



# West Sussex Mediation Service External Newsletter

## Family Mediation Week

**Issue No: 164**

**January**

**2021**



### ***External Edition***

*Published for the  
Funders and  
Supporters of West  
Sussex Mediation  
Service.*

### **Inside this issue:**

Family	1
Retirement	2
News	3
22 in 22	4

Family Mediation Week was held between the 17th and 21st January this year. Organised by the Family Mediation Council, it was an opportunity to raise awareness of family mediation and of the benefits it can bring to separating families. Their aim is to let more people know about the benefits of family mediation and encourage separating couples to think about family mediation as a way of helping them take control, make decisions together and build a positive future for their family. They held various events including online webinars for the public.



Family Mediation is one of the services offered by WSMS thanks to our great family mediators, Heather and Sarah. Since the start of the pandemic we have seen the number of referrals in this area, reduce. We haven't got a handle on why that is but there is some evidence that other providers are experiencing the same downturn.

It is an important source of revenue for us so it is important to maintain our profile. We are competitively priced.

If you have any ideas on where or how to spread the word about this area of our work, do pass them on. We have been revisiting our website to try to improve the content on Family Mediation and have recently submitted a funding bid to pay for a full review and revamp of our website. We await the outcome.

Alongside Family, we also offer Workplace Mediation, which is another area of work where we have seen less referrals in the last year or so. Again we have some great Workplace mediators who can take on any manner of workplace dispute, from senior managers/directors level down to conflicts on the 'shop floor.' This is one area where we are very well priced against the competition but still provide the same quality of service that any other organisation does.

## News

**Office working** — There are moves afoot to start resuming some working from our Park House offices. Ever since the first lockdown staff have been working from home and taking advantage of modern technology to stay connected by phone, internet and video conferencing. We are likely to stay in hybrid form for some time. First back to the office setting will be our Co-ordinator, Nick and Family Caseworker, Karen.

**Admin Assistant** — In light of the above, Nick recently posted a volunteer role on Indeed.com, the major website for job opportunities. So far, six individuals have shown an interest. Such a person could help Nick and the team carry out admin functions that could be delegated and relieve the pressure on them. We will introduce you to any successful candidate as soon as one is recruited.



**Joint Meeting Agreements** - we have been having a discussion around our Joint Meeting Agreement Form. We have recently found that a number of clients have been querying the contents, post event, or deciding they wanted to introduce amendments. We are thinking of changing the working to the following:

*'I agree with the content and wording of the above record of the joint mediation session. I am aware that it is not legally binding. I am also aware that this agreement cannot be added to or amended unless through participation in a further joint meeting and with the consent of all parties'*

We want to avoid there being a toing and froing between parties, outside the formal mediation process. We have obviously had to contend with carrying out our work online for some time now, and not face to face where we can secure signatures at the time.

The form is titled 'Mediation Joint Meeting Agreement' and is part of the 'West Sussex Mediation Service' documents. It includes fields for 'NAME' and 'ADDRESS' for both parties, a section for 'ISSUES', and a large area for 'AGREEMENT'. At the bottom, there is a section for signatures and dates, with a note stating: 'I agree with the content and wording of the above record of the joint mediation session. I am aware that it is not legally binding. I am also aware that this agreement cannot be added to or amended unless through participation in a further joint meeting and with the consent of all parties.' The form also includes a section for 'In the presence of Mediators representing West Sussex Mediation Service:' with fields for names and dates.

**Face to Face meetings** - we hope to be able to start to return to some face to face joint meetings soon, but probably not home visits for a while still. For those mediators who are comfortable with this and who have been reluctant to carry out their work online, do let the office know about your availability. We would love to see some of our 'silent' mediators return to casework. We do have cases to allocate and new mediators who are keen to start their mediating careers. Our new Admin Assistant may well be asked to reach out to all our mediators to update our records.

## Retirement

Being modest, our Service Co-ordinator Nick Handley, didn't place this article as the front page headlines.

However, the big news is that when our trustees met on 27th January, Nick disclosed his desire to retire from his post at the end of November 2022. This will be close to him reaching State Pension age. His thoughts of retirement were raised when Nicola Hawkins, the Manager of our Sussex Mediation Alliance partner, Hastings & Rother Mediation Service, announced her retirement date of the end of March 2022.

Nick joined WSMS on 1st January 2007 and was the first full-time Co-ordinator for the charity. Having started on a five day week, Nick subsequently reduced to slightly less hours over four days (Monday to Thursday). He has been the longest serving member of staff for the charity.

Prior to joining WSMS Nick enjoyed a full 30 year career with Sussex Police, where he served at Brighton, Gatwick Airport, Hailsham, Crawley and Horsham, mainly in front-line and community policing, but with some armed policing at the Airport. He joined the Police straight from six form college and was able to 'retire' on full pension at the young age of 49 years (not something that would be possible in the modern world). During his career he attended many sad situation such as a plane crash, murders, suicides, fatal road collisions, but also many funny and rewarding incidents. We was involved in the policing of the Miners strike, many demonstrations, football matches the Pope's visit in 1982, Political Conferences (but missed the Brighton Grand Hotel bombing) and much more. He managed also to lock up a good number of baddies.

Nick intends to continue to volunteer as a mediator and possibly help out with some fundraising events. He hopes to go out in a 'blaze of glory' by making 2022 a successful year for funding.

Nick said, " I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at WSMS. I was proud to be part of our 2019 achievement of being granted the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service and various innovations introduced during my time. The charity has some great people supporting its work including staff, mediators, trustees and other volunteers. Hopefully it can go from strength to strength with someone new at the helm."

Nick hopes to organise a gathering later in the year where he can say thanks to all those, past and present, who have helped him over the years.

The Trustees now have the task of bringing about a smooth transition to the new post holder. If you know of anyone who might want to 'throw their hat into the ring', they are welcome to chat with Nick or the Trustees to hear what the role involves.

## Giveasyoulive Challenge



Are you ready to take on a 22 in '22? Decide your fate and set yourself a challenge linked to the number 22. From walking 22 miles a week to reading 22 books this year, whatever your fundraiser is it will help make a difference to our charity coffers: [https://donate.giveasyoulive.com/charity/wsms?utm\\_source=charitytoolkit&utm\\_content=131258&utm\\_medium=post&utm\\_campaign=CT22in22Campaign](https://donate.giveasyoulive.com/charity/wsms?utm_source=charitytoolkit&utm_content=131258&utm_medium=post&utm_campaign=CT22in22Campaign)