

Community Mediation and Anti-Social Behaviour

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Community Mediation and Anti Social Behaviour

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The NIHE and Mediation

- Part of its strategy to tackle anti social behaviour (ASB)
- 'Tough enforcement action will not decrease ASB unless linked to effective prevention.'
- 'Promote early intervention...by encouraging development of mediation services.'

• ***ASB Policy Action Report***

Community Mediation in NI

- Northern Ireland Alternatives
- Community Restorative Justice Ireland
 - Emerged from community desire for an alternative to the informal, paramilitary justice systems in working class loyalist and nationalist areas.
 - Offer Restorative Justice, Youth Programmes, Victim Support, Community Mediation
 - Mix of professional staff and volunteer workers

Partnership Project

- North & West Belfast Mediation and Community Support Programme
- Jointly managed by Northern Ireland Alternatives and Housing Executive
- Funded by Statutory bodies and charitable organisation
- Model for future partnership with CRJI?

Principles of Service?

- Participation is voluntary
- Service is independent and confidential
- Mediators are impartial and non directive



Scottish
Community
Mediation
Centre

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- Ian McDonough
 - Mediation Adviser
 - Scottish Community Mediation Centre



COMMUNITY MEDIATION IN SCOTLAND

WHAT IS IT?

- **A way to help individuals and groups in local communities to resolve their own conflicts.**
- **A way to help people learn to resolve conflicts in their lives more constructively.**
- **A way of making sure everyone in our communities behaves themselves?**

COMMUNITY MEDIATION IN SCOTLAND- DEVELOPMENT

- **First Scottish service - Edinburgh 1995.**
- **Now around 30 Scottish services covering most of the population.**
- **Services everywhere from large cities to small islands.**
- **Community mediators help resolve over 3000 Scottish conflicts a year.**
- **Services now involved with large group conflicts, inter-generational work, homelessness and schools.**

COMMUNITY MEDIATION IN SCOTLAND – Anti-Social Behaviour (Scotland) Act 2004

- **Measures to control and reduce anti-social behaviour, including Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and extended information sharing/co-ordination between agencies such as police and local government housing departments.**
- **Finance was made available to local Councils to develop local initiatives such as mediation services.**
- **Around 15 Community Mediation services, both independent and council-run have been set up using this funding source.**
- **The funding was specific (ring-fenced) until March 2008, but ring-fencing has now been removed.**

Anti-Social Behaviour (Scotland) Act 2004

Effect on Scottish mediation services

- **Some local government departments misunderstood the new powers on information-sharing and tried to access confidential information on mediation cases.**
- **Some mediation services can only take cases that come through local government anti-social behaviour sections.**
- **At least two mediation services are likely to disappear because the specific anti-social behaviour funding has now been withdrawn.**
- **Most mediation services continue to exist independently without pressure to change their practices.**

COMMUNITY MEDIATION IN SCOTLAND

FUTURE CHALLENGES

- **Can Community Mediation services be more effective in helping disadvantaged communities?**
- **If they can, will this be seen as “political” work and will this prevent them from being seen as impartial?**
- **Will National and Local Government continue to provide finance for Community Mediation services, and if so what demands will they make on them?**
- **Will mediation increasingly be seen as a tool for handling anti-social behaviour rather than helping communities constructively resolve their conflicts?**

QUESTIONS

- **Public funding of Community Mediation services should depend on their success in reducing anti-social behaviour.**
- **Community Mediators should report back to referring agencies on whether parties have been co-operative.**
- **If community mediators receive state funding, their service will become the first step in a punitive process, or a support service for people with complex needs.**
- **If community mediators receive state funding their role will change from one of facilitation and empowerment to one of direction and advice-giving.**