

Appendix 3

Promoting Healthy Relationships Case Studies

Case Study – Mediation Herts

Managing Future Issues

This case involved neighbours with issues over noise and parking. One party took exception to the other's complaints, making the other party feel intimidated.

The mediators visited each party to discuss their issues which followed in an agreement to attend a joint meeting.

Due to the feeling of intimidation, one party would only agree to attend the joint meeting if it could be conducted as a shuttle mediation.

The meeting culminated with an agreement. The parties would take measures to manage the noise and to use consideration when parking in the future. The parties agreed to use more respectful behaviour towards each other.

Following the meeting, the parties now felt able to discuss any issues that may arise in the future face to face.

Case Study Mediation Herts

Signposting

This case involved a father and his young teenage son. The parents were separated.

Due to the conflict in their relationship, the son had refused to have any contact with his father which appeared to be having an effect on the child's schooling and attendance.

When the mediator went to visit the parties individually, it came to light that the main reason for the conflict was that domestic violence was involved.

The son had allegedly been dragged down the stairs, had his arm twisted behind his back (which had only just healed after being broken) and was locked out in the garden by his father. The child's mother was unaware of this.

We had to make a safeguarding referral in respect of this and the social services investigated the incidents.

Nevertheless, the parties resolved to attend to a joint meeting and an agreement was reached.

Case Study Mediation Herts

Agreement

This case involved a dispute over a boiler that had been fitted by party 2. The parties were uncle and niece.

The parties were visited by the mediators and discussed their issues. A joint meeting was arranged.

The parties reached an agreement at the end of the meeting where party 2 offered a refund for the work to be paid in monthly instalments.

Case summary – Relate

Don and Jen (details changed to protect anonymity)

Don and Jen, self-referred for couple counselling to Relate as they were struggling to deal with their new 'sober relationship' since Don had given up drinking alcohol eighteen months ago.

In the initial session we explored how Don had become aware of the damage his drinking had caused his relationship. He spoke with remorse of having being verbally aggressive towards Jen when he was drunk. Jen spoke of how she had chosen to keep quiet and had avoided speaking to Don when he was drunk. The couple had lived in the shadow of Don's drinking and now that he was sober, they had been left without any idea as to what a 'normal' relationship looked like.

In line with our protocols and procedures regarding potential DV, the couple were seen individually in order to thoroughly assess the balance of power in the relationship. After the interviews and consultations with a supervisor, it was agreed that the work could continue with careful monitoring.

The aim of the work was agreed and in subsequent sessions was the theme of our conversations: what was different now and what else needed to be different in order to get their relationship 'back on track'.

For example – and with a focus on communication styles – neither told each other when they were anxious or upset. Don would notice physical changes in Jen, and ask her what was wrong, and he expressed his guilt and shame that he had made Jen act in this way. However, as Jen was also unable to communicate how she felt, especially when Don was drunk, the cyclical pattern continued.

Conversations were facilitated around how Don's reliance upon drink had evolved. These revealed that the more pressure he felt to be the 'perfect' husband- the more of a failure he felt and how he had used alcohol to comfort himself. The more he did this – the more distance grew between them as Jen would then withdraw from him – thus increasing Don's sense of failure.

We worked together on making nonverbal communication verbal within the couple relationship and discussed how this could create a different atmosphere – one where feelings were expressed and were real and not imagined – or 'mind reading' as we came to call it in session.

This was a pivotal moment in the work as we identified that this process provided a bridge from the old relationship to the new one they were now jointly creating. Further exploration revealed how they had both held unrealistic expectations of each other and of their relationship, some of which had been based upon looking at social networking sites and images.

The work also looked at what had been lost by the couple when the drinking ceased as Don had initially felt unsupported without drink to turn to when he felt stressed or anxious and Jen had lost being the decision maker in the relationship when Don was not sober enough to make choices.

The couple were invited to review their progress at the last session and they both spoke of how counselling had changed the path of their relationship. With an improved communication style and realistic viewpoints, both felt more understood, supported and equipped in their relationship and hopeful that Don could maintain a healthier relationship with alcohol.