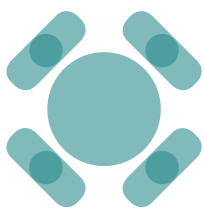




"To be at peace with yourself is to feel a sense of equilibrium, of balance within yourself, that's the gift - and to act justly towards others: that's the task."
Brendan McAllister



East Lothian
Community
Mediation
Service

Annual Report 2008/2009

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Working in Partnership
with East Lothian Council



> Our Vision

Our vision is for a safer Scotland, able to resolve conflict constructively and to deal effectively with offending and its consequences.

> Our Mission

Our mission is to promote safe and cohesive communities by reducing conflict and offending.

> Our Values and Principles

We are committed to working to the highest ethical standards. These include: integrity; recognising and valuing diversity; promoting equality of opportunity and probity in the use of public funds.

Our practice is guided by the belief that all should be shown respect and be empowered to take personal responsibility, acknowledging their capacity for change.

Our key principles are that we acknowledge:

- > conflict is most effectively resolved through informal, facilitated resolution which assists those involved to identify their own lasting solutions
- > offending and its consequences are most effectively dealt with through an emphasis on community disposals and sentencing, other than where there is an overriding need to protect society.

> Our Priority Client Groups

In pursuit of our mission, we will prioritise the following client groups:

- > in criminal justice: women offenders; young offenders (over 16 but under 25); offenders on release from prison, including sexual and violent offenders; those on bail, and those whose offence is alcohol related
- > in restorative justice: young people diverted from the Children's Hearing System and those they have harmed; adult offenders referred to the Procurator Fiscal and those affected by offending
- > in community mediation: neighbours and others in the community in dispute
- > in schools: pupils, teachers and all other school staff to be involved in restorative practices.

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



“Both the verbal and written information was very useful and informative”

Client:
East Lothian Community Mediation

“Staff were exceptionally respectful”

Client:
East Lothian Community Mediation

> 10 Years In – a personal reflection

It's an exceptionally wet and windy August day in Musselburgh as I compose my reflection on 10 years of providing mediation in East Lothian. It's not the kind of day to be wandering up and down a street trying to figure out some arcane house numbering system, nor do you want to be conducting a shuttle mediation, going backwards and forwards between two homes getting increasingly soaked. Then a call comes in from one of the Housing Managers and I brace myself as I know that it's about a particularly difficult and entrenched case we last dealt with over a year ago. But then we get talking about the service and its successes and how our closer working relationship with East Lothian Council has led to a dramatic increase in referrals – almost double the number we used to receive – and I think about how far we have come since we sought to introduce mediation across East Lothian in 1999.

I can't remember what the weather was like in January 1999 when I first arrived at our new office space in Port Seton Community Centre, but it seemed such a daunting task to set up this brand new service with an 18 month funding agreement in place with East Lothian Council and Lothian & Borders Police. However, with the strong backing of the Advisory Committee, and the skills, experience and drive of the two part-time staff to guide me, we set about publicising and promoting the service and recruiting volunteers. We were taken aback with the interest from people in East Lothian and I will never forget the excitement of the first volunteer training programme. The group were a joy to work with and so committed – indeed, two of the original group, Anne Gallacher and Anne Milne still continue to give their time generously as volunteers, and Diane Marr who was our administrator in 1999 has gone on to become a highly skilled and experienced full-time mediator with our service. Since then we have trained three more groups of volunteers and each time it has been such a positive and affirming experience and has greatly enhanced the service we provide.

Over the years we have been fortunate to have support and help from a wide range of individuals and agencies across East Lothian, and also in Sacro, some of whom have moved on, but many others are still championing our service. It is difficult to do justice to them all, and perhaps unfair to single out anyone, but we would not be where we are without the support of Ian McDonough of Sacro, Lesley Fairley, our job-share team leader until 2008 and Bruce Walker, Ian Patterson, Douglas Proudfoot and now Alan Forsyth and Kenny Black – all of East Lothian Council – who over the years have ensured the continued existence of our core service and the development of other innovative projects. This has included support to undertake work in local schools, leading to our well received 'Breaking the Cycle' project which assisted primary 7 pupils from all feeder primaries to make the transition to S1 at Musselburgh Grammar, and to run a programme on Communication and Managing Conflict. There was also the Homeless Service where we provided mediation between young people and their families in order to re-establish communication and repair relationships. More recently we have provided training to Employee Support Officers and mediation to a range of staff in East Lothian Council under their 'Prevention of Harassment at Work' policy. From 1st September we will be hosting 'Amber' Homeless Mediation service for young people in partnership with the Cyrenians.

All the staff and volunteers will have their own particular cases, situations or individuals that stick in their minds, people whose circumstances are challenging or whose lives are difficult, moments where there is a 'turning point' in a mediation meeting and suddenly people begin to understand each other and see a way forward. Some days it seems like the best job in the world, and you are making a difference, but of course there are other days...that's the nature of conflict. Throughout it all, we remain hopeful and committed to the best possible outcome, always aiming to help people to move on from the difficult and destructive situations they find themselves in and to reach agreements that are practical and sustainable.

Lisa Drinnan
Service Team Leader

“All the mediators that we met were professional, respectful and understanding”

*Client:
East Lothian Community Mediation*

“Both ladies were lovely, very friendly, polite and easy to talk to”

*Client:
East Lothian Community Mediation*

East Lothian Community Mediation

Staff Team at 31 March 2009

Melodie Peters	Administrator (mornings only)
Diane Marr	Mediator (full time)
Morag Steven	Mediator (2 days)
Lucy Florquin	Service Manager (1 day)
Lisa Drinnan	Team Leader (4 days)

Staff who left the service 2008/2009

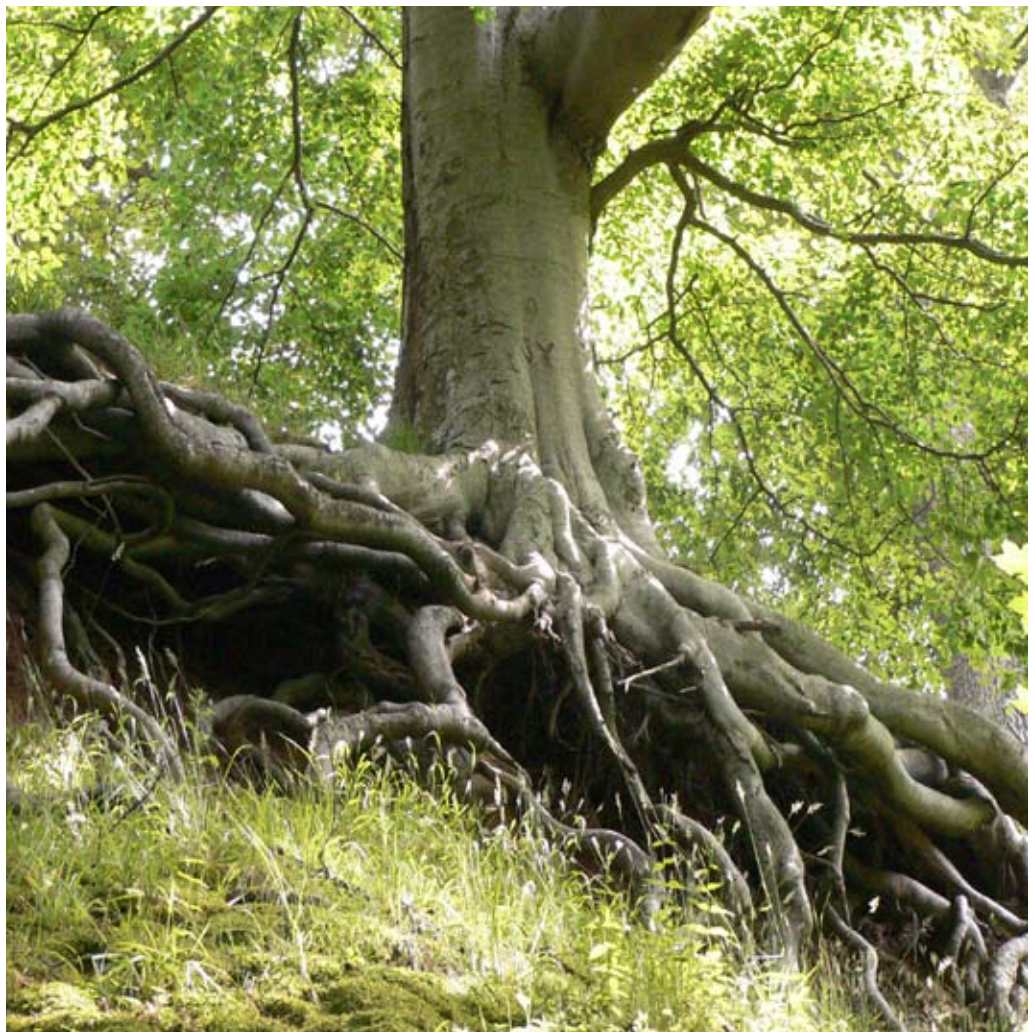
Lesley Fairley	Christine Russell
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Volunteer Mediators at 31 March 2009

Anne Gallacher	Kiki Schwarz
Anne Milne	Karen Turner
Melodie Peters	Dorothy Weatherley
Jasmine Reavley	

Volunteers who left the service 2008/2009

Heather Bruce	James McCallum-Browne
Rosie Hunter	Adrian Stott
Anne-Marie Gray	



“Communication was excellent by phone, letter and email”

Client:
East Lothian Community Mediation

“Meeting conducted in a fair and constructive way”

Client:
East Lothian Community Mediation

> Staff Reflections on Mediation

In 2003 I started work as a part-time mediator with ELCM on a three month contract, which ended up being 2 years. My previous experience with Sacro was as a volunteer mediator with the service now known as Restorative Justice in Edinburgh. The concept of co-mediating or working in pairs was new to me, and I remember thinking ‘what a great way to work!’ for so many different reasons. I felt really privileged to be joining such a friendly, professional and dedicated team of staff and volunteer mediators.

After a short break I joined the team again in 2006 and I’m still here on a part-time basis. Recently our links with East Lothian Council’s Antisocial Behaviour Team and other referring agencies have gone from strength to strength and we are kept very busy with case work. Some of our current cases are very complex with multiple issues sometimes including threats of violence and/or police charges, and sometimes involving drug and alcohol misuse. At first sight some cases may seem unlikely to resolve successfully, but it can be very heartening when we do get involved and help facilitate some positive change.

This year I met a new client who told me she was familiar with mediation and the way we work because her mother had used mediation to successfully resolve a dispute with her neighbour. So one positive outcome from ELCM’s 10 year presence in East Lothian is that more people know about mediation and are passing on the success stories from one generation to the next!

Morag Steven
Mediator

When I became service manager for East Lothian Community Mediation in August 2005, it was a new and positive experience to work with a stand-alone service, as I had previously worked with Sacro services in a shared office base. Four years later, I still believe that this ‘model’ – a service wholly responsible for its own space and with a dedicated staff team, able to focus solely on its own operation and scope of business - has many benefits. We have been extremely fortunate to be able to operate in this way, thanks to the ongoing support of East Lothian Council.

I have appreciated the enthusiasm and dedication of the team and am often amazed at the insight and skills which they bring to the most difficult and entrenched neighbour disputes. Integral to the service is our dedicated and skilled group of volunteers without whom the service (and East Lothian) would be so much the poorer. Working in partnership with the Antisocial Behaviour Team has doubled the rate of referrals we receive. We are grateful for their belief that mediation can effect positive outcomes and bring together disputing parties in order to reach agreement that benefits all parties involved. Thanks, too, to everyone who has made referrals to the service over the past ten years and to all who have worked with our team.

Together with all mediators and mediation services, we are part of the vision to embed mediation into the Scottish culture as a familiar way of facilitating conflict resolution. Of course, mediation is not the only way of resolving disputes, but mediation is currently underused in proportion to its benefits within the community. It will be interesting to be part of the induction of amber East Lothian, a new homeless mediation service delivered in partnership with Cyrenians, and to watch it grow and flourish just as amber Edinburgh has done over the past two-and-a-half years.

I can’t help but wonder what the next ten years will reveal and whether we will recognise the profile of East Lothian!

Thank you for all your support over the past ten years; we look forward to continue working with you all.

Lucy Florquin
Service Manager

“Would probably use mediation for future problems”

Client:
East Lothian Community Mediation

> Partnership and Multi-agency Working

Mediation is usually highly effective in lower level or early stage disputes, before the situation has escalated. People often avoid approaching their neighbour directly to address their concerns; they are unsure of how they will react, or have never spoken to them before. In these situations we can provide individuals with advice, guidance and assistance on how to approach and communicate with their neighbour and resolve the difficulty themselves.

Increasingly we are dealing with more serious and complex disputes, however, even cases with high levels of ‘anti-social behaviour’, and considerable police involvement, have been successfully mediated.

Working with these more difficult cases would not be possible without good working relationships with the other agencies involved and it’s their commitment to encouraging people in dispute to consider mediation that has led to a huge jump in referral rates. As a service we have had to become more flexible in our approach, working in partnership with the ASB team, and with the support of them and other referring agencies, trialling different models.

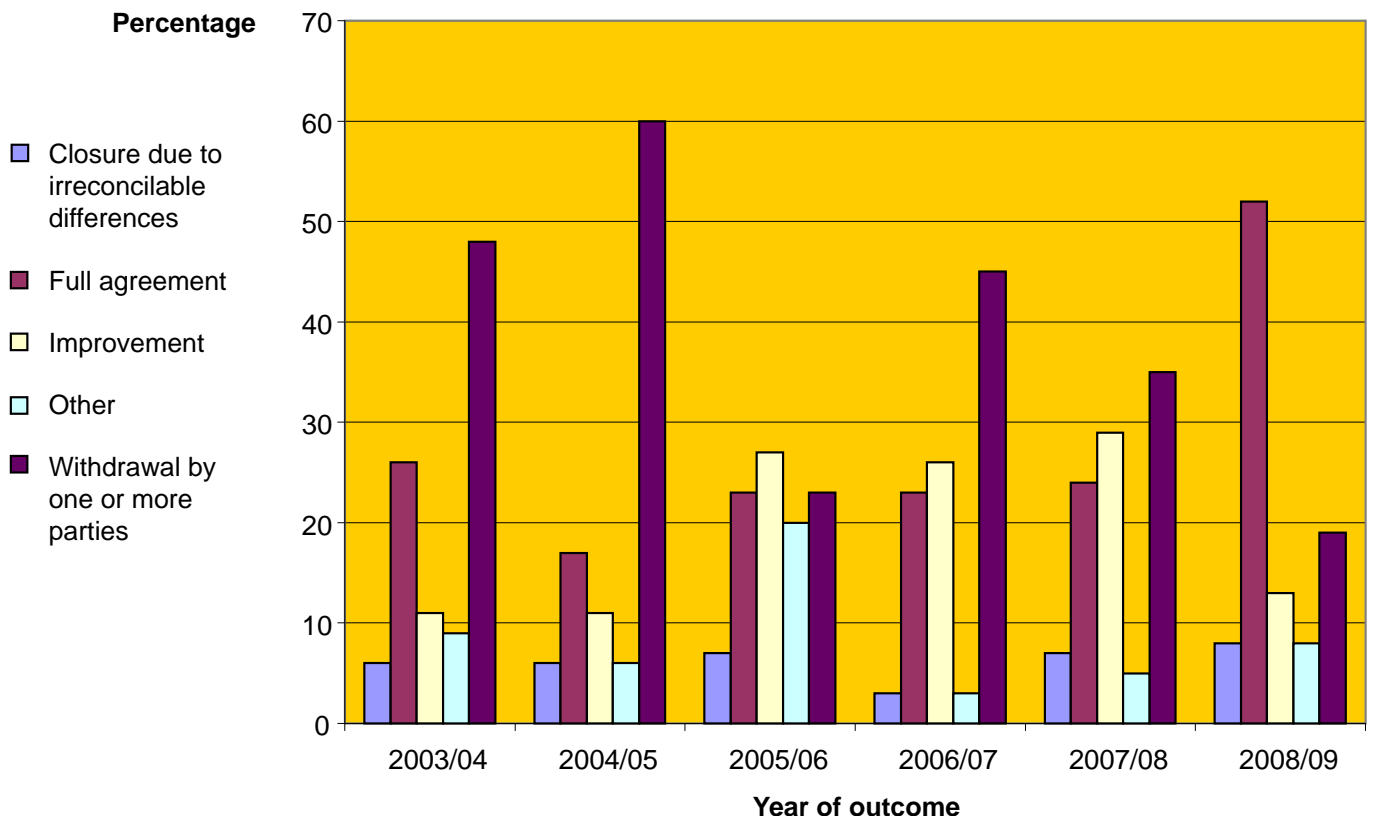
Recently we have had success with joint agency visits, where a mediator accompanies a housing officer or ASB officer in order to be clear about our different roles and encourage the uptake of mediation. We have also drawn up ‘noise level agreements’ with Environmental Protection Officers present to give advice and guidance to neighbours.

We have also seen our withdrawal rate drop to below 20%, as referrers reinforce the message that mediation is still a viable option, even when there are ongoing difficulties during mediation, and so encourage parties to re-commit to the process.

“The Mediation Service forms an essential part in the overall response to effectively tackling antisocial behaviour in East Lothian.”

Kenneth Black, ASB Co-ordinator, East Lothian Council

> Outcome codes: 2003 – 2009



“We could not fault the way our case was handled and if anyone we know needed your help we would definitely recommend your service”

Client:
East Lothian Community Mediation

“It helps to be able to talk to someone and I found the ladies in question really listened to what I had to say”

Client:
East Lothian Community Mediation

> Referring Agencies Feedback

“A number of difficult and entrenched cases have been resolved via the Mediation route. Cases without any obvious legal remedy have been skilfully mediated by Sacro staff and volunteers. Early intervention in neighbour disputes is an integral part of East Lothian Council’s and Lothian and Borders Police’s Antisocial Behaviour Strategy 2009–2011. The fact that Sacro are a wholly separate organisation from East Lothian Council lends the Mediation process a degree of impartiality. Over the past 2 years the referrals to the organisation has increased. Success rates are high and Agreements are holding firm. As the Antisocial Behaviour Co-ordinator I look forward to working alongside Sacro in the future in helping bring peace to the lives of those adversely affected by antisocial behaviour and related neighbour disputes”.

Kenneth Black, Antisocial Behaviour Co-ordinator, East Lothian Council

“I have worked with Sacro on neighbourhood dispute resolution cases for over four years now and was delighted to be asked to contribute to this report. Community mediation services are now embedded into our Antisocial Behaviour Policy and form a key part of our procedures. One case in particular defines to me the major benefits of an independent mediation service provider and, in particular, the high-quality work carried out by East Lothian Community Mediation.

We had an ongoing Antisocial Behaviour case with the dispute running back over many years. The relationship between the two complainants had completely broken down and there was no dialogue between them unless through ourselves, our Antisocial Behaviour team or the Police. The case had progressed and legal action was imminent when staff managed to persuade both parties to engage with mediation.

A lot of time and effort was put into understanding the issues and concerns raised by the two parties. Following initial shuttle mediation, an agreement was reached and face to face mediation was achieved. This brought amazing results and now both parties engage and communicate with each other. They have strategies in place on to how to deal with certain circumstances and now live contently alongside each other.

East Lothian Community Mediation’s expert involvement was invaluable to the Council in helping both parties reach this exceptional outcome in a long-running dispute. I would highly recommend anyone, whether in a professional or personal capacity, to use this service.”

Simon Davie, Community Housing Manager, Tranent Community Housing Office

‘The nature of the potential cases which come to us is such that in general relationships have deteriorated beyond the point where mediation would be considered by the parties. More recently people appear to be more susceptible to at least giving mediation a try

Comment from ‘Referring Agencies Feedback Questionnaire’, Environmental Protection, East Lothian Council

East Lothian Community Mediation

Statistical Information: 1 April 2008 – 31 March 2009

Total referrals received	137
Cases still open	12
Referral source	No.
Self	20
Housing	39
Environmental Services	4
Police	6
Antisocial Behaviour Team	68
Dispute type	No.
Noise	70
Children's behaviour	1
Anti-Social or Abusive Behaviour	26
Boundary or Property Disputes	20
Other	6
Not yet allocated	4
Outcomes	No.
Advice, Guidance and Assistance	48
Mediation used	77
meeting	21
shuttle	56
Outcomes when mediation used	
Full agreement	40
Improvement	10
Withdrawal during process	15
Closure due to irreconcilable differences	6
Other (e.g. client moved away)	6



“Although my neighbour pulled out of the service I thought it was good for me (and my husband) to talk about our feelings and complaints about our neighbour. I felt the mediators listened to us and didn’t just sweep us to one side”

Client:
East Lothian Community Mediation

“For me it makes me feel I’m not alone”

Client:
East Lothian Community Mediation

> Volunteering

Our service highly values our volunteers, as individuals and as a group they are highly committed to the work they undertake and to the community of East Lothian, giving their time so freely and generously. We would like to express our sincere thanks and gratitude to them all for their time, patience and commitment. Their work as mediators is often on-going quietly, sensitively and unobtrusively within the community of East Lothian.

> Our Volunteers Thoughts and Views:

When did you begin volunteering with the service and what attracted you to volunteering as a mediator?

“I was drawn to a service which helps people find a peaceful way through conflict or distress. I like the role of the mediator as it supports those in the conflict to think of ways in which to move forward and to build on the positives. Mediation is not dictatorial and understands the need for voluntary participation and the importance of each individual. Being non-judgmental makes mediation neutral, and as a process can be applied to all situations. I feel skilled and able to be professional in my volunteer work because I have a clear set of boundaries provided through the training and the structured nature of mediation”.

Jasmine Reavley – Volunteer since 2007

“I was looking to do something where I could learn some new skills and when I read the poster advertising the service it sounded like it could be fun and interesting and I like the idea of being able to help other people”

Karen Turner - volunteer since 2007

How would you describe your experience of volunteering with ELCM?

“It has been a great experience for me and way beyond my expectations. I have made some very good friends along the way and have shared ups and downs – always supported. I have also met people from all walks of life. The training is always being updated and helps me feel confident in what I am doing”

Anne Gallacher - volunteer since 1999

“Personally rewarding, as it is opening my eyes to what is going on around me, without me putting my personal perspective first”

Kiki Schwarz – Volunteer since 2007

Has training as a mediator brought about any changes in you?

“I have learned to listen not only to what is being said but also to what is not being said. To ask open questions and to feed back information, checking that what has been noted is what has been said. I find now that I have a greater tolerance of people and approach problems in my daily job in a different manner”

Anne Milne - volunteer since 1999

“... because I work as a counsellor there are similarities in the practices. Unconditional positive regard for the people in any circumstance or way of life is a base for both and helps lead to better understanding. The training, because it being updated and delivered on a regular basis, helps reassure me as a volunteer of awareness of safety aspects and helps my on confidence with my work”

Anne Gallacher – volunteer since 1999

“The only way I can describe it is that it has been brilliant. All of the staff members in the service have been helpful and encouraging and only too happy to help with any questions I might have. I also have met lots of different types of people when out on visits, it has been a real eye opener and I feel really privileged to be in the position I am working with the service”

Karen Turner – Volunteer since 2007

“Will ask for help before things get out of hand”

Client:
East Lothian Community Mediation

“I wasn’t aware of this service until I had to deal with them”

Client:
East Lothian Community Mediation

What have you enjoyed the most and least?

“I have enjoyed the experience as a whole, the learning, the practice and the people. There is nothing that I do not like. (Except trying to find an address in the dark and the cold)

Anne Milne - volunteer since 1999

I enjoy networking with other mediators and find the training to be valuable. I also like representing the service, for example at the Racial Equality Council launch into East Lothian, and a mediation workshop I did for elders at my local church. I enjoy community work and believe a strong community has a heart and a place for everyone in it. Without a service like this, there would be more suffering in silence, and a lower quality of life for a lot of people.

Jasmine Reavley - Volunteer since 2007

What do you feel the benefits have been to the people that have used the service?

“I believe many people benefit greatly from being listened to – we see them visibly relax. I think that when there is agreement with neighbours it enhances the quality of peoples’ lives and relieves stress”.

Dorothy Weatherley – Volunteer since 2002

“They feel listened to which gives them a feeling of I am somebody worth something and that is important for them and shows through”

Kiki Schwarz - volunteer since 2007

What are your views on the service?

“I think we provide an important and crucial service to the community”

Karen Turner - volunteer since 2007

“I think it is an excellent service run by very caring, competent and committed staff”.

Dorothy Weatherley – Volunteer since 2002

“I think the service is great and its growth is a testament to that. The need for mediation will continue to grow especially as neighbours are increasingly strangers to each other. A lot of people who use the service feel vulnerable and anxious about how their neighbour might react if they were to raise a problem with them. Mediation provides a vehicle for communication between neighbours and in doing so strives to reduce the fear element which prohibits one neighbour from speaking to another. It is a positive model and builds on respect and solutions which both neighbours can agree on”.

Jasmine Reavley - Volunteer since 2007

