

Community Mediation

Case Referred by: Housing Officer, An Edinburgh Local Housing Office

Party A: Jane was a young woman with two young children and a very new baby

Party B: Janice was an older woman who lived with her husband below Jane

Both parties were Council tenants.

The Housing Officer involved had approached both parties who had agreed to meet with mediators although both felt sceptical about being able to resolve the issue.

Jane had just had a new baby and with her other two young children under four was experiencing difficulties coping; she had the support of a health visitor. Jane had put down a laminated floor in her flat in order to make the flat easier to clean.

Jane was complaining that Janice was continually banging on her ceiling about the noise of the children. Jane had spoken with Janice about the noise and sympathised with her situation, however, she felt her children needed to play. Jane was now breast-feeding the new baby and was not able to supervise every move of the two other children. The banging up was adding to her anxieties and stress.

Janice had lived in her flat for many years; most of those years spent with an elderly couple living above her. The elderly man had since died.

Initially, relations between both women had been good; Janice buying a present for the Jane's new baby when it was born. However, when Jane put down a laminated floor shortly after she moved in, Janice said that the noise of the children jumping about and playing with toy cars was much worse. Janice said she could also hear personal conversations between Jane and her boyfriend.

Both women were becoming angry and frustrated and their previous friendly relationship had broken down.

Mediation

On visiting both Jane and Janice, it was absolutely clear that both were equally distressed and this mutual feeling was the natural starting point. For Janice it was important to learn that Jane was doing all she could – she had put down a rug for the children to play on. Jane had also discussed with her health visitor a play place for her son who was more active than her daughter, and she was also discussing getting a bigger place now that there were three children in the small flat. For Jane it was important for her to know that Janice accepted that her children needed to play, and wanted to stay on neighbourly terms with her and not complain to the Council.

Both women were able to talk about how they felt in this difficult situation, and what they were doing to try and improve things. Both felt that the situation became manageable due to the meeting and they felt relieved that they were repairing the friendship.

Edinburgh Community Mediation Service

