

## Appendix 'D' - ESI Project Case Study (anonymised)

Family Intervention – 2 parents, 4 children

### Background:

Family A were referred to the service by a high school as the older boys had persistent time keeping problems identified by school pastoral care team. Mum and partner were in the process of possibly splitting up and mum was in the process of finding alternative accommodation. Dad was suffering from low mood and the children at high school (both male) were worried about having to move out.

Reason for splitting up was that parents had different ideas about discipline/rules in the home, and this was a cause of argument. Also, the teenage children used this difference as a means to divide parents and get their own way.

### Intervention:

After an assessment of the family including a self-reported assessment by parents, specific areas of support were identified as follows:

- Getting the family to communicate effectively with each other
- Strategies in the home to reduce stressful situations
- Contact with extended family (from parent's previous relationships)
- Differing parenting techniques – a common ground to be agreed between parents
- After 3 weeks of family assessment and discussion Mum decided that she wanted the support on offer and to stay with the family and give everything a go.

15 weeks of family mediation followed:

- Each week the practitioner listened to a different member of the family to gather information and get a real feel for the family environment.
- To have a strong base upon to build successful strategies, the practitioner felt it paramount to get mum and dad in an emotionally stable position, where they have time to talk to each other about issues that are affecting their abilities to parent appropriately. This resulted in deep rooted issues spanning a decade being brought up involving past relationships. Each parent was given their time to talk without interruption. This intervention worked well with both parents commenting that they had no idea the feelings the other was harbouring regarding past incidents.
- A suggestion was that parents needed to spend time alone without the children about, and start spending time together – this was so successful that they commented they were both happier now than in years.
- Once parents were in better place, and both fully committed to wanting to rebuild their family, we moved to strategies to use in the home with the

children. The children were involved in all of these discussions, and could comment on how they wanted things to be, and how they thought they could help to make things work better.

- 'Compromise' became the key word in the household, and strategies put in place regarding bedrooms, jobs around the home, and out of school activities for the children.
- Family outings were organised every other week – an activity that every family member contributes suggestions to, and agrees on the chosen activity.

#### Outcome:

The 15 week intervention has enabled the family to communicate with each other effectively. This has opened up conversation that has benefitted everyone in the family.

The comments from the family, in a personal letter to the key worker are:

"we can now compromise and work together .. in the past there have been arguments, friction, and frustration - not just for me but for the kids and my partner. The support helped us to take small steps together and now we are so much happier."

The family didn't recognise their own strengths and only focussed on their negative behaviour. It took an outside mediator to help the family realise that this was a recoverable situation, and through guided discussion and understanding they learned to believe in this and themselves as a family unit.

The children at high school are now both happy, active – going to out of school activities, have learned about responsibility in the home, and their attendance at school has improved.