

# Does Mediation Work?

Mediation is a voluntary process and so relies on the active participation of the parties. If this is given, mediation can be very successful. The following case study illustrates one example of a successful mediation.

*The young family complained of noise nuisance caused by their recently widowed neighbour leaving her radio on when she left the house. This extended to leaving the radio on twenty-four hours a day when she went to stay with relatives at the weekends. The young family found the noise disturbing, especially as one of the children had recently undergone surgery following a long and painful serious illness. The child's sleep and rest during the day and early evening were being disturbed by the constant noise from the radio.*

*The mother of the young family approached her neighbour about the problem but no satisfactory solution had been reached. The family's social worker had also made an approach but this had not been fruitful. The social worker suggested mediation and contacted the local mediation service.*

*The social worker telephoned the mediation service who then contacted the mother of the young family and arranged a home visit for the following day. The next day a letter was sent to the neighbour who phoned the mediation service and was visited the following week. There was a further visit to the young family, and finally a face-to-face meeting session was arranged.*

*In the face-to-face meeting, the mother was able to inform her neighbour about her son's illness and treatment and explain how the noise was affecting the family. The neighbour was able to explain that since she had been widowed she had had a fear of entering a silent house and an even greater fear of finding her home burgled. She said that she left her radio on to give the impression that someone was at home and to prevent her having to enter a silent house. After listening to her neighbour and the problems of their child's illness she also accepted for the first time how her actions were affecting her neighbours. She said that her family had insisted that she had a burglar alarm installed after the death of her husband but explained that she never used it for fear of it 'going off' while she was away from home.*

*In the meeting it was agreed that she would use the burglar alarm rather than leaving the radio on. It was also agreed that a contact number and whereabouts would be left with the mother of the young family if required. The family received a full apology from the neighbours for the distress she had caused and both parties left the meeting on good terms.*

*A month after the meeting the mediators received a 'Thank you card' from both parties. Follow-up contact six months after the meeting revealed that both parties were still enjoying a good relationship.*

This dispute is typical of many neighbourhood disputes in that the main complaint was noise-related and had to do with the fact that the parties' lifestyles were not entirely compatible.

Mediation may also be used in cases relating to disputes over car parking, children, rubbish, fences, pets and many other issues.