



November'09 newsletter

Funding Update



Further to last month's newsletter, we have started to get a bit of feedback to the letter I sent to Councillors and MPs about the threat of a reduction in our funding.

We have had one Councillor stop me in the street while passing me in her car, get out and chat to me about her ideas about where some money could come from.

We have had an MP write to me to say he has raised the issue with the Leader of the Council, Ray Puddifoot and that he would get back to me with his response.

For me, this is an excellent start. Simply keeping our situation 'in the loop' of discussions amongst people who might influence this situation is the most

important thing at the moment. When we have a better idea of how things might go, we can then start to draw upon support if needed. Initially I think that just identifying people willing to support us and thanking them for that is the main thing. So if any of you do know your local friendly Councillor or MP, please 'drop in' your concerns about our situation to them next time you see them. At present we are just talking about £4.5k but the risk is it could be more. And that £4.5k is additional loss for us as we have run for 3 years at a loss without going cap in hand to the Council or Hillington Homes as we have honoured the terms of our contract and seen it as our responsibility to make up the shortfall. Now that the contract fee has been, apparently, cut by HH, this

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is a different situation as what we thought was 'safe' has been threatened, and that, in itself, threatens our survival.

I would prefer that we adopt an approach of highlighting the positives of what we offer and that there is a risk that that may disappear, than to throw any kind of negative comments towards particular bodies or individuals. We are all experiencing tough

financial times at the moment and Council officers have to find ways of making numbers add up just like the rest of us. At the same time, survival and thriving is what matters and so our aim is to make HCM and what it provides a priority concern for those able to make the funding decisions.

Alan

Some feedback about Conflict Coaching:

"I'm writing to say THANK YOU VERY MUCH! for the Conflict Coaching sessions. I found them very helpful. It's helped me to realise though I continue to have difficulties that I can approach and look at them differently. And I feel more empowered to face difficult situations."

Conflict Coaching client in a Thank You card sent to one of our Coaches.



One of the things that is always interesting when talking to mediators about cases they have worked on is the frequency with which they say things like 'I wanted them to....', 'I tried to get them to....', or other similar statements which suggest an agenda on the part of the mediator. We all do this, so it's not a criticism, it's just an observation. But the main question is, are we listening to what WE are saying so that we can identify when we have that agenda so that we can then change our practise so the agenda isn't coming across? We may want a party to talk a bit more - why is that? What's our agenda there? We may feel that someone is focusing 'too much' on a particular topic - why is it that we feel that? What's our agenda there? *Cont'd on the back page*

What's Going On in November

Volunteer Support Sessions

at Key House, Yiewsley

Thursday, 5th November'09, 2.30pm ~ 4.30pm

Wednesday, 11th November'09, 6.30pm ~ 8.30pm

Themed Training Evening

At St Giles, Ickenham

Monday, 16th November'09, 6.30pm ~ 8.30pm

Working with an Interpreter

On occasions parties may require an interpreter to be present during a visit or a face to face meeting to facilitate clear communication when there may be language or hearing difficulties. During the themed training sessions mediators will have the opportunity to explore effective ways of conducting mediation through interpreters and discuss any expectations they may have regarding the use of interpreters.



That's your agenda....? (Cont'd)

The very 'trying to get' a party to do something implies we think they are / are not doing something we think they should be. So we have an agenda. Often when a mediator says that, it is alongside a sense of 'not quite managing' to 'get' them to do the thing they've identified. That 'not quite managing' is our Rescuer coming out, the sense of 'effort' to 'get them' to do it, and usually the resulting frustration that they don't is us putting our own agenda on to them and them not accepting it.

Keeping to the practises of always asking where a particular party wants to go and then simply helping them, whether it fits with our 'agenda' or not is the continuous aim of mediation.

Most of you will know the sense of relief that comes when you realise you've let go of your agenda and can just ride alongside the journey of the party or parties you are working with. In the face-to-face it means we can 'sit back' and let the parties have a good ole chat, even if tinged with a few 'digs'. The point is they are flowing with their agenda and we don't have to keep up or keep hold. In a visit we might find a couple start to engage in their own debate about what they want and how they are experiencing their dispute with their neighbour, and how they want to deal with it. Alternatively we may be visiting someone who lives alone. If we can leave that situation without the thought 'I wish I could have got them to.....' then we have been able to lose our agenda. That thought is a 'content' thought. It has to be because it is not about our practice it is about them and what they did/didn't do. The main question afterwards is ideally just about 'Did I ask open questions?, Did I use summaries? Did I explain the face to face well?'etc. Those are questions about me. Not what I was able to 'get them to do'.

So always keep in mind whether you use such phrases about a case you are on. If you didn't 'get them to' do something, - What was your agenda?

Alan