

CROYDON COMMUNITY MEDIATION



**Annual Report
2005 - 2006**



**CROYDON
COUNCIL**
www.croydon.gov.uk



Company Information

TRUSTEES

David Bowen
David Rees – Treasurer
Graham Owen
Barbara Ottaway
Cathy Pleasance
Philip Webb

STAFF

Françoise Grimshaw – Service Manager
Doris Amenonyoh - Medyp Co-ordinator (from June 2005) -1/2 time
Geraldine Pirdue - Administrator (until October 2005) -1/2 time
Christopher Lawton - Finance Administrator (from October 2005) -1/3 time
Margaret Earl – Casework Co-ordinator (from October 2005) -1/3 time

SESSIONAL WORKERS

Yvonne Kassim
Christopher Lawton (until September 2005)

OFFICE VOLUNTEERS

Daphne
Irene
CETS and other students

Company Number 3973287
Charity Number 1088222

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Introduction

Dave Sutherland

Head of Housing Management Services, Croydon Council

I am pleased to introduce the sixth annual report of the Croydon Community Mediation service. The service was set up by Croydon Housing Department to provide Croydon Council's tenants and leaseholders with a way of helping them resolve differences with neighbours that may arise from time to time. The service has more recently been successful in gaining funding for the Medyp project to help young people who are in conflict with family members or at risk of homelessness.

Although simple in theory – after all what is complicated about sitting down and talking to your neighbour about the cause of your disagreement, and how you might solve it, I know that in practice undergoing mediation can be very challenging to those involved. The skill of a trained volunteer mediator is to give both sides space to communicate in a reasoned and dignified way and to help them reach agreement about actions that are acceptable to them.

I am keen to ensure that neighbour mediation remains the service's prime focus and that it remains an option for Croydon tenants and leaseholders when they fall out with their neighbours. I will continue to look at ways in which the service can support the work of the Housing Department and make a contribution to the council's overall aim of maintaining cohesive communities.

I would like to thank the hard work carried out by the volunteers, whether trustees or mediators, and by the paid staff, to maintain the service during the last 12 months.

Chair's Report



Graham Owen

CCM Trustee and Assistant Director of Housing, Croydon Council

The Board of Trustees has continued to operate without a Chair, with each Trustee taking turns to carry out the duties of the Chair. This reflects in a very real way the struggle that trustees have had over the last 12 months in balancing the demands of working and family lives with those of being a trustee of a small charity like CCM.

There have been some changes in the membership of the trustees over the past 12 months and some more will take place this summer. David Bowen stepped down during the year due to a move to the West Country. At the next AGM in July 2006, two more Trustees will step down: David Rees our Treasurer from the beginning of the service in 2000 and Philip Webb, who took over from his colleague in the Met Police in 2002.

We are sad to lose three experienced trustees and their energy and enthusiasm will be sorely missed. David, in particular, will be a hard act to follow. He has faithfully attended to the accounts, signed cheques every week, got our accounts ready for the auditors every April over the last six years. We wish him, Philip and David Bowen all the very best of luck in their future endeavours.

As a Board, we have found it very difficult to fill trustee vacancies as they have occurred. It has been hard to find people with the time, energy and commitment to get involved. However, we continue to look forward and we have good reason to be optimistic. New blood is essential if the service is to thrive and prosper. We have a number of candidates who are interested in being elected at the AGM.

Financial position has been stable over the last 12 months with income from the council and other sources allowing the service to operate with a reasonable budget.

Our thanks are due to our experienced administrator, Geraldine Pirdue, who left for a position in Croydon Council, and to Yvonne Kassim our sessional caseworker, who also found a new position. Christopher Lawton and Margaret Earl have successfully come in and taken over their new responsibilities. Finally, I must welcome Doris Amenonyoh, who started the Mediation for Young People Project (MEDYP) in June 2005.



Service Manager's Report

Françoise Grimshaw
CCM Service Manager

This last financial year has seen our previous predictions and preparations unfold. It has confirmed our belief that mediation has the potential to make a difference to people, who, for whatever reason, find themselves in difficult situations and are in need of imaginative solutions.

As funding for our Mediation for Young People was fully pledged by the beginning of the financial year, we appointed Doris Amenonyoh to co-ordinate the development of MEDYP, and she started her part-time post in June 2005. The project was launched at our AGM in July 2005. Doris has worked on many fronts at the same time, thus increasing everyone's awareness of our availability to young people, their families, friends, referrers etc. A separate detailed report is available for MEDYP, covering the work accomplished during the first year of the project.

At the end of last financial year, our situation was stabilised with the help of the Housing Department, leaving us with a small budget surplus, so were able to plan ahead and introduce important staff changes. Geraldine, our Administrator of three years, wanted to work full-time, but we did not have the funds to employ her full time on administration. She found a post with the Council, so her salary, plus some of the sessional workers budget, were pooled together to employ a new Casework Co-ordinator for 12 hours. Margaret Earl started with us at the end of September. We have witnessed a significant speeding up of case-related office actions, and clients have benefited from her prompt responses to their problems. Christopher Lawton, who was already involved in sessional work for the service, took over some of the administration of the office for 12 hours a week at the same time, benefiting from the excellent systems Geraldine had put in place. Christopher plays an important stabilising role in the office, in supporting our Treasurer and the Trustees in fulfilling their Company responsibilities, financial or otherwise.

Our new part-time staff team has learnt to work together during the Autumn. Yvonne Kassim, our last sessional worker also found another job for herself, and left the office by Easter. Behind all this is Irene who as a volunteer each week has been trouble-shooting, advising, and 'mucking-in' with innumerable computer networking problem.

They deserve many thanks for reserving so much of their energies to the service, well beyond their official duties. The co-operation between everyone is remarkable, and whatever needs doing is now done as best as can be. The learning curve involved had been steep, from acquiring new IT skills and routines, to increasing their communication and mediation skills.

In the Autumn, we made important contacts with the local courts during Mediation Awareness Week and delivered training for Croydon Voluntary Action. In the Spring, we renewed some Housing Associations contacts.

Besides the general service promotion, some of my extra energy has been spent shouldering and guiding the developing contacts, publicity, networking and funding for the MEDYP service. In this respect, we owe a lot of gratitude to all the office and mediation volunteers who have helped us, notably those who helped MEDYP at publicity events. Darren's influence - besides his responsibility for our website and our newsletter - is in evidence in many items of information we have, especially the new much praised Medyp leaflets.

The previous year had seen a huge slump in the referred casework, which at the time I attributed to the major changes happening in the world of Social Housing. This however has now settled, and we have seen a significant rise in Housing referrals since the Autumn, as well as more recently, a renewed interest from Housing Associations. This change can be seen in the service's statistics page.

Our overall results in terms of the effect of our interventions remains high, given that many tenants are initially reluctant to enter a mediation process in the first place. Other results I came across recently show that in the field of neighbourhood disputes, expected results are much lower than in any other field of mediation and this has been attributed to the very emotional nature of clients involvement. This is confirmed by our own results, showing that whilst referrers often mention 'noise' as the primary issue in a fair number of situations, 'relationships' continuously crops up as a first, second and third important issue.

We started a new group of trainee mediators in the Autumn, on an 'express' course, which all reckoned was far too much - but they have survived, and many have already obtained NOCN credits for their portfolios. This is due to the excellent input from their tutors, Arthur and Rosemary, my organising and badgering around the portfolios, and of course the internal moderation process carried out by Barbara K. New mediators started to take on cases in January and February, and I hope that most will be able to finish their qualification over the next six months. Some trainees from the previous years have also achieved NOCN credits this year. Our more experienced and already qualified volunteer mediators must feel proud that because of their input, new mediators, and clients, are now happily 'out of the woods'.

During the year, supervisors Irene, Rosemary, Greta and myself reviewed how the clients work would be best managed, due to the limited funding available for this, and the fact that the previous model of supervision, recommended by the Community Legal Service standards was not working so well. Rosemary competently took over file reviews, improving considerably the standard of file maintenance, and consequently improving the monitoring of mediation practice. Greta, who has been with the service from the start and is also a local councillor had to decide to let go of her responsibilities with us, due to the increased demands made on her time both by her constituents' needs and by the numerous meetings she attends. We shall miss her wisdom.

Over the years, my job, as a service manager has become more demanding and the responsibilities increasingly varied; there is no 'typical day' for me except that it mostly consists of at least three major and imminent pieces of work per day, two of which require simultaneous work with two or more persons, whilst being interrupted by phone calls requiring specialised advice, clients changing their mind, discussions with impromptu visitors or a hard to reach referrer, worrying about unopened emails or a PC's unexpected quirks. Then there is the shopping, the supplies, tidying (my most forgotten task), and those important papers which need to be accurately and convincingly written, in peace, probably at home. My waking day starts with the question: 'what's up to-day, what is urgent and unforgettable?' It can end very late, with 'I am too tired to even think about that one'.

Keeping abreast of a fast developing local and national scene is necessary but trying. There are more and more new initiatives and strategies, new groups, new directions, and little funding - for mediation - to accompany them. I have increased my least favourite activity - fund raising - during the year, as the service has to grow to survive.

This brings me to the question of what makes an organisation in the service delivery sector capable of survival, and I have narrowed it down to the following basic needs:

- 1) a stable accessible office base;
- 2) safe, basic, continuous funding and well managed accounts;
- 3) highly skilled and diverse staff and volunteers who practice what they preach;
- 4) active and enthusiastic supporters;
- 5) a positive image and a good reputation.

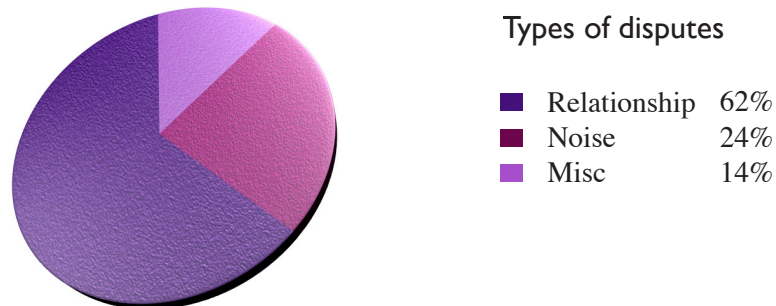
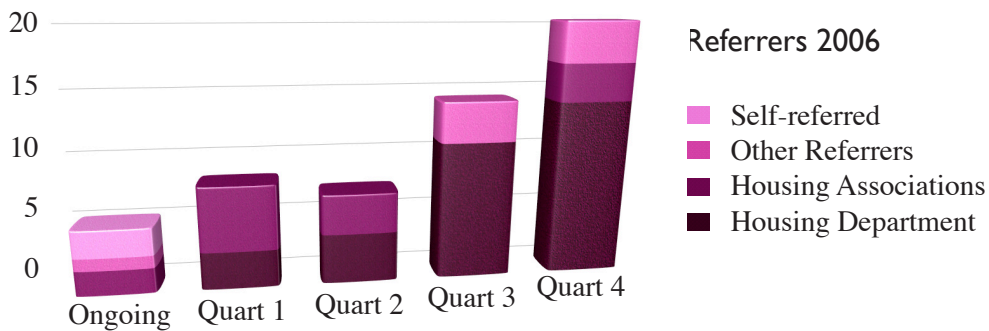
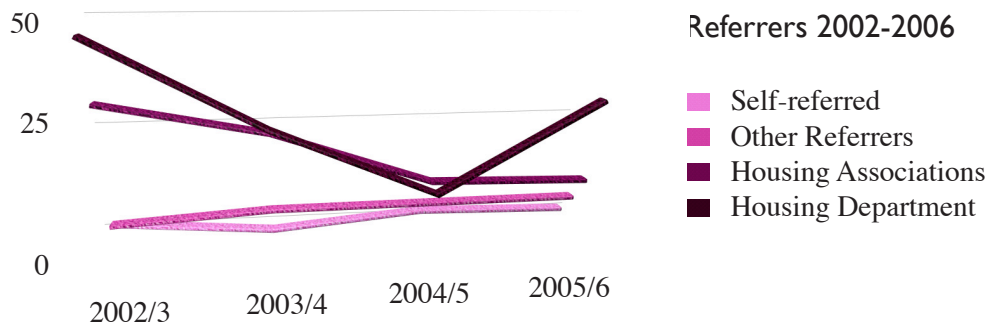
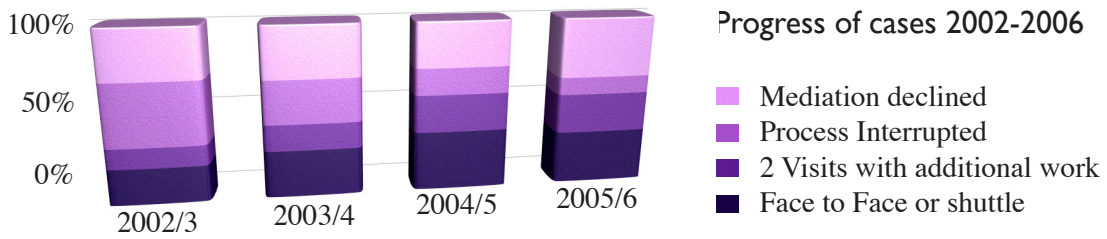
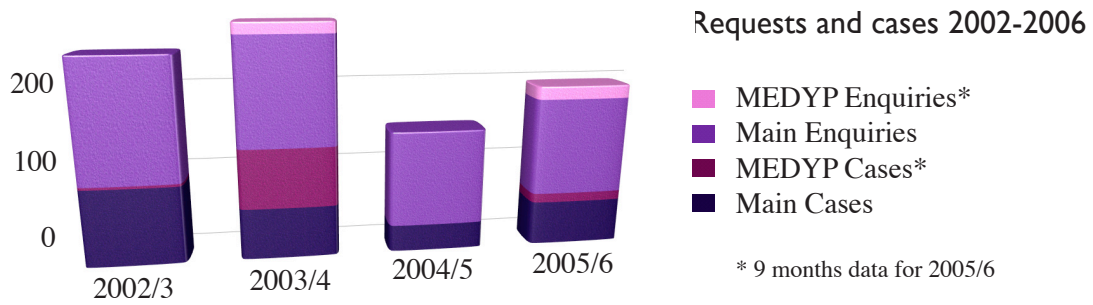
I believe we have worked hard in all these directions and that we are very privileged to have maintained the mediation ethos, internally and externally.

I want to thank everyone for their listening, guidance, co-operation and the extra time given freely, and especially show my heartfelt appreciation to our hard-pressed Trustees, who have been with the service for so long, and have put up with all my idiosyncrasies. Their trust has contributed significantly to what I have been able to do for the service so far, and thus also enabled funders to have confidence in the way we deliver mediation.

The service is facing even more challenges in the coming year, and we are all very thankful that new Trustees will join us at the AGM especially as David Rees, our faithful treasurer, and Phillip Webb, are retiring this year.

In a climate where mediation is firmly established in more and more areas of life, this is an exciting time for us. Provided we can maintain and increase our expertise and impetus, we will continue to attend successfully to those emerging conflict issues which are an inevitable consequence of everyone's life changes.

CCM Statistics





Treasurer's Report

David Rees

CCM Trustee & Treasurer

At the end of my second three-year term as Trustee and Treasurer, it is good to know that the Council and the Housing Department still have confidence in the professional mediation service which it initiated in 1998, supported and launched as an independent Company in 2000.

From the financial point of view, 2005/6 has been the busiest and one of the most exciting years, with the expansion, in July, of the MEDYP project, made possible by designated funding, principally from the Tudor Trust, but also from the Metropolitan Police, Croydon Voluntary Action, and the Croydon Relief in Need Charities. We wish to express our sincere gratitude to these bodies for their support. We also received annual financial support from local Housing Associations, including Croydon Churches, Broomleigh, Hyde, South London Family, Wandle and Warden Housing Associations.

As a retired person, I feel fortunate in having found part-time voluntary work with a Charity, which has an ethos and mission with which I find myself so much in tune. I wish my successor, whoever he or she may be, much happiness.

Financial Statement for Year Ended 31 March 2006

INCOME	2006	2005
Housing Department core funding	53979	60,515
Council Grant for Standards/Supervision	5000	0
Council Grant for rent	8000	5,750
Housing Landlord & other fees	5450	6,410
Donations	155	1,651
Receipts from MEDYP fund for stationery etc	1435	0
Bank interest	662	344
	74681	74,670
EXPENDITURE		
Staff costs	49,611	45,686
Self-Employed sessional worker's fees	2,203	10,745
Office expenses (print post & stationery)	2,983	2,121
Telephone	714	955
Mediation expenses	256	245
Mediation Training costs/Supervision	3,691	3,717
Office Volunteers Expenses	462	452
Rent	7,227	6,783
Rates & Water	118	72
Light & Heat	645	775
Premises maintenance with health & safety	766	2,340
Resources & Equipment	411	42
Publicity	561	1,253
Insurance & Membership	2,177	2,302
Payroll & Audit fees	873	809
Legal Costs	646	0
Fund raising	0	5,422
Cleaning & General Expenses	766	973
Depreciation	363	401
	74,473	85,093
NET INCOMING RESOURCES	208	-10,423
Balance brought forward at 1 April	5,126	15,549
Balance carried forward at 31 March	5,334	5,126

Balance Sheet at 31 March 2006

Fixed Assets

Tangible Assets	1,803	1,310
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Current Assets

Debitors	2,100	2,203
Cash at bank and in hand	16,878	14,946
Total	18,978	17,149

Liabilities

Creditors	-15,447	-13,333
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Net Current Assets	3,531	3,816
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Total Assets less Current Liabilities	5,334	5,126
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MEDYP

Doris Amenonyoh

MEDYP Project Co-ordinator

A way from the statistics and number crunching, I would like to share my experience of a typical week at work with you.

Usually, on arrival at work on Mondays, Françoise is already embedded in her computer. Good morning, good morning is usual of us and I head straight for my desk. That Monday morning feeling? I am no exception. I normally need a cup of tea if I am to survive the day. Believe it, as if by design, the phone always goes when I head for the kettle. Usually a client is on the other end, and for the next 15 minutes I forget the cup of tea.

“Doris can we have some time together, I will put the kettle on”, says Françoise. “Yes, yes”, is normally my reply. On schedule are updates, review of cases and plan for the week.

Later on, we all settle down to our various jobs for the day. Casework, follow ups on contacts, reports, database records, mailings, resource search on the web etc. are all on the agenda. I juggle them out.

When the phone rings again, I am normally grabbing files, making other calls, reminding a client of an appointment or fixing a new one. It’s also not unusual for me to head for a meeting out of the office.

Otherwise, a client is due in the afternoon and I am reading the file to prepare for the meeting. As a new mediator, such moments don’t come without a bit of tension or anxiety. But the best bit is, I can always ask Françoise for help unless the client arrives early. “How did it go?” Françoise asks, there then follows a discussion. Much later, I write a report.

Many a time, I am lost and engrossed in my work till it’s time for an evening meeting which could last until 7-7.30. At the end of such a marathon, what a relief to be heading home!

The way home takes me through Croydon shopping centre and there is always something interesting to look at as I manoeuvre myself home. At home, behold another million dollar question about what to eat. I have had tea the whole day!

By the way, Françoise is still at work and probably with a client who has unceremoniously appeared for a mediation session. I do not know how she manages it!

Most local network meetings are scheduled for Tuesdays and Wednesdays, but I could also be heading for central London juggling between buses and trains if the meeting is not local. Well, of course, if you coordinate a new project, your best bet is to take advantage of such meetings and “network”. Typical of such meetings, I am weighed down by documents at the end.

I could also be delivering a workshop on conflict resolution. It forms part of our interventional work. With a background in education, this comes naturally.

Outreach work, involves participating in local events which are also mostly organised mid-week or weekends. I am usually saved by the help I get from our volunteers in organising such events.

Case reviews, discussions, client intakes, updates and staff meetings are usually on Thursdays and Fridays. Personal visits to schools and other contacts are also vital part of the work and provide a change from the usual-mouse and pad syndrome. The possibility of joint work is the focus of such meetings.

As part of Continuous Professional Development, Saturdays are occasionally service training days when one gets the chance to meet other colleagues and learn new skills. Part of the training involves role plays which I enjoy.

Families unable to make appointments in the week are also normally booked for mediation on Saturdays. It's sometimes demanding, but its also a joy and satisfying to be able to help others resolve their differences. I enjoy mediating!

I am lucky however to be supported in my work, diverse as it is, by a wonderful staff team, Margaret and Chris, dedicated mediators and volunteers, including our IT gurus Darren and Irene, who bail all of us out of our IT problems. I really do appreciate all your support. Thank you all for your contributions. I love my work at CCM. It's a small team, but committed to the job at hand.

Dear colleagues, this is what it is like in a typical week. It does not come any easier!

What people have said to us this year

A young student:

- *“I have been working on admin. with CCM for the last 2 months, whilst I revised and took my exams. It has been a wonderful experience working with lots of people. It has offered me the confidence to return to full-time employment after I graduate, thank you.”*

Neighbourhood Mediation clients feedback:

- *“I have moved certain toys downstairs and encouraged the children to stay downstairs and play quietly in the morning. She agreed not to keep banging on the walls.”*
- *“Mediators were extremely understanding, and we would really like to thank them for all their time and trouble. We hope that eventually we will get a face to face meeting with our neighbours and we can finally put an end to the whole sorry experiences of the past.”*
- *“I am more than pleased with the outcome.”*

Trainee mediators:

- *“I’m different with the people at home, we talk differently and they talk to me more; I’ve learnt that you have to take responsibility for the way people respond to you, you deserve the responses you get.”*
- *“The lack of structure led me out of my comfort zone, so I learnt.”*
- *“It was a shared learning, the group worked as a team, not against each other, there was no top dog (except the tutors!).”*
- *“It’s given colour to my life, which was only in black and white, and that’s scary.”*

Feedback from an external staff training day:

- *“Overall I enjoyed the course and learnt some things; loved the role plays and having to explain feelings; also enjoyed the group discussions, thought they were worthwhile; did not feel like falling asleep in the PM!”*
- *“Could do with more of it.”*

MEDYP:

Young person to mediator:

- *“I’m staying with my mum at the moment, we are getting on better.”*
- *“It helped to chat, and I’d like to come back with my mum.”*

Parents:

- *“We had a family meal together and watched the football together. This has not happened for a very long time.”*
- *“Life is quieter and relaxed; we haven’t had a row since.”*
- *“I have found the team to be professional. They are polite and have given a lot of thought to the management. Although I realise that family mediation is a very difficult matter, I have found that the mediators have both been very helpful, paying particular attention to listening to all parties and giving feedback. Although the negotiation on myself and my daughter has not been very great I still feel it is an important part of helping in family therapy”*

Teacher:

- *“I read your leaflets, it’s exactly what the children tell me, and what the parents say, in their own words.”*