

Difficult Conversations:

The Role of Mediation in Assisting People with Dementia & their Families

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What is Mediation?

Mediation is a process in which an impartial and independent third party facilitates communication, negotiation and promotes voluntary decision making by the parties to assist them to reach a mutually acceptable solution

(Mediator's Institute of Ireland MII)



Development of the Pilot Elder Mediation Project

- Partnership between The Alzheimer Society of Ireland and Mediation Northside
- Plans commenced in early 2009 with a steering group established
- Organised Elder Mediation World Summit and Symposium in June 2009
- Trained 7 existing volunteer mediators – September 2009
- Role out of pilot project in 2010 (with no additional funding)



Mediation Northside



mediation
northside





At the Elder Mediation International Summit and Symposium, Dublin June 2009

Maurice O'Connell – CEO The Alzheimer Society of Ireland
 Judy McCann Beranger – Elder Mediation International Network
 Colin Daly – Managing Solicitor Northside Community Law Centre



Rationale for the Pilot Project

- Older people and their families face difficult decisions as they age
- Families often feel burdened by responsibility and by conflicts regarding differing views of care plans
- Services consistently report family conflict is a major source of stress for carers and has a huge negative impact on the quality of life of the person with dementia
- Mediators have the necessary experience and knowledge to determine the most effective approach for the family to move forward



Training for the Volunteer Mediators

54 hours of training completed by 7 volunteer mediators covering topics such as:

- Introduction to Dementia
- Understanding Perspectives – the person with dementia and the family
- Communication and the Person with Dementia
- Advocacy
- Power Balancing
- Ethical Issues
- Grief and Loss
- Elder Abuse
- Community Support Services
- Legal Issues



Our Team of Volunteer Mediators



Our Team of Volunteer Mediators



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How did the Elder Mediation Service work?

- Referrals were open to families living with dementia and a limited number where dementia was not the issue
- Most of the referrals came from the ASI through advertising the pilot locally amongst our services
- A screening panel met regularly to assess the appropriateness of new referrals and review existing cases
- Mediation Northside managed the pre mediation phase and set up the mediations
- Steering group meet regularly to discuss the issues arising out of the pilot

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Referrals to the Service

- Total of 11 referrals/enquiries to the service
- Dementia was involved in all but one referral
- Advocacy Officer involved in 2 of the cases
- 4 cases went through to full mediation
- 4 cases – a significant amount of time was spent in pre mediation but did not progress beyond this stage
- 6 people availed of conflict coaching

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Unique Features of the Mediation Service

DEMENTIA
RIGHTS
making your voice heard

Advocacy - where appropriate, cases were referred to the Dementia Rights Advocacy Service to offer support to the person with dementia throughout the mediation process

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Link between Mediation & Advocacy

- We wanted to promote the voice of the person with dementia throughout the mediation process
- All cases involved in the mediation services were referred to the advocacy service
- In 2 cases, the advocate supported the person with person to ensure they was represented throughout the mediation process
- The advocates role meant that the views and wishes of the person with dementia were expressed where they may previously have gone unsaid



Unique Features of the Mediation Service



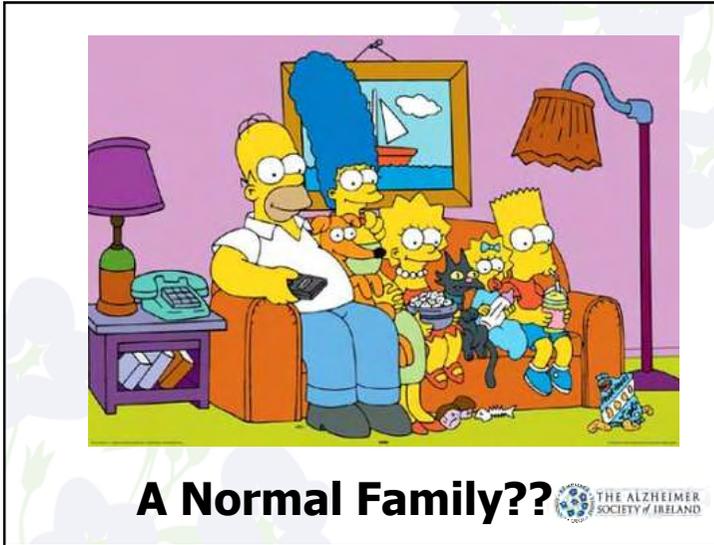
Conflict Coaching - offered to all family members to help them manage the disagreement more effectively



Role of Conflict Coaching

- Conflict coaching was offered to all families who contacted the service
- In some cases it was not possible to bring the family to mediation. However, we offered the family conflict coaching to help them manage the disagreement more effectively
- Conflict coaching is a structured process that helps people on a one to one basis, to develop or enhance their skills, knowledge and competencies, to effectively engage in and manage interpersonal conflict

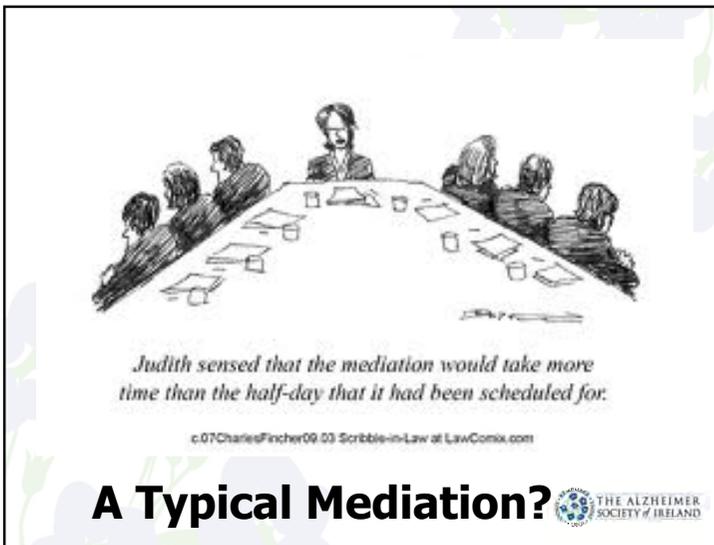




Issues that Have Arisen

- Families not in agreement about their loved ones care
- Grief, denial and family dynamics all play a strong role
- Intergenerational conflict
- People struggle with care planning decisions that need to be made
- Communication has completely broken down
- Legal and financial issues





Benefits of Elder Mediation

- Mediation has helped to repair some damaged sibling relationships
- Encourages uninvolved family members to become involved again
- Provided a safe environment for people to focus their energy in reaching solutions to their disputes
- Promoted communication and cooperation
- Introduced families to greater supports
- Allowed people to take control of their decisions and actions



Challenges faced by the Pilot



Dementia Specific Challenges

- In early-stage dementia, it is good practice or acceptable for the person with dementia to be involved in the mediation if the mediator believes the individual has good decision-making ability with only occasional lapses
 - In later stage dementia, it is not appropriate for the person to be involved directly with the mediation. However, they could be supported by an advocate.
- The Alzheimer Society of Ireland logo is located in the bottom right corner of the slide.

Evaluation of the Pilot Project



Themes from the Pilot Project

- The complex dynamics of family conflict & the impact of dementia poses many challenges for mediation;
 - Mediation raises ethical questions around the involvement or lack of involvement of the person with dementia;
 - The benefits of partnership between diverse organizations to develop innovative services;
 - Sustainability, efficiency and the most appropriate model of mediation are all important questions that need to be raised in order to meet the needs of those involved
- The Alzheimer Society of Ireland logo is located in the bottom right corner of the slide.

Recommendations

Mediation
Training
Empowerment
Service Development
Influencing



Thank You! For More Information

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