

CASE STUDY: MEDIATION FOLLOWING A NEIGHBOUR DISPUTE IN WARRINGTON

Background

Colin and Mike had been neighbours for a number of years and throughout that time they had always got on well.

Mike was involved in a serious fracas with a local youth and was arrested. He felt aggrieved as he believed Colin assisted the police with his arrest. The charges impacted heavily on his domestic life and his employment.

Relations between the two deteriorated and were becoming aggressive. Colin claimed to police he was being harassed via verbal abuse, threats and targeted litter drops.

Mike counter claimed that Colin had targeted litter drops and that he was slandering Mike by discussing his original arrest with the local community and embellishing the facts.

The process

The police referred the case to the Cheshire Restorative Justice & Mediation Hub. The referrer wanted to avoid criminalising both parties for harassment as these allegations were made by both parties and she felt mediation would provide a more amicable and longer term solution.

The restorative justice practitioner assessed both parties and they both agreed to shuttle mediation as they wanted to resolve the situation.

They both confirmed similar feeling about the disintegration of their friendship (sadness, frustration, confusion and anger) and both confirmed they wanted to resume friendlier terms. This was shared with each other via shuttle meetings.

It became evident that there may have been 'crossed wires' over Mike's belief that Colin had phoned the police. This confusion was explored and Mike realised his reactions to Colin may not have been based on fact. This was pivotal in reducing tensions and smoothed the way for reducing animosity. Shuttle meetings allowed feelings to be shared, confusion to be clarified and solutions offered.

Both parties agreed no more antagonistic behavior, appropriate litter disposal and no 'gossiping' to the local community.

Feedback

Colin said: "It's the first time I've used mediation and it has been really successful to both parties. As a result of the process we've now been able to resolve our misunderstanding.

"The process has been really useful and I have gained a lot of knowledge. Prior to using the service I had never heard of mediation, but it's been really helpful – a fantastic process for putting both parties to rest.

Mike said: “The mediation process went very well. It cleared up misunderstandings between me and Colin us and was delivered in a very professional way.

“As a result of undertaking mediation we now have our friendly neighbourhood relations back as it used to be.”

**Please note – the names have been changes in the case study to protect the identities of the people involved in this case.*