

Homelessness Mediation

Party 1 – Louise Brown

Louise left school last summer after she had finished her GCSEs. She was excluded from her local comprehensive before she took her exams and moved to another school nearby where she found it very difficult to settle and make friends. She decided to take only two GCSEs at this school as the syllabus was different - she passed them.

She was excluded from the previous school for her difficult behaviour and attitude to staff. She had been under a child psychologist at primary school and had a group of friends who she moved to the comprehensive with. At the comprehensive she found it difficult to be in such a large, very disciplined environment and with the fact that she was not with her group of friends during lessons.

Louise gives the impression of being a very self-assured young lady and wants to be in control, especially of friends and family. Everyone should do what she wants and if they do not she gets very angry. When she finished her GCSEs and left school she felt she was 'entitled' to have a long holiday before trying to get work. She went out with her friends and saw no reason to tell her parents where she was going or what time she would be home. She stayed in bed in the morning till everyone else in the house had gone out and made sure she was out before they returned. She did, however, keep the house clean by dusting and vacuuming and occasionally preparing food for the family.

Louise has now got a part-time job as a shop assistant in the local town.

The situation that had caused Louise and her mother to go to the council followed an incident at home. Louise had gone out with friends returning home drunk at 3am, parents were very angry and had locked her out. Louise created such a scene that they let her in, a row followed and Louise put her foot through a wall. The police were called, who managed to calm Louise down. Louise has one older brother and two younger brothers all living at home. Both parents work full-time.

Louise has admitted that she takes 'recreational drugs'. She is also keen to stay at home if she cannot have her own flat. Louise does not want to go into a hostel, she has heard about those 'places' and does not want to go to one. The Council have offered her a place at a hostel but it is the other side of the town and would mean that she could not get to her job.

Party 2 – Mr & Mrs Brown

Mrs Brown says that she has always had 'trouble' with Louise, when Louise was little she used to hold her breath until she went blue in order to get her own way. Mrs Brown and her husband would like Louise to be able to stay at home but feel that they can no longer cope with her attitude and the way she treats the rest of the family. They are concerned that Louise is taking drugs and have stopped giving her any money.

Mrs Brown has tried her 'best' for Louise and tried to get the school not to exclude her but could not understand the school's point of view. When Louise was younger Mrs Brown asked for help in handling her and had been with Louise to a child psychologist. She doesn't know what to do now. She thinks Louise has a problem with her younger brothers in that she is jealous of them and feels pushed out of the family.

Louise is very bossy and often falls out with friends if she cannot get her own way, this worries Mrs Brown as she feels Louise will have no friends at all if she carries on this way.

Mrs Brown gets very cross when Louise borrows her clothes and jewellery without asking.

Mr Brown has said that by 'evicting' Louise it will teach her a lesson and if she changes her ways they will take her back.

Both Mr & Mrs Brown are concerned at how angry Louise gets and do not know how to handle it. They also feel that Louise could get a better job than a shop assistant, even if it meant studying again. Mrs Brown doesn't want Louise to go to a hostel – she has heard it is not a 'nice' place but does not know how she will cope with Louise if she stays at home.

Mediation

The mediators spent a considerable amount of time with both parties individually and face to face. They worked on the 'positives' in the situation and how they were going to manage the 'negatives'. They helped Mr & Mrs Brown to recognise and appreciate Louise's good points and actions and Louise to understand Mr & Mrs Brown's concerns and what she could do to make life more bearable.

An agreement, which both parties prepared, was written up and signed by them.

It was agreed that Louise could stay at home for the time being and that the mediators would contact them after a couple of months (either party could contact them earlier if felt it was necessary).

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