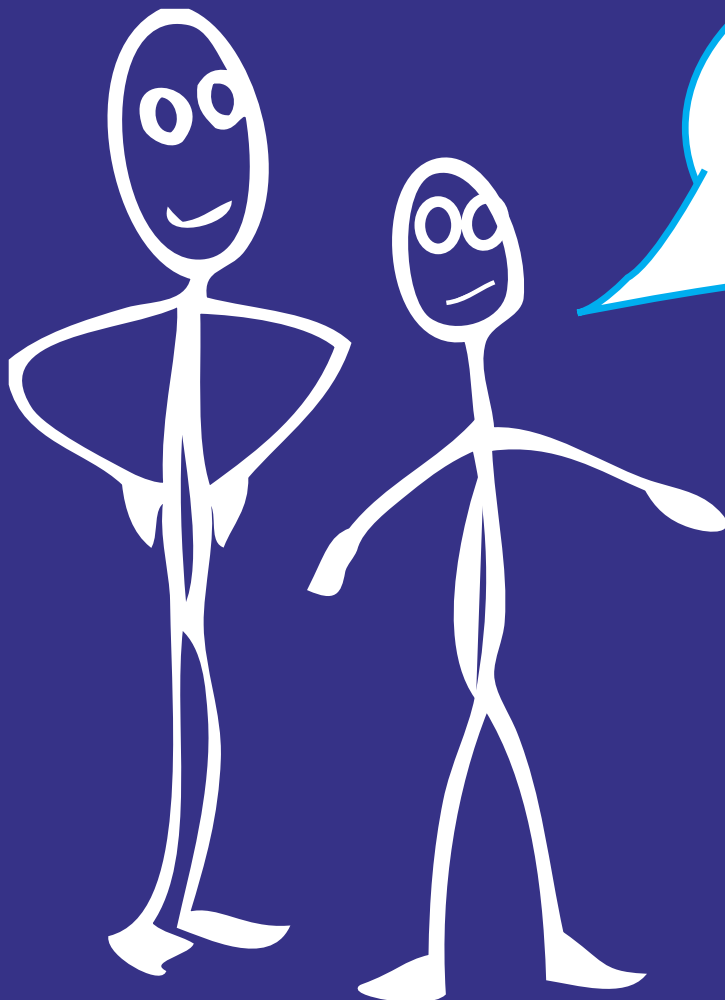


smile mediation

Getting people to talk to one another again



"Smile's Annual
Review 2013-14"

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Governance Report 2013/14

On behalf of the board of trustee directors, staff, volunteers and the 500+ customers who have used our services, we thank our funding agencies and partners for placing their continued trust in Smile Mediation. Without your ongoing support, none of the excellent and innovative work in this report would have been possible.

Smile is more than a community mediation service. We have a good business focus, as we have had to be flexible and creative in the face of a challenging funding climate. We are community investors, and during 2013/14 we have trained 18 volunteers in new skills to resolve community conflict. We aim to be a partner of choice for local authorities who want creative and value for money solutions to problems. This report sets out a number of examples which illustrate these themes.

Above all, we want to solve problems, be customer focussed, responsive to partners, and have a social impact at the heart of what we do. Thank you for your support during 2013/14.



Ian Clark
Chair of Smile Mediation Board

Who's who at Smile – the Team:

Ian Clark – Director /Chair

Peter Kenyon – Director/Treasurer

Carol Pike – Director

Karen Bailey – Director

Karen Ainsworth – Manager & Company Secretary

John Ormerod – Director (appointed 4/9/13)

Jean Thompson – Director (resigned 11/2/14)

Janet Whittaker – Director (resigned 11/2/14)

Kim Henderson – Casework and Contract Co-ordinator (resigned 20/5/13)

Ursula Miller – Caseworker (resigned 5/6/13)

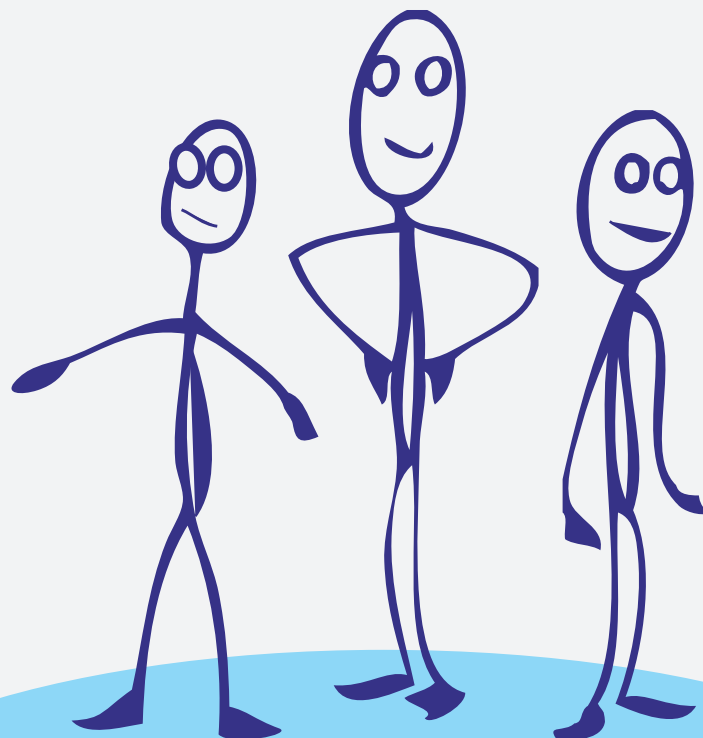
Freya Morrison – Caseworker/Administrative Assistant (resigned 21/3/14)

Emma Shaw – Mediation Services Coordinator (appointed 8/7/13 and resigned 19/9/13)

Ken Turner – Casework and Administration Officer (appointed 8/7/13)

Angela Clipstone – Casework and Administration Officer (appointed 1/11/13 and terminated 21/3/14)

Elaine Roberts – Mediation Services Project Manager (appointed 24th March 2014)



Manager's Report 2013/14:

I wasn't too confident before mediation but found the meeting helped me to understand my neighbour's point of view a lot more. Eight weeks later I'm still really happy with how things are; we are still talking with the neighbours and we are now on really good terms. I would definitely recommend mediation to anyone as a way of resolving problems and would like to thank Smile for sorting things out.

Whilst the following narrative will focus on developments and achievements it is important to recognise the day to day delivery of the community mediation service. Without this it would not be possible for Smile to continuously develop and improve our range of services and training.

Our new website was launched in April and the 'look and feel' of it reflects the Smile brand. We see the website as our shop window and it is one way in which we can evidence our professionalism.

Smile has experienced many challenges over the last three years, reduced staffing, reduced budgets and loss of grants; however change also presents opportunities to try something different. The staffing structure has been reviewed so that roles and responsibilities can develop to respond to the changes that lie ahead.

As a volunteer led organisation the recruitment and retention of mediators is essential for the sustainability of the charity. This year in addition to the annual training programme, Smile also delivered a two day 'community conversion' training course for qualified workplace mediators which boosted our volunteer numbers by six; we now have more than forty trained volunteer mediators working across a wide geographical area. This has resulted in much more flexibility to arrange appointments for parties in dispute.

Last year Smile also recruited office based volunteers; this was further developed by working in partnership with UCLAN which resulted in two law students carrying out a six week placement. It provided valuable work experience for the students and increased resources for Smile. We hope to review this offer and continue with it into 2014/15.

Another successful conference was held in November 2013 with over seventy delegates and excellent speakers. The conference is one way that Smile can promote the effectiveness of mediation as a way of resolving conflict and disputes. I would like to extend my thanks to Reverend Joanna Williams and Professor Liz Stokoe, the main speakers for the day.

Finally, Smile has been involved in two exciting and innovative pilot projects. The first is piloting a new approach to reports of low risk anti-social behaviour in partnership with Burnley Borough Council. The project has been evaluated and concludes that using trained mediators to carry out initial assessments of reports of nuisance results in fewer repeat complaints and cases are resolved more quickly.

The second project, funded for two years by Lloyds Foundation is developing a family mediation service for families where someone is in recovery from drug and/or alcohol addiction. Smile is working in partnership with Inspire, the East Lancashire drug and alcohol service.

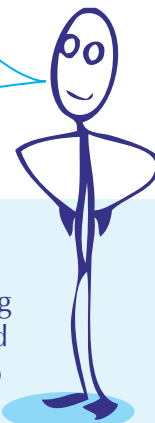


Karen Ainsworth
Mediation Services Manager

Community Mediation Service

This year Smile received 245 referrals; of these 210 were for community mediation, 7 family cases, 2 hate crime cases, 6 workplace cases and 20 initial assessments. All referrals involve at least two people and many involve multiple 'parties' which means that we engage with more than 500 people each year. The majority of our referrals are made by Housing Associations and Local Authorities.

'Over 500 people involved in mediation'



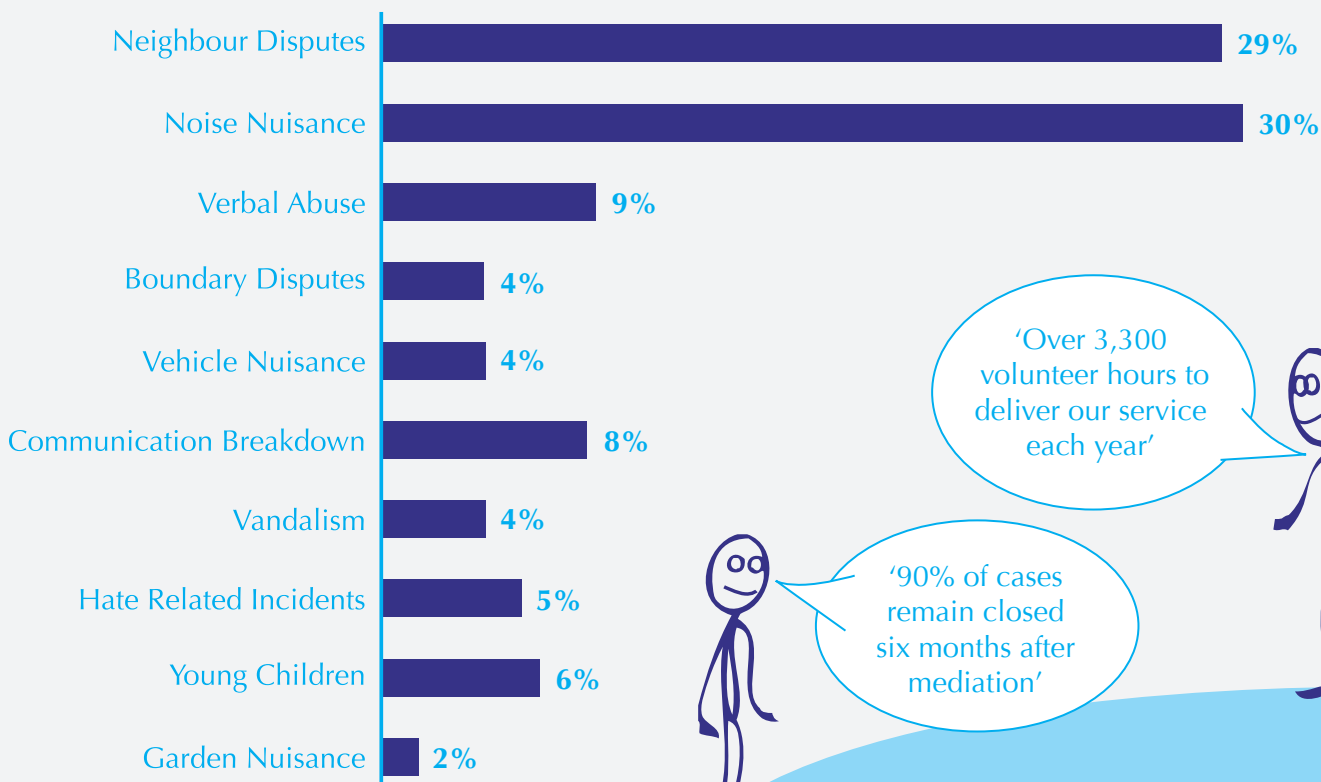
'Mediation works when people really want to find a solution'

Case study

Elaine complained to the Council about excessive noise from the neighbour's car; the music from the car sound system was blasting out at all hours of the day and night. The engine was being revved and the noise from the TV throughout the day and night was also very loud. Following mediation this is what Elaine had to say:

Really, really happy! We talk to each other now, say 'hello' and ask how the kids are, it's great talking face to face - it actually works!

Main reason for referral:



'Over 3,300 volunteer hours to deliver our service each year'

'90% of cases remain closed six months after mediation'

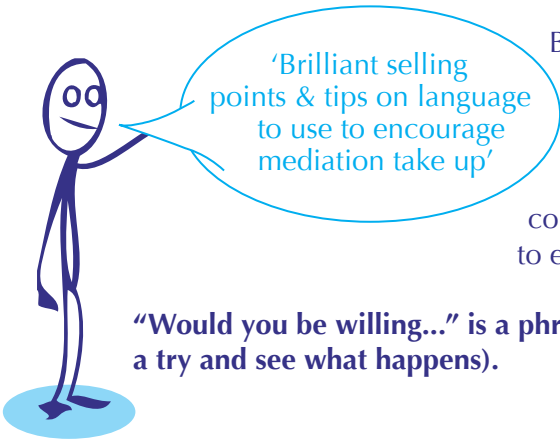
Failed appointments:

Whilst we do understand that people have genuine reasons for cancelling an appointment more than 50% of appointments were cancelled and had to be rearranged. In terms of administration and case management this is the equivalent of more than 100+ referrals.

In part this reflects the anxiety that people experience when preparing for mediation; having difficult conversations is something that many of us would rather put off. Smile staff and volunteers work hard to prevent this by confirming all appointments by letter, telephone, and text message and email where possible.

Smile's Mediation Conference:

It is important to Smile that the people coming to the conference learn something new and that they also leave with a practical skill they can start to use immediately. With this in mind the morning session was about conflict styles and understanding how we personally respond to conflict followed in the afternoon by a session which focussed on language and how powerful using the right words can be.



“Would you be willing...” is a phrase that stuck out (give it a try and see what happens).

Based on the feedback both workshops presented completely new ideas to almost everyone attending the conference. There was a real buzz around the room as people began to recognise how they respond to conflict and how to use words to elicit positive responses.



Satisfaction Levels

Smile received 307 responses from customers.

SERVICE STANDARDS	TARGET	ACTUAL
THE MEDIATORS:		
Did the mediators listen to your issues?	95%	99%
Did the mediators avoid taking sides?	100%	98%
How satisfied are you with the service?	95%	95%
THE PROCESS:		
Do you understand the other person's point of view?	80%	90%
Did you find the process useful?	80%	96%
Are you satisfied with the agreement?	80%	90%
6 MONTHS AFTER MEDIATION:		
Cases remaining closed 6 months after mediation	80%	90%

Successful outcomes are important and Smile sets challenging performance measures to ensure our services are valued. Our results demonstrate that the mediation process delivers a high percentage. One measure of success is whether or not the 'case' remains closed 6 months after the mediation intervention. Sometimes, it is enough for the people to discuss their situation with our mediators and this is why some cases do not proceed to a joint meeting.

This year, 35% of cases resulted in a joint or shuttle meeting, giving all those involved the opportunity to have their say and listen to the other person's point of view. We aim to achieve at least 80% agreements when people meet face to face; in 2013/14 we exceeded this as 90% of people reached agreement following a joint meeting.



Our Partners:

Delivering excellent services is only achievable when people work together. Partnerships where the relationship is well-developed can be explored to look at service delivery and apply creative approaches to improve quality and services even more. This is what happened in November 2013 when Smile and Burnley Borough Council joined forces to pilot a new initial assessment service. The pilot has been evaluated (August 2014) and states:

The key conclusion of the report is that the project has been successful in providing an effective service to customers. This service improves outcomes for the Council because it makes the response to low-risk Anti Social Behaviour complaints more consistent and minimises the number of cases that re-open or run on for over three months. It is beneficial to Smile Mediation because it promotes mediation as an option to customers. Customers seem generally satisfied with the service they have received.

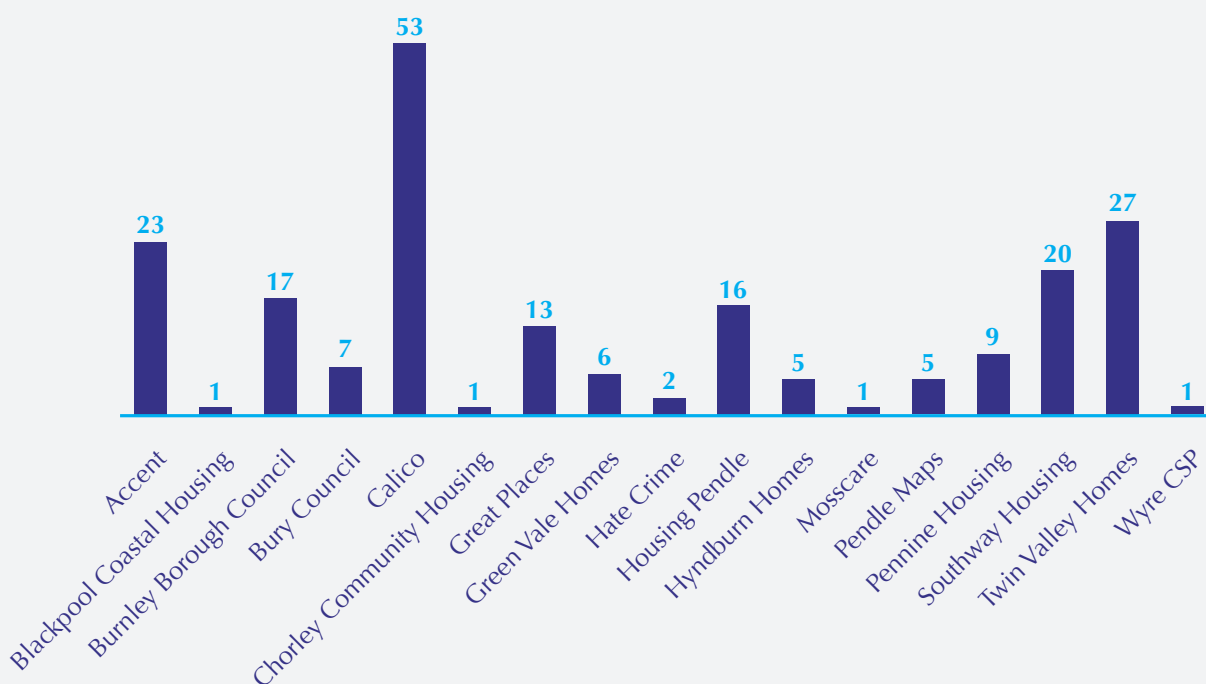
The success rate of the cases studied based on the definition of success laid out in the original plan was 89.3%, exceeding the 80% target.

Case Study

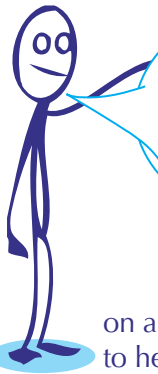
Sue reported her neighbour to the Housing Association because she was allowing her dog to foul on the grassed area in front of her flat. She decided to clean up after the dog but felt angry that her neighbour wasn't doing it. She didn't feel able to approach her neighbour about this as she felt intimidated by Joyce. This is what Sue and Joyce said about mediation:

Things were bad before, then once mediation was offered things did seem to settle down. The process was alright - I didn't really know what to expect of mediation as I hadn't done it before. Mediation worked for me by helping me to open up with my neighbour before the joint meeting - the mediation gave us something in common which we talked about in the street. This would not have happened if we hadn't been going through the process of mediation. I felt intimidated before mediation but the mediators made me feel comfortable going through the mediation process.'

Referrals by Agency April 2013 to March 2014



Our Volunteers



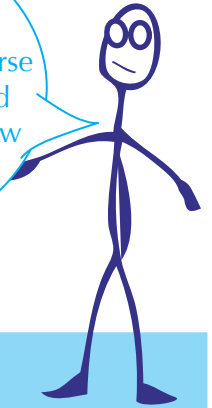
'It is a very useful course, which has application in other areas. It is high quality and delivered well. Participants benefit beyond work they carry out for Smile'

Volunteering is a word we are all familiar with, but what does it mean in practice? Smile is a volunteer led organisation and that means that every single one of our forty mediators is a volunteer. They undergo extensive training and development, approved by the College of Mediators, to ensure they are competent to practice.

They make themselves available on a weekly basis to visit people in their own homes to help them find positive ways of resolving disputes (usually with neighbours but sometimes within the family or at work).

When a solution to the problem seems obvious the mediators do not impose their suggestions or ideas; they listen and question people to encourage them to find their own solution to the problem – often this will be a much better solution than the mediators were thinking about.

'I appreciated having the opportunity of meeting existing Smile mediators throughout the course (it was helpful to ask questions and listen to their experiences). Also how approachable and welcoming the Smile staff are'



The social value and social impact of volunteering is significant; here are some comments from people who regularly volunteer:

- 'Get satisfaction from seeing the results'
- I really enjoy it'
- It gives me a sense of personal achievement'
- It broadens my experience of life'
- It gives me more confidence'
- 'Makes me a less selfish person'
- It gives me the chance to learn a new skill'
- It gives me a chance to get a recognised qualification'
- It makes me feel less stressed'
- It gives me the chance to improve my employment prospects'

Source: 2006/07 Helping Out survey



'My listening skills have improved and continue to improve through self awareness'

'I have learnt about the process of mediation and had the opportunities to try out these through skills practice. This helped me to understand what I know and what I need to work on, such as active listening, getting the story, probing and clarifying. I also learnt from watching peers mediate'



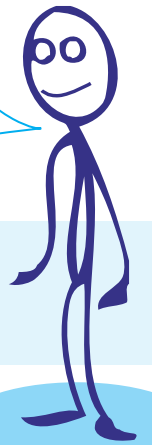
Lloyds Foundation - Grant Funding Secured

A real boost for Smile Mediation was the successful award of a grant of £24,900 (over two years) from Lloyds Foundation in March 2014. The grant was secured to provide a family mediation service for people in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction. Smile will be working in partnership with Inspire (East Lancashire Drug and Alcohol Service) to train family mediators, deliver one to one mediation and conflict resolution training for Inspire volunteers, service users and staff.

Need for the project was initially identified by Inspire staff, volunteers, family members/carers and service users. Failure to communicate and lack of understanding gets in the way of the recovery process and can result in poor engagement with crucial support services at a time when expectations and vulnerability are high. This resulted in Smile and Inspire working together to develop the project and identify funding.

Some families are choosing to go their separate ways as they do not have the skills to work through and deal with highly charged relationship issues with family members/carers. Those with a supportive network of family and carers are more likely to be able to maintain their recovery or seek help sooner if problems with substance misuse recur. Mediation offers a way of building and maintaining positive relationships.

'I was rejected by friends and family - it's as if they think addiction is a contagious disease'

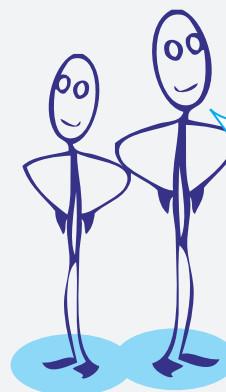
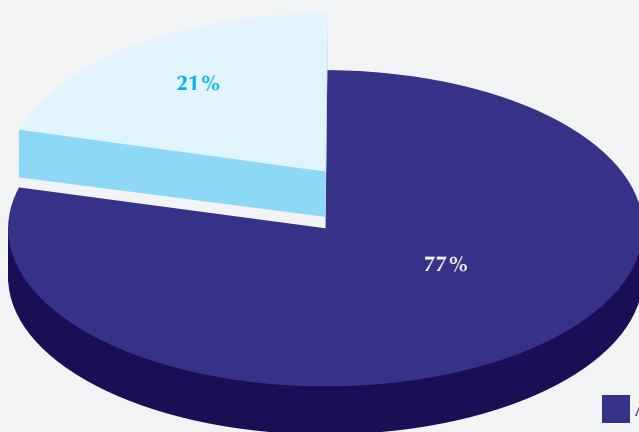


Case study

In a family where Mary is supported by Inspire for her alcohol use, her husband has reached crisis point and he is accessing Families and Carers Together (FACT) to help him through.

Health and Wellbeing

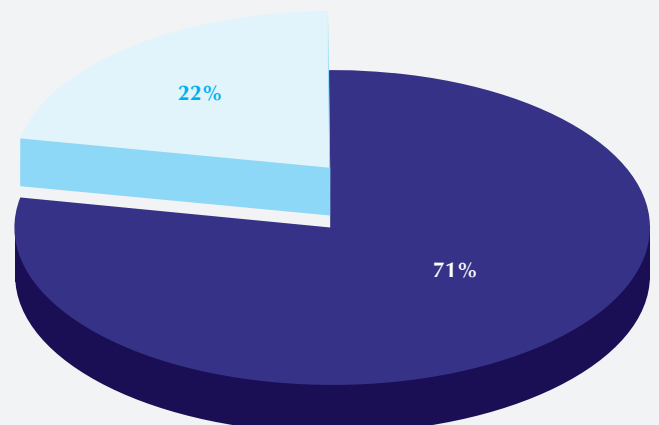
Negative impact on health and wellbeing (before mediation)



'77% people said the dispute had a negative effect on their health and well-being'

Positive impact on health and wellbeing (after mediation)

■ A Lot
■ A Little



'71% of people said their health and well-being improved significantly following mediation'



Financial Matters

	2014	2013
	£	£
INCOME:		
Mediation Service Contracts	95,090	87,710
Grant Funding	9,350	10,000
Interest receivable	3	3
Travelling income	4,914	-
	109,357	97,713
EXPENDITURE:		
Costs of delivering services	1,543	925
Rents and rates	537	286
Salaries	62,982	56,988
Sessional Labour	2,004	334
Travelling expenses	4,386	2,625
Printing, postage and stationery	3,263	2,383
Repairs and maintenance	2,120	2,782
Training and conference expenses	6,475	10,377
Accountancy	984	768
Legal and professional	3,723	4,541
Insurances	1,020	1,683
Telephone and fax	1,366	1,392
Subscriptions	653	902
Heat, light and power	1,371	1,358
Equipment depreciation	3,028	1,750
Sundry expenses	1,514	1,692
	96,969	90,786
SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR:	12,388	6,927

We retained all except one of our existing contracts in 2013/14. Once again the final accounts showed a modest surplus and an increase on the previous year; a huge achievement during a particularly challenging economic climate, not least because many of our contract partners are facing public sector cuts. Increasingly value for money is being defined by cost alone and the added value of working with an organisation that delivers social value and social impact is sometimes not taken into account. This is something that the trustees will be addressing in the future to ensure existing and new contracts can be sustained.



Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank the following organisations and their staff for their support during 2013/14:

- Accent Foundation
- Ainsworth's Chartered Accountants
- Be Computing
- Big Lottery
- Blackburn College
- Blackpool Coastal Housing
- Burnley Borough Council
- Burnley Community Safety Partnership
- Burnley, Pendle & Rossendale CVS
- Bury Council
- Calico
- CANWe Solutions CIC
- Chorley Community Housing
- College of Mediators
- Great Places
- Green Vale Homes
- Hyndburn Homes
- Hyndburn & Ribble Valley CVS
- Lancashire Constabulary
- Lancashire County Council
- Lloyds Foundation
- Mosscafe
- Pendle Borough Council
- Pendle Community Safety Partnership
- Pennine Housing 2000
- Social Landlords Crime and Nuisance Group
- Southway Housing
- Twin Valley Homes
- Wyre Community Safety Partnership
- Young Lancashire
- Your Housing



LLOYDS BANK FOUNDATION
England & Wales



Getting people to talk to one another again

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