators' aim is to enable the parties in dispute to work out a solution for themselves by assisting them to identify their needs, clarify the issues, explore solutions and negotiate an agreement. The Service thus offers non-legal assistance in an informal setting, so potentially avoiding the need for recourse to the Police, the Council or the Courts.



HOW DOES THE SERVICE OPERATE?

COMMUNITY MEDIATION

Referrals come from various organisations such as local Housing Associations, Local Council Departments, Sussex Police and the Citizens Advice Bureaux as well as from clients themselves direct.

The mediators aim to enable the parties in dispute to work out a solution for themselves, after hearing the views of the other side, and having a full opportunity to state their own views. Where this does not prove possible, for example if the parties do not wish to meet, indirect mediation may be suitable.

How Does Mediation Work?

The basic types of community mediation are:

1 Direct Mediation – Both parties are visited independently in their own homes and, if both parties are willing, a meeting is arranged at a neutral venue. The two mediators help the parties discuss their disagreement using the following structure:



a Opening Statement – The mediators welcome the parties, establish ground rules and procedure to be followed and remind parties of willingness to meet.

b Uninterrupted Time – Each party has the opportunity to speak without interruption about the disagreement, what it has meant and still means.

c Exchange – People respond to what has been said, ask questions and give and receive further information.

d Building an Agreement – Mediators help the parties look for common ground and ways forward and these are built into an agreement which is written down and signed by those present.

e Closing Statement – Mediators review and acknowledge what has been experienced and check what follow-up is needed.

2 Indirect Mediation – This is sometimes called “shuttle diplomacy”. The mediators listen to each party separately and convey messages via letters or telephone calls between them. Where parties refuse to meet face-to-face, this can be a useful means of helping the parties reach agreement on future behaviour.

3 Working with One Party – For a variety of reasons, some first parties do not wish to proceed to mediation or the second party may not agree to mediation. Many mediation services find that they can be useful in helping the first party to discuss more constructive ways of approaching their conflict. This can empower individuals to be more able to cope with conflicts without the need of third party intervention. Alternatively it may be appropriate to refer the party to an alternative agency such as Victim Support, Age UK, CAB etc.

INTERGENERATIONAL MEDIATION

The principles involved in Intergenerational Mediation are the same as those for community work, but the processes may be more informal and tailor-made. They



would still include seeing the people involved in the dispute, perhaps separately to begin with and then together, in an attempt to resolve difficulties.

PEER MEDIATION

Peer Mediation is dispute resolution conducted between pupils, by trained pupils. It is being used very successfully in schools nationwide to resolve conflicts between children caused by bullying and other inappropriate behaviours.

FAMILY MEDIATION

Family Mediation is mediation between couples who are separating or divorcing. It is used to help decide issues relating to children and/or property and finance.

NB: Neither **Peer Mediation** nor **Family Mediation** are processes that volunteers are involved with – they do only Community Mediation and, if interested, there is the opportunity to undertake Intergenerational Mediation after a year of doing Community Mediation.



VOLUNTEER ROLE DESCRIPTION

Role Title: Mediator

Responsible to: Manager/Deputy Manager

Purpose of role: Working towards the aims of the Service, to provide an effective and efficient mediation service for the community living in Hastings and Rother.

Nature and Scope: a The mediator will be part of a team with the Board of Trustees, Manager, Deputy Manager, paid staff and volunteers who provide a confidential mediation service to the community of Hastings and Rother.

b The mediator will be expected to undertake the full induction training provided by the Service. (Potential volunteers will not be accepted to undertake the training if they are not available to attend the course in full.)

c Mediation is a process in which two mediators help people in dispute to reach a mutually acceptable agreement.

d This will involve visiting parties in their own homes and taking the necessary action to follow through the mediation process.

e No set minimum hours per week is stated but it is anticipated that in the region of up to four hours, including attendance at training and support meetings. Mediators must have flexibility regarding availability to see clients .

f Mediators must be able to complete clear, accurate mediation records and contribute to the development of the service. They must submit all the necessary case paperwork within the stipulated time.

g Mediators are expected to attend monthly support training meetings to assist personal development and skills. Attendance at these meetings is an important part of the Mediation Service for training and case discussions as well as mutual support. Mediators can obtain Continuing Professional Development (CPD) through attendance as well as through other events.

h Mediators must attend two one-to-one supervisions per year, generally with the Manager or Deputy Manager.

i Mediators must gain competent mediators status by compiling a personal portfolio with supervision and guidance from the service within three years of joining.

Grievance Procedure: If you have any personal grievance or are in any way unhappy or unsure about your work in the Service, please discuss the matter with the Manager who, if unable to resolve the problem, will arrange for you to discuss it with the Chairman of the Board of Trustees.

Expenses: Expenses will be paid for travelling, telephone calls, carer's expenses and postage. Full details are available from the office.

Mediator Specification / Essential Attributes needed: Sense of humour, ability to work as part of a team, motivated, keen and friendly personality, committed to the aims of the Service. Should be a good listener, able to evaluate facts impartially, non-judgemental and able to keep information received confidential.

Desirable Attributes: Ability to drive and have use of a car, telephone and internet.



NOTES FOR APPLICANTS

When completing the application form please look at the points listed below and, if possible, show how your skills would help you carry out these tasks.

Case Recording – It is very important that all clients' cases are recorded so that an efficient service can be offered if the client comes back or the mediation gets more difficult.

What Support Do I Get? – Full training is given and the office staff are there to advise and provide back-up where necessary.

Impartiality – Whatever your views are, you will be expected to work with all kinds of clients. You will need to be prepared to examine your own views and feelings to make sure that you are able to give an equally good service to everyone.

Equal Opportunities – The mediation service is committed to equal opportunities for all, and everyone must be committed to the Service's equal opportunities policies including taking positive action.

Confidentiality – Everything that you see and hear whilst working for the mediation service has to be confidential. Everyone has to sign an agreement to observe a strict rule of confidentiality before they begin work for the Service.

In-Service Training – An initial training course followed by regular training/discussion sessions are provided.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

In compliance with its aims and principles, the Mediation Service:-

- is opposed to all forms of racism and discrimination and is committed to ensuring that all services are equally available to all people
- will resist and challenge acts of discrimination and support its staff, volunteers and clients when confronted with racial harassment
- seeks actively to conform to the 1976 Race Relations Act and the 1984 Commission for Racial Equality Code of Practice
- is an Equal Opportunities employer and encourages participation of black and ethnic minorities at all levels of the service
- Opposes all forms of discrimination or harassment on the grounds of sex, marital status, race, disability, HIV/AIDS status, sexuality and age