

# Case Study

## Typical Neighbour Mediation 1

### Party One - Mrs Ali

Mrs Ali complained of noise disturbance from the flat above. She did not approach the tenants directly but called the Wardens. Mrs Ali lives alone

### Party Two – Mr and Mrs Rostock and their 3 children

Mr and Mrs Rostock were unaware of any noise disturbance. One evening The Wardens showed up on their doorstep telling them to be quiet in what they heard as aggressive tones. Their English is not great and they felt they were being threatened.

### What followed:

Mrs Rostock saw Mrs Ali and started shouting at her for calling the wardens. After this there were a series of incidents between them where crossed words were spoken. Mrs Ali found the situation intolerable and the Housing Officer referred the case to mediation.

### Party One visit

Mrs Ali told us that her son was living with her and he was supposed to go to university in London. Instead he decided to go to University elsewhere and he told his mother that the reason for leaving was that he couldn't study because of the noise upstairs. Mrs Ali was now living alone and taking care of an elderly sick neighbour who is bed-ridden. She said that the noise was of children jumping up and down and that it disturbed her most on a Sunday morning when she wanted to lie in. She told us that she had been verbally abused by Mrs Rostock.

### Party Two visit

Mr and Mrs Rostock said they found it difficult to cope with their 3 children and they were aware that children can be noisy so they had arranged their lives to reduce any noise. They had put carpet under the dining table to stop the noise of chairs being dragged. They took the children out to the park as often as possible and they made a rule that the children could not get out of bed before 8 am or be up after 9pm. They were confused because no other neighbours were concerned with noise. They were hurt that Mrs Ali called the wardens. Mrs Rostock said that she had once passed Mrs Ali's window had had seen Mrs Ali's son

smoking a joint out of the window but she decided not to say anything out of some kind of loyalty to neighbours.

Mrs Rostock believed that Mrs Ali's son was blaming them for noise because he didn't want his mother to become friendly with them so she wouldn't tell on him.

Our observations: When the wardens showed up, Mr and Mrs Rostock were frightened. They had come from a part of the world in conflict and seeing uniformed presence was intimidating and they also were scared that they could lose their home and be asked to leave the country. Mr and Mrs Rostock took what the wardens said and assumed that these were Mrs Ali's words. Mrs Rostock, seeing her husband distressed, took it out on Mrs Ali by shouting and name calling. Mrs Ali's son had told her he couldn't stay at home because of noise from upstairs. Mrs Ali believed that Mr and Mrs Rostock were responsible for her son leaving home. We wondered if the son had other reasons but didn't want to hurt his mum's feelings about leaving home.

### The mediation

Once we established that the words the wardens used were in no way reflective of the nature of the complaint made by Mrs Ali we were able to re-establish some trust between them. In fact Mrs Ali simply wanted to find an amicable solution but because she had taken verbal abuse from Mrs Rostock, she was unwilling to try. Mrs Ali expressed that she didn't want the situation to feel like imprisonment to the children and she didn't want to be pointed out to the children as the cause of their unhappiness. Mr Rostock was able to accept that it would be good to establish neighbourly relations.

### Post mediation

Communication broke down and they called our service. We were able to visit both parties and bring them together on the spot to open meaningful dialogue. Mrs Ali was welcomed into Mr and Mrs Rostock's home and they were able to establish communication. The case resolved.

Our observation The problems started with the response to the complaint. Mrs Ali actually needed empathy for her situation and help with establishing communication with her neighbours which could have been done at the first complaint. Using a 'quick fix' strategy like sending in wardens escalated the dispute.