

# Mediation Service

Annual Report

April 2020 to March 2021

catch  
**22**



“I am very pleased to be able to allocate funding from my Police and Crime Commissioner’s fund to continue this mediation service delivered by Catch22. If issues can be resolved through mediation without involving the police the outcome is better for everyone, so I fully support this. Successful mediation reduces the amount of police resources spent on neighbourhood disputes which makes this a good investment for me as Police and Crime Commissioner.”

**Tim Passmore, Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner**

# Introduction

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## Aim of Service

Working with the Police, Local Authorities and Housing Associations to provide a skilled, practical, flexible service focussed on resolving community conflict, unhampered by the constraints the referring professionals face.

We aim to help service users to communicate safely and to facilitate the best possible conversation between them and their neighbours directly or indirectly. We also try to find ways they can manage conflict differently in the future as well to help those whose neighbours can't or won't mediate.

We strive to be as flexible as possible, offering face to face, shuttle mediations and individual support to manage conflict. This allows people to access our service who may not normally be considered suitable for mediation. The service helps people to find ways out of conflict that they cannot find alone while reducing demand on public services, by applying the skills and allowing the time that conflicts need to resolve well.

## Outcomes of Service

This year our service has received **194 referrals**. We have worked with over **450 service users** with over **210** children benefiting from the results.

Due to the pandemic, we have done very little face to face work but have made over **1300 phone calls**, conducted **49 mediations** and helped people achieve **60 other positive results**, even without mediation taking place. In many other cases we have signposted service users to other sources of help, played a part in identifying safeguarding concerns for vulnerable people and offered ongoing support where it's helpful to reduce conflict.

*"I don't have to worry about leaving the house anymore. Lockdown would have been torture if we were still in that situation."*

**Clarion Housing Tenant**

# Impact & Challenges

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## Impact

While not always straightforward, the outcomes of community mediation can be lifechanging. Home should be a sanctuary from the outside world. Neighbours in dispute can feel unsafe in their homes, nervous to go in their gardens or leave the house. Mediation can take the heat out a situation and ensure clear communication. It allows everyone to be heard and understood and helps people to make practical plans to avoid conflict in the future, reducing stress and allowing people to move on.

Referrers can waste large amounts of time on disputes where evidence is short and enforcement action is impractical or inappropriate and expensive. Referrers are rarely seen as impartial because of their enforcement role and they seldom have the time available that's needed to effectively resolve conflict. Having access to an independent mediation service allows them to offer the people they serve a way out of their situation that is voluntary, independent, confidential and solution focused.

### **Of the service users that responded to our request for feedback last year:**

- 97% of those that felt it was relevant to them, felt safer and more able to enjoy life after working with the service
- 85% felt they would be more able to deal with future conflict
- 86% of respondents said they felt less stressed after working with the service, whether or not mediation had taken place
- 100% of respondents would recommend the service to others

### **Of the referring officers that responded to our request for feedback:**

- 89% reported that the intervention of Catch22 had avoided an escalation of events
- In 86% of cases where enforcement action was possible, it was no longer needed
- 100% of referring officers reported that they had good communications with Catch22
- 100% found the service helpful, whether or not mediation took place and irrespective of whether they were able to close their case

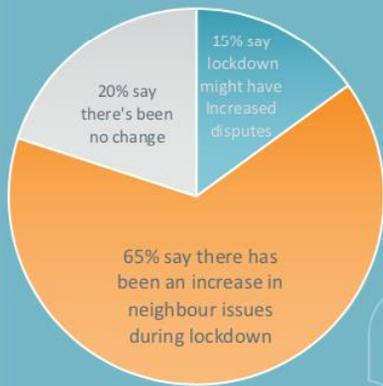
# Challenges

Our service has been particularly busy during the pandemic. We have operated throughout, mostly over the phone dependent on changing government measures and the needs of service users. We have paid attention to those who are finding lockdowns stressful or whose dispute may worsen under these circumstances, aware that in many cases, people's mental health has been badly affected.



**Mediation Service Pandemic Response** - In the last year, our service has received 194 referrals, 25% more than 2019-20. Many cases are as a result of, or made worse by increased stress or changed living conditions due to the pandemic and the lockdowns. We have responded to the needs of services users and referrers working mostly over the phone. We asked them how we're doing:

We asked our referrers if there was an increase in neighbour disputes during the lockdowns:



We asked our referring officers for feedback about our operations during the lockdowns:

*"The service did not seem to change during lockdown"*  
*"The response from Catch22 was immediate"*  
*"I have had a couple of cases running during lockdown and Catch-22 have been very helpful"*  
*"Contact maintained with clients throughout - helpful informative and instill confidence in the service"*  
*"The service was still operational and could support our tenants even though it was a phone call"*

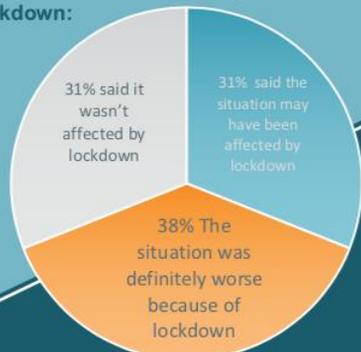
**100%** of referrers continued to find the service useful while we were working remotely



We asked our service users for feedback about the service they had received during the pandemic:

*"It was brilliant to be able to still talk to someone even if you can't come out to see us"*  
*"I felt heard, and very supported, even though neighbour wouldn't engage in mediation, the mediators still supported me"*  
*"The mediator always did her best to listen and mediate through phone where possible instead of a mediation meeting which enabled us to fix some of the problems"*

We asked our service users if their conflict was made worse by the lockdown:



# Working in Partnership

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After many years of working with **Norwich City Council** we have just completed the first year of our tender to deliver Norwich's innovative Self-Referral Community Conflict service. Norwich residents refer directly via the council website, presenting a diverse set of problems that we work with the service user to find solutions to. This could lead to mediation, just exchanging information, working with only one party to manage the situation or connecting them to other agencies that can help them. Along side this, we continue to provide a traditional mediation service to the ASB team.

*"I can honestly say that the help [the mediator] gave me on this case has been incredible. Without their help I can say that I do not think I could have resolved this issue. I am so grateful and the quality of life is better for both parties involved in the mediation process"* **Area Manager, Norwich City Council**

**Suffolk Police** refer antisocial behaviour and neighbour dispute cases to us. We have built up good relationships with the police over the last 6 years with feedback showing that, despite the outcome of a mediation referral, the service has saved Suffolk Police time and been a very useful resource. This is now funded directly by the PCC and has been topped up by 2 Coronavirus grants to from the Suffolk Community Fund to help us respond to demand during the pandemic.

*"Police involvement effectively ended from when Catch22's began."* **Suffolk Police Officer**

We have a longstanding relationship with **Clarion Housing** who have been referring neighbour dispute cases to us for over 7 years.

*"In all honesty, I have been impressed with Catch22 and cannot fault the service. I cannot think how you could be more helpful or efficient."* **Housing Response Officer, Clarion Housing**

We are entering our third year of working with **Ipswich Borough Council**, through which Ipswich Housing Officers can refer mediation cases for Ipswich tenants.

*"In cases referred to your service the amount of calls regarding the neighbours disputes, so far, has ceased entirely... for now anyway, which we assume is down to your hard work. Thank you."*

**Ipswich Housing Officer**

We are looking forward to working with **Babergh Mid Suffolk District Councils** in the coming year.

We also work with other local authorities and housing associations on a **spot purchase** basis, providing mediation work and conflict resolution training.

## Co-producing solutions

Mediation is by definition, a person-centred process that begins with listening and empathy. Our mediators don't expect a person to take into consideration another person's point of view if no one understands theirs. We work alongside service users to help them identify and then communicate their needs and concerns effectively, in most cases facilitating practical and long-lasting solutions.

*"You got to know me. Brilliant to have one to one support from someone who cares if you're alright"* **Norwich Resident**

We work together with each commissioner in a way that best suits the needs of their organisation, in order to make the service easy to use and supplying commissioners with the information they need. We attend multi agency meetings, Housing Officer team meetings and Police Safer Neighbourhood Team meetings to raise awareness of the service and help people to use it effectively.

*"As far as I'm aware there have been no further issues reported to police involving these two parties, which is a stark contrast to the daily/weekly incidents being reported"* **Suffolk Police Officer**

For more information please visit  
our website:

[www.catch-22.org.uk/services/mediation-service/](http://www.catch-22.org.uk/services/mediation-service/)

To get in touch with us, please contact:

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“I think this is the 3rd referral I’ve done and so far each has assisted in easing a tempestuous situation/stalemate between warring neighbours where neither party will budge. I cannot rate Catch22 highly enough - a completely impartial 3rd party who are not police seems to do the trick”

*Suffolk Police Constable*

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