

Dublin  
Community  
*Mediation*

# The Story of Dublin Community Mediation (DCM) after 25 Years

## How did it start?

The origins of the community mediation scheme in Tallaght are connected to the visit to Ireland in May 1986 by Ray Shonholtz, the founder of Community Boards in San Francisco and one of the pioneers of a community-based approach. He believed that disputes should be tackled at source and resolved directly between people themselves through mediation without having to go to court. It happened that Ray took sabbatical leave that year and fortunately had a week to spare before returning to his Director's role. He readily accepted an invitation from Geoffrey Corry to visit Ireland, splitting equal time between Dublin and Belfast. Wondering how to cover the expenses of his trip, Geoffrey contacted Sr Christina O'Neill of Pax Christi, whom he knew through the reconciliation work, and got an enthusiastic response because she had been trained in mediation by Ron Kraybill the previous year at sessions organised by the Mennonite community in London. Then he contacted Joan Broder in Belfast to share the costs of Ray going north and discovered that she was influenced by Howard Zehr of the Mennonites and wanted to develop a restorative justice scheme with offenders through her work with Extern. A good many people turned up at the meetings to hear Ray and there was such an enthusiastic response that the seeds of community mediation were sown on fertile ground during that week.

The story did not end there. When Ray Shonholtz returned to the USA, he contacted the Public Welfare Foundation and succeeded in obtaining grants for two people from Ireland to receive basic training in community mediation from his own agency of Community Boards (CB) in San Francisco. This offer was not just in the mediation skills themselves but also how to set up





a community mediation scheme. The problem was how to squeeze the grant money from two people to three. Well, you see, the Lord will provide! It so happened that the religious order to which Sr Christina belonged had a convent house in San Francisco and suddenly free accommodation for all three was provided for the two weeks. Geoffrey was nominated to sleep in the priest's room. The CB mediation training proved to be a turning point in each of their lives and all three became champions of the process leading eventually to the establishment of the Mediators Institute of Ireland in 1987 and Mediation Northern Ireland in 1998.

### What model to use?

The immediate challenge was to work out which mediation process would work best in the Irish context. Christina had been trained in the four-stage model devised by Ron Kraybill of the Mennonite Conciliation Service (MCS) with storytelling at the heart of the process and using two trained volunteer mediators. The Community Boards six stage model devised by Interaction Associates in San Francisco put a lot of emphasis on hearing, understanding and validating the concerns of disputants

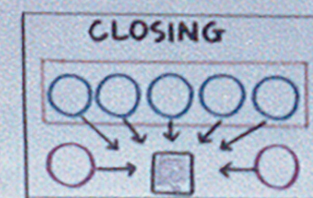
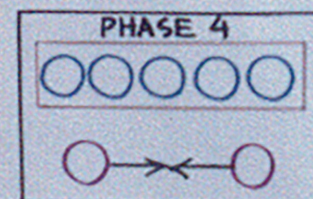
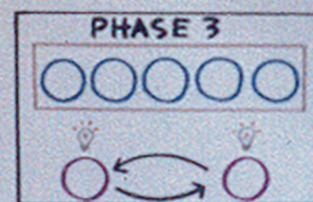
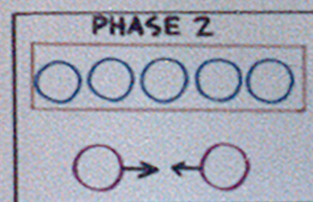
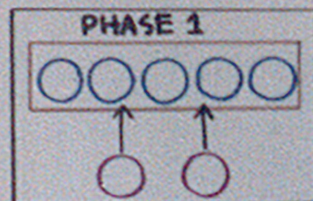
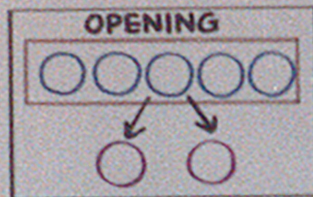


Sr Christina O'Neill (Pax Christi), Geoffrey Corry (Glencree Centre for Reconciliation) and Joan Broder (Extern in Belfast) in San Francisco for the mediation training with Community Boards in August 1986



The goal of the conciliation process is to help two or more people in conflict develop or repair a relationship so that they can resolve their conflict.

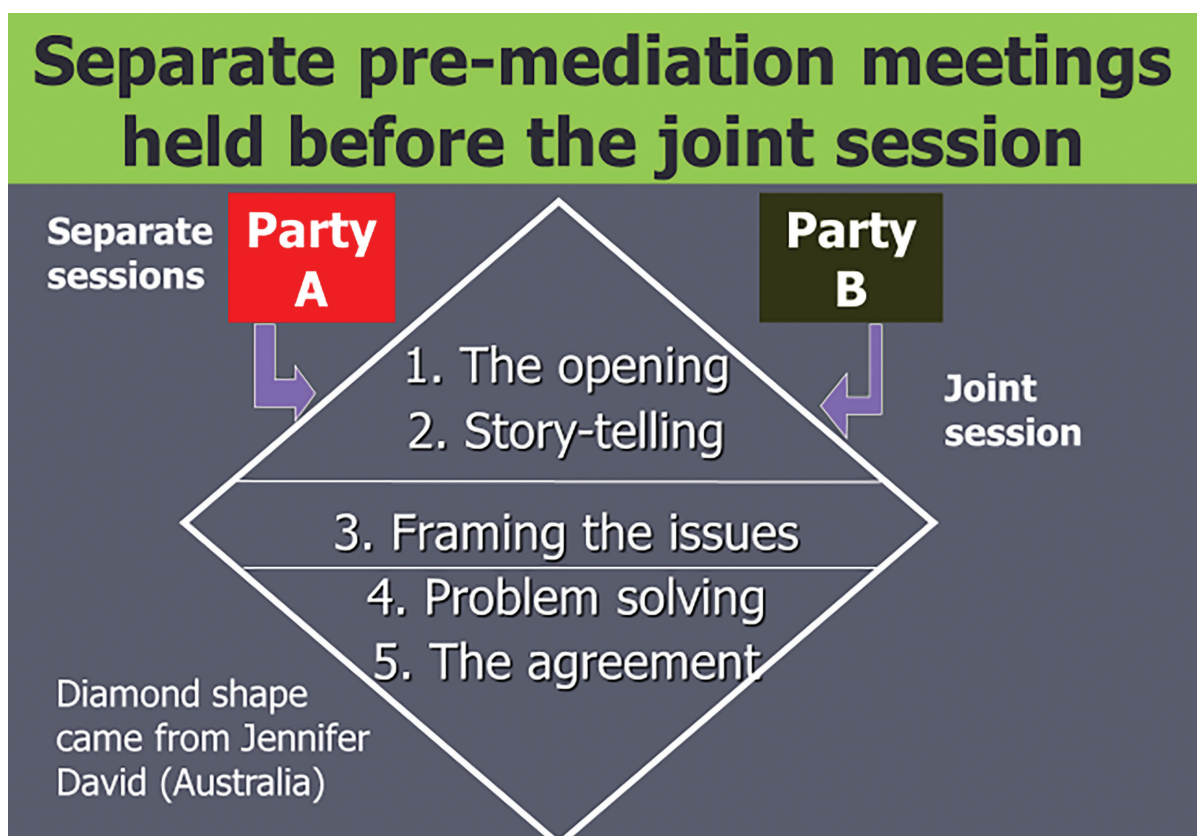
### THE CONCILIATION PROCESS: OBJECTIVES



- Develop a positive conciliation environment.
- Clarify the purpose, stages and expectations of the process.
- Develop trust in the conciliator and the process.
- Develop a rapport that helps the people in conflict state issues and express feelings.
- Understand and validate those issues and feelings.
- Establish a model by showing teamwork, neutrality and communication.
- Prepare the people in conflict to communicate & work together in phase 2.
- Facilitate communication so each person understands how the other experiences the conflict.
- Identify new information that affects the conflict.
- Maintain an environment that enables the people to work together, communicate, and move forward.
- Help the people in conflict reflect on the work and learning that has occurred as a result of phases 1 and 2.
- Prepare them to resolve the conflict.
- Help the people develop a mutual resolution.
- Validate both the work and the process used for resolving the conflict.



[see photo taken by Geoffrey Corry of the CB model]. What was really different was the size of the mediator panel consisting of up to five trained mediators so as to represent the cultural diversity of the Bay area – Hispanic, Black, Chinese and Whites. Each model had their own different strengths yet both valued the essential reflective listening process by the mediators that takes place at the very start. Mediators do not jump swiftly into the problem-solving stage that happens in the more commercial settlement model. Christina particularly valued the storytelling phase because she felt this resonated with Irish people, and Geoffrey liked the idea of a transition phase in the middle to pull together the issues into an agenda. Faced with this dilemma, the three of them integrated elements of the CB and Mennonite models and came up with what they felt was a simpler and easier to remember five stage model for use in Ireland. The Irish model kept storytelling at its heart and added an intermediary or transition phase at stage three of ‘framing the issues’ before you get to problem solving. It went down very well in the initial trainings that the three did together both in Dublin and Belfast.





Extra training support came in 1989 and 1990 when Barry Hart of Charlottesville Mediation Centre was sponsored by the Mennonites to come and live in Dublin to show us how to use role plays for training mediators and introduce the conflict resolution training materials.

As a result, the five-stage diamond model became the dominant mediation process in all the training that Geoffrey Corry did over two decades, and effectively introduced hundreds of trainee mediators in Ireland, north and south, to their first interactive experience in simulated role plays. It was the model used to get Tallaght Community Mediation started, as well as Ballymun and Northside community mediation schemes in the early 1990's and later in the Midlands and Mayo.

## **Earthing mediation in Tallaght**

First of all, Geoffrey tried to get a scheme going in central Dublin in 1991 but it did not work in the big urban context and neither attracted volunteers nor cases. In rethinking how to get community mediation off the ground – and still enthused by the San Francisco experience – he got to know Rosaleen Walsh in the Tallaght Welfare Service (TWS) because she had been a one-year volunteer up in the Corrymeela community at Ballycastle on the Causeway coast. She offered to host a local meeting in October 1993 under the auspices of the Community Information Service out of which a local steering committee was established with the backing of Charlie O'Connor, the local Fianna Fail TD, who was involved in TWS. Without Rosaleen's and Charlie's commitment and local networking, Tallaght Community Mediation (TCM) would not have got off the ground.

The embryonic scheme was run on a financial shoestring with small grants from the Howard Foundation and People in Need. A free introductory mediation training course was organised by Geoffrey Corry in 1994 for about ten people at the Dominican Priory and out of that came people like Bernard Murphy, Audrey O'Carroll, Sister Maria Flynn and Christy Keeley along with Mary and Owen Phelan. They joined the first steering committee and met upstairs above the TWS office at 1 Main Street. The launch took place on Monday 20th February 1995 in the RTC Lecture Theatre [formerly the Institute of Technology Tallaght, now Technological University Dublin, TU Dublin]. Charlie O'Connor, as the first Chairperson, got the meeting off to a great start and, as training director, made a presentation on neighbour disputes. Alwyn described the case development process and the initial steps made by mediators to connect with the disputants.

All the mediation sessions were conducted at 2 Main Street in the evening time and keys were collected from the TWS office. Elizabeth Cleary was appointed as a part-



time administrator of TCM in January 1995 and worked from No.2 from 1pm to 3pm on each weekday to look after phone calls and develop the service locally.

It was a slow process developing local contacts and getting the word to go around the grapevine about what mediation was about. The initiative was supported by the Gardai in Tallaght, by FAS, Threshold, and the two local authorities. It was a new concept and there were huge misunderstandings, yet informal mediation was embedded in the Irish psyche because it happened in the markets when a dissatisfied buyer felt they got a raw deal. The first cases came to fruition in 1995 worked on by the volunteer team who were learning about how best to do it.

Audrey O'Carroll tells the story of getting her bus from Dun Laoghaire into the city centre and then the second bus out to Tallaght to meet up with her fellow case developer. They knocked on the door of Party A only to find there was no answer. Yes, there must be a better way of doing it! An internal document written in February 1998 sums it up: "Case development is a piece of work in its own right. It can be very time consuming. We need to have more training for it and try out different approaches."

The first case to reach an agreement involved two families over a piece of land on a rural laneway. It had been sold many years previously by one family member to the other, but the deal was subsequently disowned by the first family. A feud subsequently developed between them. The case came to TCM through Victim Support when the Gardai brought a case against the two families for a breach of the peace. The TCM case development was well organised. A team of four mediators separated into two pairs, each visiting one family. Then one male mediator from one pair joined with a female mediator from the other pair to co-mediate the case. But neither of the families were prepared to meet in the same room to talk out the dispute face to face. Shuttle mediation was offered and three members of each family were prepared to come to a neutral venue to sit in separate rooms. It started at 7.30pm and three hours later, after shuttling back and forth between the two families, a hand-written agreement was signed with a 'just-in-case' clause saying that if the agreement does not work out, they would review it in three month's time.

Another case from those early days involved three sets of neighbours on one side and one neighbour on the other side, who happened to be a sister of one of them. There was also a business dispute between enterprises sharing the same premises. Newspapers for the business upstairs were thrown into the shop porch downstairs. The situation became inflamed through an angry phone call followed by a solicitor's letter.



## Research into community mediation

By the end of 1999, enquiries and requests by phone, in person and by letter for community mediation had grown. Some statistics were given in the TCM annual report of that year:

- 45% of the cases were by self-referral, 47% from an agency and 8% from a third party
- Of the referrals who came from an agency, 45% were SDCC, 29% were Dublin City Council, 8% each from Fingal and Kildare County Councils with the balance coming from the Gardai and St Pancras Housing Association
- The overwhelming types of cases at 78% were neighbour disputes (noise, threats, intimidations and children), 9% were family disputes with the balance being boundary, workplace or other kinds of disputes
- The geographic spread of cases was predominantly southside at 78% coming from postal districts 24, 22 and 12. The northside cases were spread over postal districts 17, 5, 7 and 1 with a few from Co Dublin.

An ambitious research project funded by Combat Poverty was conducted in 1997 by the Nexus Research Cooperative as part of the effort to tailor the mediation service to the needs of the local community in the greater Tallaght area. Audrey O'Carroll was the link person to the research team who adopted a cluster sample approach in three different catchment areas – private housing, local authority rented housing and thirdly mixed private and tenant housing. Of the 100 households contacted, 87 of them agreed to sit down with the interviewer to answer 21 questions. While interviewees were cautious or resistant at the beginning of the interview, they became more open and at ease as the questions flowed. It was found that people were not comfortable in talking about a conflict and saw it in terms of the people involved: "Fighting with neighbours?". They had difficulty in being able to name the issues or dismissed their importance: "No, the usual things with kids and that." Or "You mean, like the drugs?"

The conflicts that caused most stress and worry were those involving family members and neighbours in close daily proximity. Conflicts within families tended to be ongoing rather than being precipitated by a single issue. Most were sorted out by an adult family member and then forgotten about. Out of the 87 interviewed, only five had heard about TCM. The research report concluded there was a latent demand for a mediation service in the community but people found the idea of mediation difficult to grasp: "Mediation, conflict – that's a weird one!".

## Establishment of restorative scheme

By 1998, the Steering Committee had agreed a Strategic Plan and support had been obtained from South Dublin County Council (SDCC). Each mediator was given a TCM Identification Card. The “wise owl” was selected as the logo with the motto: “the more he heard, the less he spoke, the less he spoke, the more he heard”. The name was subsequently changed to The Mediation Bureau (TMB) a few years later. Through contacts provided by Rosaleen, a grant for two years (£25,000 in 1998 and £16,000 in 1999) was provided by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, a Quaker philanthropic fund, to employ a full -time development officer to strengthen the service and get it up and running on a permanent basis. Rowntree had stated clearly at the start that the grant was not for core funding but a primer to enable TCM secure further help from statutory funding. By 2000, SDCC were convinced of



John O'Donohue, Minister for Justice and Equality, launches the restorative scheme in 1999 in the presence of Peter Keeley, Sr Maria Flynn, Charlie O'Connor, Martin Tansey and Elizabeth Cleary.



the benefits of the scheme and came up with a grant to pay staff. Peter Keeley was appointed as the Development Manager in early 1998 and served for two years.

Back in 1990, Howard Zehr from Canada addressed a meeting in Dublin about restorative justice. The well attended meeting was organised by Geoffrey Corry and chaired by Martin Tansey, Director of the Probation and Welfare Service. Contact was maintained with Martin particularly by Elizabeth Cleary along with Anna Rynne, who kept him enthused about the process. They developed the thinking for a pre-sentence Restorative Justice (RJ) scheme connected to the district court. Key discussions were held with Martin Tansey in May 1998 and the language got changed to a post-prosecution model that would take place in between the moment of conviction and sentencing. If the offender pleaded guilty and said 'yes' to RJ, then the case is adjourned by the local District Justice for a Social Enquiry Report (SER). In this way, the offender is supported to be accountable to the victim and take responsibility for the harm done.

Within one year, a pilot scheme was sanctioned by the Minister for Justice for the Probation Service to proceed in 1999. The offender / victim service was branched out from the TCM as a standalone service with Peter Keeley as its first Manager. This was a requirement of the funding from Probation that the RJ scheme would be housed in a separate place to the community mediation scheme. However, the TMB did have the use of an office at Unit 15 of the Tallaght Business Centre under a verbal agreement with the Victim/Offender mediation scheme for a short time in 2002 in a financial time of need. It was lucky that the local District Justice was Sean Delap who supported its introduction from the start. He was followed by District Justice John Paul McDonnell who was also sympathetic providing support for over ten years. Sr. Maria Flynn became the chairperson of the management board.

In the early years there was a strong emphasis on providing community mediation training usually conducted over weekends at Kiltalown House in Jobstown. TCM ran several 60 hour courses every year fully accredited by the Mediators Institute of Ireland (MII). Geoffrey Corry also assisted with the setting up of community mediation services in Ballymun and Northside in Dublin in the mid-1990's and in Cork. Two of the TCM mediators got involved with the North Clondalkin Community Forum who were dealing with a number of contentious issues at that time. Informal support was also provided to groups in the Tallaght area like the Jobstown Integrated Services Project. In 1999, an Advanced (Part 2) Mediation course was organised by Brigid Clarke, Chairperson, and Elizabeth Thomas, the new Development Officer, at the Old Bawn community school on Tuesday nights over a period of two terms. This enabled trained mediators to go on to become advanced

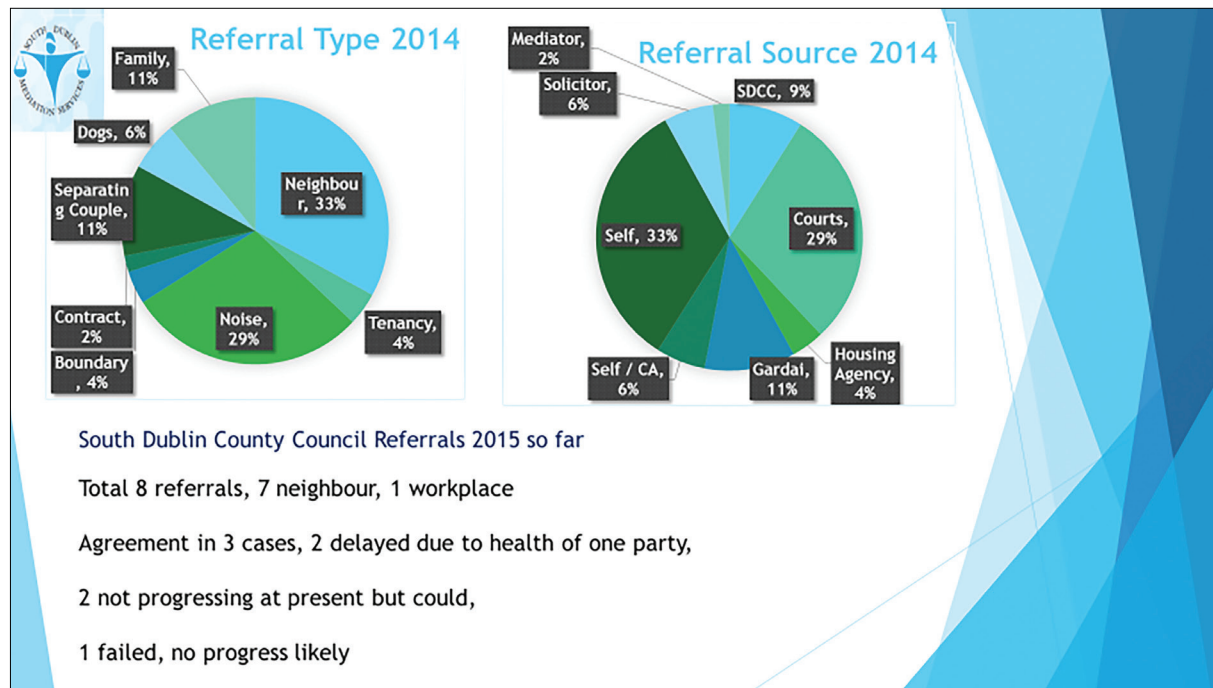


Retirement party for Elizabeth Cleary who gave many years of official and voluntary time to TCM from the beginning until 2002, pictured with Maire Ni Mhaoilmhichil, Chairperson.

practitioner mediators under the old accreditation arrangements of the MII. The basic mediation training course was also provided to other groups and TCM was contacted by the Garda Juvenile Liaison Officer Training Unit to train their national team of Juvenile Liaison Officers in community mediation skills for their Restorative Conferencing initiative under the 2000 Children's Act. They found the storytelling process very attractive because it humanised the scripted restorative justice model they had been taught by a Metropolitan Police scheme in London.

In the first cohort of members was Maire Ni Mhaoilmhichil, who contributed strongly to the training initiatives, and who continued to provide leadership and expertise to the service up to 2016. Other early joiners to the training team included Sr. Maria Flynn, Susan Moran, Anne Byrne, Bernard Murphy, Ann Doyle, Jacinta Treanor and Marie Keeley.





The service struggled to obtain adequate funding because there was no Departmental national scheme and was reliant on getting grant aid from the Housing Section of the local authority. The service was fortunate to secure regular annual support from the Community Department of South Dublin City Council (SDCC) starting around 2000. This enabled the continued employment of Elizabeth Cleary, who retired in April 2002, as administrator on a part-time basis followed by the appointment of Elizabeth Thomas.

## Registration as a Company

A steady stream of referrals was coming to the service around the millennium and in 2002, TMB had a team of 11 mediators, of which five were associate mediators pursuing their practitioner accreditation. In 2003 the Steering Committees decided to register the service as a company limited by guarantee. The company was registered as “The Mediation Bureau Ltd.” and has maintained this official name and status ever since, with Directors and a Board, records and annual filings as required by the CRO.

## Multiple Office Locations in Tallaght

The service moved location a number of times. It started “over the hairdressers” at 1 Main St. Tallaght Village, moved in 1998 to a premises beside Pat Barron Motors on the Old Bawn Road. They then moved to 23 Brookview Avenue, Brookfield with the assistance of SDCC and in late 2005 found themselves in Unit B Killinarden Enterprise Park. The service shared an office with the Restorative Justice Service in Whitestown, spent a short period in Cookstown before locating in the SDCC building in Jobstown around 2008. Finally, the service left Jobstown for Glenview Lodge in 2018. Due to a problem with the Glenview building, the service located at the Trustus office in the building beside the Maldron Hotel. Finally, in 2020, Dublin Community Mediation (DCM) found a new home in Whitechurch Library, Taylor’s Lane, Rathfarnham, Dublin 16. DCM rents office space from The Web Project, an organisation that provides services for children and adults with disabilities.

## Developments in Recent Years

In the period since 2009 a number of significant new developments took place. The first was the participation of the service in the Mediation Pilot scheme in the District and Circuit Court. This began in 2012 through contact by Maire Ni Mhaoilmhichil with the secretary to Ms Justice Mary Quirke, who brought us into contact with Tom Ward, the Principal Officer in the Courts Service. He was instrumental in developing this by involving ourselves, Ballymun and Coolock Mediation Services. As a result, a volunteer mediator has been attending Court 23 most Fridays in session, to assist disputants with neighbour disputes.

In a report to South Dublin County Council in 2015, the data in this chart was shared, showing the types of disputes and the sources of referral in 2014, along with specific outcomes in the cases coming from the County Council itself.

In 2013 the service provided a low-cost Community Mediation training programme, led and delivered by Maire Ni Mhaoilmhichil and Maria Garvey. Some funding was obtained from the Dodder Valley Partnership, and as a result some participants were able to attend by paying as little as €100 for a full FETAC registered training programme involving 10 sessions, with the potential for MII certification at the end.

Since 2016 the service has provided a structured Sharing and Learning facility on a monthly basis, which has been very popular with all mediators, but especially newly certified members. Very high calibre speakers have been involved and excellent programmes for helping mediators maintain and improve their skills and achieve their CPD requirements have been a feature.





Launch of the WIT Family Mediation Project in Quarryvale

The website and the logo for the service has been updated on two occasions, firstly in 2015 in a joint project with the Institute of Technology in Tallaght, and more recently in 2018, reflecting changes in the operation of the service. In 2017 the name of the service was changed to Dublin Community Mediation, to reflect the wider geographical range of referrals.

In 2017 John Mulligan began exploring the possibilities of the service providing a Family Mediation service to respond to the need from the long waiting lists at the Family Mediation Service. The pilot project was a not-for-profit means tested research initiative, by Waterford Institute of Technology, based on a family mediation model developed by Dr. Róisín O Shea of Arc Mediation, assisted by Dr. Sinéad Concealy of Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT).

The project aimed to replicate and scale up their successful collaboration with Family Resource Centres (FRCs) in Waterford and Kilkenny, by partnering with DCM and three Dublin based FRCs who would refer families in need of mediation services. The project was launched by the Canadian Ambassador to Ireland, in

acknowledgement of Canada Mediation's contribution to the ARC/WIT family mediation model. The project did not scale up as expected as the level of referrals from the Dublin based FRCs did not materialise. However, the project helped DCM make major advances in building the capacity and skills base of its volunteers, 20 of whom attended intensive training in the model and its delivery, which was provided by ARC/WIT, as well as updating and strengthening the protocols and back-office procedures needed to deliver a professional family mediation service. The project undoubtedly created the basis for, and foreshadowed future developments in this area such as the project with Treoir (details later). It also began a conversation with the Family Mediation Service (FMS) which raised the standing and visibility of DCM in the family mediation sector.

In 2019, under the stewardship of Tony Bourke as Chairperson, a number of developments happened for DCM. Our finances were improved, as well as some fundraising activities approved by the Board. DCM activities, policies and governance were approved by the Charities Regulator. Our data protection policies were brought into line with the new GDPR regulations. The DCM Sharing and Learning (S&L) group became the largest S&L group in Ireland, with more than 30 members from around Ireland. It is one of the strengths of DCM that mediators receive professional, high-quality support for their mediation practice, and engage in great learning in the S&L group. DCM also embarked on developing a Strategic Plan for the following 5 years. This process was begun in 2019 and completed in early 2020. The Strategic Plan covers 2020-2025 and is available on our website. DCM applied to the HSE for financial support so that we could have a fulltime administration person in the DCM office, and this application is ongoing. The Legal Aid Board convened a working group to establish a Mediation registration Council, as required by The Mediation Act 2017, and will have a community mediation representative on it. Tony Bourke currently sits on this working group.



### **The Let's Work it Out Pilot / Research Project**

In 2020, John Mulligan began a conversation with a colleague, Damien Peelo, the CEO of Treoir-National Federation of Services for Unmarried Parents and their Children. It was clear to Treoir, based on their research and some 2000 requests for information and



support they received per year, that there was a major need for mediation services that was not being met by available services for those parents who lived apart but parented together in some form. Awareness raising, advocacy for and provision of supports for “Shared Parenting” for these families, who comprise 40% of families with children in Ireland, is part of Treoir’s strategic plan. DCM’s discussions with Damien and Samantha Dunne, Treoir’s shared parenting officer, about how DCM could help respond to this need, resulted in the formation of the Let’s Work it Out (LWiO) pilot project in partnership with DCM, and eventually included a sub-pilot with FMS. The pilot project runs until August 2022, and is being evaluated by an independent researcher, and has received an award, some funding and consultancy support from Rethink Ireland in 2020. Its continuation and/or scaling up is currently under consideration in both organisations.

It became clear in early conversations that simply providing a standard family mediation service was not going to meet the needs of parents struggling to deal with conflicts and communication breakdowns related to their efforts to share parenting. DCM and Treoir formed a project management team to develop and oversee the LWiO project and, within DCM, a project management team including Evelyn Power, Caroline Mc Namara, Pat Lynch, Eileen Beechinor, and Lyndsey Reynolds, was formed to explore alternative dispute resolution (ADR) offerings. These ADR services focused on meeting the needs of parents for whom communication, parenting relations, joint decision-making, negotiation, and collaboration problems were getting in the way of co-operatively sharing the parenting of their children. It was clear to us and to Treoir that many parents were not ready for mediation or had mediated settlements which they were not able to implement, so preparatory and 1-1 work such as Conflict management Coaching was needed.

Treoir and DCM developed 5 models of Shared Parenting as a guide to help focus our LWiO shared parenting services, and DCM defined 10 service offerings to support these models. Early in 2021 and 2022, DCM trained some 20 Conflict Management Coaches in the CINERGY model, dialogue facilitation and parent support guides, resulting in the current 43 volunteers trained in a range of skills needed to deliver the project. New regular reflective practice groups were also established to support service delivery in addition to DCM’s monthly Sharing and Learning sessions. The DCM team also developed and continually refined protocols, procedures and guidelines to support the emerging model of service provision and the data gathering processes needed to support evidence-based research and GDPR requirements. Rethink Ireland funding enabled DCM to employ a part time administrator for the first time to support service delivery.

The LWiO Project has currently supported and provided services to some 70 parents with some months still to run before the project formally ends, and the evaluation is completed in August 2022. Covid provided the impetus needed for us to provide these services online, and our success in doing so means that we are now providing our services to parents nationally, rather than just in the local environs of Dublin. It has enabled far more efficient use of volunteer and parental time without any noticeable adverse effects on service. It is expected that the services and protocols developed will continue to be provided by DCM in forms to be decided at the time of writing, but it is clear from evidence to date that we are meeting a definite need, and feedback from parents suggests a high degree of satisfaction with the service, as well as our volunteers valuing the experience and development opportunities provided by the project. Enormous thanks are due to the volunteers who have cumulatively contributed thousands of hours to the development and delivery of the model and the project to the parents who have participated in LWiO.

In 2020, Ireland faced many difficulties because of Covid-19. Government restrictions meant that DCM was unable to deliver mediation in person from the middle of March. In response to the needs of the community for mediation services, many DCM mediators provided their services online. Mediators shared their skills and advice about online mediation at Sharing and Learning sessions. These Sharing and Learning sessions also went online and were very well attended and very well received by the members of DCM. Board meetings were also conducted online. The DCM mediators responded to the Covid crisis immediately and with enthusiasm, upskilling very quickly in the delivery of online mediation, and in engaging in online roleplays and in the Sharing and Learning sessions.

2020 was an important year for DCM as we moved to a new premises. DCM is now based in the beautiful and historic Whitechurch Library on Taylor's Lane. This is a Carnegie Library and was opened in 1911 and has been in use since then. We share the building with The Web Project, which provides classes and therapies for adults and children with disabilities.

In 2020 DCM had a meeting with the Community Gardaí, based in Tallaght Garda Station. Among the strategies planned are 1) presenting a module to the trainee Gardaí, 2) giving DCM business cards and flyers to the Community Gardaí to circulate to the public in appropriate cases, 3) expanding our connection with Community Gardaí in other garda stations. DCM will continue to liaise with the Community Gardaí to raise awareness of the work of DCM.

2020 was also a special year as DCM reached its 25th anniversary. Unfortunately, this anniversary could not be marked due to Government restrictions because of Covid. However, plans are in place to mark this significant milestone for DCM in having a social event and presentations about the history of DCM, as well as information sharing about the services provided by DCM. This is set to take place in Whitechurch Library on 11th June 2022. Among the activities, the following are planned: contacting local newspapers and radio stations to highlight the work of DCM, the launch of our new website, a social event in our new premises, re-engaging with former DCM members, the launch of the History of DCM booklet.

In 2021, mediation continued to be delivered online. Sharing and Learning, as well as DCM Board meetings, continued online. DCM and Treoir began the new pilot project in supporting unmarried parents. This project is called Let's Work it Out (LWiO). A number of DCM mediators trained in CINERGY Conflict Management Coaching in March 2021. These mediators bring their Conflict Coaching skills as well as their mediation skills to their work in the Let's Work it Out project in helping unmarried parents develop a parenting plan that respects the best interests of the children. DCM members who volunteered to work on the LWiO project engaged in Reflective Practice sessions under the guidance of John Mulligan. Rethink Ireland gave a grant to DCM in 2021, which has enabled a parttime administrator to be appointed in the office. This person has been joined by a person employed under the Community Employment (CE) scheme which means more cover in the office. Blathnaidh Colhoun was elected Chairperson of DCM in 2021 and led DCM in implementing the Strategic Plan 2020-2025. Many of the planned items in the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 are already in hand, and the Board hopes to achieve all objectives in the plan in a timely fashion.

In 2022, Blathnaidh and a sub-committee also designed and delivered an Induction session as part of the February Sharing and Learning, in order to upskill and train our members in DCM procedures, how to write agreements to mediate and settlements, DCM office procedures in cases of mediation and coaching, governance of DCM in compliance with the Charities Regulator. It is expected that this sort of Induction/Revision session will become an annual event. Eugene Boyle continues to organise the Sharing and Learning sessions and has plans for more invited guest speakers as well as our members presenting cases during 2022. These Sharing and Learning events continue to be presented online. We now have over 40 mediators enrolled in the DCM Sharing and Learning group.

During 2022, the Board, led by Blathnaidh, continues to implement the Strategic Plan 2020-2025. In 2022, the Board continues to develop the services of DCM, offering face to face and online services which include both mediation and Conflict Coaching. It is expected that DCM will continue to collaborate with Treoir and to expand its services to include working with the Family Mediation Service (FMS). A second group of our mediators have graduated from CINERGY Conflict Management Coaching training, and are eager to implement their





Four community mediation schemes receive recognition from the MII at its 2015 annual conference: Tallaght, Ballymun, Coolock/Northside and the Midlands.

training in helping parents, who live apart, to work together in the best interests of their children. Discussions are taking place in DCM and Treoir about the future plans for LWiO.

DCM continues to engage with the Community Gardaí, Rathfarnham Gardaí, and Tallaght Gardaí, to support people in community disputes, as well as family disputes, so that we can collaborate and work together to enhance the lives of people in conflict in the community. We acknowledge the help, support and advice we have received from An Garda Síochána to date. DCM is also collaborating with the Gardaí in developing a policy on Elder Abuse, Vulnerable Adults and Domestic Abuse, so that our mediators are clear about what procedures to follow in the event that they become aware of such issues in carrying out their work for DCM.

The current Board plans to celebrate DCM 25th anniversary in June 2022. We hope to increase awareness among people about the work of DCM, and how we can help and support the community. We are very proud of the history of DCM and of its volunteers, who have given their time and skills to help people in conflict and dispute. We look forward to the next 25 years for DCM, and hope the charity goes from strength to strength.

## **A Roll Call of Significant Contributors since 1995**

**Geoffrey Corry**, founder and Training Director

**Rosaleen Walsh**, founder and office host

**Charlie O'Connor**, founder, Chairperson

**Elizabeth Cleary**, first part time administrator

**Peter Keeley**, Development Manager

**Elizabeth Thomas**, Manager

**Anne Byrne**, SDCC liaison

**Maire Ni Mhaoilmhichil**, Chairperson and Director, Peer Mediation leader, Training Provider

**Bernard Murphy**, Director, Mediator

**Sr. Maria Flynn**, Mediator

**Susan Moran**, Director, Mediator

**Jacinta Treanor**, Director, Mediator

**Ann Doyle**, Mediator

**Brigid Clarke**

**Terri Mulhall**

**Maria Garvey**, Mediator

**Joe Kiernan**, Director, Mediator

**Maria Keeley**, Mediator

**Micheal Finnegan**, Director, Mediator, (2005 to 2015)

**Bernadette Kaluzny**, Chairperson, liaison with SDCC (2008 to 2012)

**Padraic O'Neill**, Chairperson, Director, Mediator (2010 to 2019)

**Mary O'Driscoll**, Mediator, temporary Office Manager (2016)

**Anne Bacon**, Mediator, legal advisor, (2011 to 2019)

**Tony Bourke**, Chairperson, Director, Mediator (2014 to 2020)

**John Mulligan**, Director, Mediator (2016 to present day)

**Liam Purcell**, Chairperson and Treasurer

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### **The current Board members are:**

**Blathnaidh Colhoun** (Chairperson), **Mary O Flaherty** (Vice Chairperson), **David Scott** (Treasurer), **Anne Mandal** (Secretary), **Pat Lynch**, **John Mulligan**, **Eugene Boyle** and **Anne Rush**.

Dublin Community Mediation is proud of the contribution its members have made in supporting the people of Dublin and beyond, in resolving disputes peacefully. The Board of Dublin Community Mediation acknowledges the enormous contribution made by current and former members of DCM, in giving their time and expertise in mediation delivery, conflict coaching services, and in engaging in Sharing and Learning. Our mediators and conflict coaches have delivered thousands of hours of their expertise and skill to support people live in harmony. We look forward to the next 25 years of alternative dispute resolution provided by the members of DCM.



In September 2015, before attending the ACR mediation conference in Nevada, Geoffrey Corry dropped into the Community Boards office in San Francisco to acknowledge the important and significant contribution that Ray Shonholtz had made to getting community mediation going in Ireland, north and south. Unfortunately, Ray had died of a sudden heart attack two years earlier but Geoffrey met his widow Ann (pictured on the left) to pay his respects on behalf of the mediation community in Ireland.



We thank South Dublin County Council for its continued support of DCM.



We are grateful for the support of Rethink Ireland in awarding DCM a grant from the Digital Solutions Fund in 2021.



We thank Trustus for all their support over the years through their involvement in the Community Employment scheme and in providing accommodation for DCM.



We thank the Web Project for allowing DCM to share this beautiful building, Whitechurch Library, with them.



Special thanks to the authors of this booklet for compiling our history, and giving us a souvenir to mark our 25 years of hard work and dedication. What started as a small idea has blossomed into the vibrant community based organisation it is today. Well done to all our volunteers both past and present.

**Here's to the next 25!**

**Authors**

Geoffrey Corry

Padraic O'Neill

John Mulligan

Mary O'Flaherty

Special thanks to Roisin O'Flaherty for all her design advice and guidance.



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