

## Young People and Family Conflict Mediation

### Guidelines for Referral Agencies

Every family is different, so there are no hard and fast rules. There are many situations where, as an experienced family mediation team, we will be able to help those experiencing stress within the family during these unprecedented times. There will also be situations where we may not be the most appropriate organisation to assist the family, or where other steps need to take precedence over our involvement. This brief guide is aimed at helping those who come into contact with families looking for support. If you think we might be able to help – or are not sure – please call us to discuss further.

Resolve's approach is based on many years of experience as a community mediation service working with individuals and families in a wide range of situations and circumstances. Our mediators are professionally trained to a high standard to be good listeners, empathetic, non-judgmental, open and genuine. Many of our mediators are parents themselves and many have professional backgrounds where they have worked with young people. We are not, however, mental health professionals or social workers.

Our aim is to assist individuals and families to find positive and constructive ways of moving forwards in challenging situations that take into account balancing everyone's needs and making sure everyone is listened to and respected. In mediation, everyone is unique and valuable and we work equally with parents and young people without prejudging, or telling anyone what they should or should not do. Individuals find their own strengths, build resilience, and enable problems to be overcome with everyone contributing ideas and input. Mediators support this process.

Circumstances where we may be able to help:

- One or more individuals within the family are struggling and need support within the family.
- Relationships are fraught and dysfunctional.
- Behaviours are negative or problematic between some or all individuals.
- There are high levels of anger and emotion and 'acting out' behaviours.
- Individuals are not coping well with current situations and feel they or the situations in the family are often out of control.

Where any of the following are present, we may not be the first or most appropriate agency to help:

- Where one or more individuals feels unsafe.
- Where there are issues of domestic violence or abuse.
- Where matters of basic rights are at stake, e.g. personal safety.
- Where legal or police action is already being carried out.
- Where there is alcohol or substance abuse going on by one or more individual.
- Where parents are initiating or going through divorce proceedings.
- Where there is an ongoing pattern of emotional / behavioural concerns in children / adolescents e.g. nightmares, excessive focus on anxieties, increased aggression, regressive behaviour, or self-harm that does not resolve with support but which may indicate professional help is needed.

During the current Covid19 pandemic, Resolve will not be offering face to face mediation sessions. Instead, we offer conflict coaching sessions through Zoom or telephone conferencing facilities where individuals can talk freely and confidentially to a mediator or pair of mediators. Parents can have sessions together or individually, and we normally offer up to three one hour sessions to enable support to continue for a period of time. Young people can also have sessions without their parents if they would like someone to listen to them in confidence. If anyone's safety is in jeopardy, we will need to discuss this and involve other services as necessary and appropriate.

An example of how the conflict coaching sessions progress is shown below:

