

Edinburgh Homelessness Prevention Service
Mediation



Information for:

- ✓ People who might be at risk of becoming homeless whether they are a tenant or a home owner;
- ✓ Landlords, Registered Social Landlords, Lettings Agents, and Lenders.

We've all been in situations where we know that, if we'd acted earlier and taken a step back from the frustration of the situation, we could have stopped something difficult from happening either to us or someone else.

At Cyrenians, we know that misunderstanding, disagreement and conflict are common causes of homelessness. This can particularly be the case between landlords and their tenants and, in the current economic climate, mortgage lenders and home owners.

That's why we have included Mediation as part of our new Homelessness Prevention Service. Our trained and experienced mediator and Personal Advisors can help you to step in early and resolve housing problems which, if they continue, might cause you or someone you know from becoming homeless.

Peter's Story	Legal Aid & Agent's Story
<p>Peter had received a notice to quit his tenancy when he contacted the Cyrenians Homelessness Prevention Service. He was expected out of his house at the end of the week. He was very anxious about a statutory notice repair that had gone on in the stair over the previous year and had got Legal Aid involved.</p> <p>The Mediator took up the case and spoke to Peter, who gave her permission to contact the Legal Aid Solicitor and the Lettings Agent. After contact was made, the mediator contacted Peter again and he chose to continue with mediation in order to clear up other matters. Peter had a lot of questions for the Agents.</p> <p>When the meeting went ahead, Peter was able to express his anger and frustration in a safe environment. Two outstanding matters around the inventory and statutory notice were addressed the following week with the Agent.</p> <p>He said to his personal advisor "If I had known this (mediation) was available I wouldn't have gone to Legal Aid".</p>	<p>Once the mediator got in touch with Legal Aid, the Solicitor immediately fed back that the notice to quit had been lifted and that they would write to Peter. The Mediator also phoned the Agents, who were concerned about Peter as he was not responding to phone calls or notes put through the door. They also had major concerns about a deeply critical letter sent to them by Peter and copied to influential people in their field.</p> <p>At the meeting the Agents were able to clarify the way in which they worked. As a large company the systems they had in place meant that people were specialists so passed on tasks to colleagues. This made sense of some of Peter's complaints and gave him a better understanding of why difficulties had arisen.</p> <p>The Agents were able to express their unhappiness about the way he had written undermined their professionalism to others. A way of working more constructively in the future was agreed and Peter's home was no longer at risk.</p>

Gail's Story	Agent's Story
<p>Gail came to CHPS because she wanted to move. A new lettings Agent was hassling her about money and the shower and washing machine were out of order. She was worried that she would be asked to leave and was convinced the landlady had gone off with her deposit so she would be unable to get another flat.</p> <p>The Mediator visited with a Personal Advisor they both listened to Gail's story. The mediator asked what Gail wanted; what she feared and what outcome she was looking for. The Mediator explained that meeting with the Agent might help reduce tension and clear up misunderstandings. The mediator's job was to keep it safe and not take sides. Gail wanted to move, she wanted her deposit back and to know why they were saying she owed them money. She agreed to the mediation.</p> <p>At their face to face mediation meeting, she explained her point of view. The agent had an opportunity to do the same. Each then responded to each other. The matter of the deposit was cleared up quickly. Gail though upset about a small debt with the agent now fully understood what it was for. After the mediation with support from her Personal Adviser she set up a plan to pay off the debt, which was cleared within a month. Gail now felt secure in her flat and is very happy to continue to live there.</p>	<p>The Agent had taken over the management of the flat from the owner and had nothing but trouble from the tenant. When they had organised repairs the firm could not gain access but were still billed. They didn't want to be caught out like this again and decided - no repairs till the call out charges had been paid. The matter was passed into the hands of the debt collector.</p> <p>The mediator telephoned the Agency to arrange a meeting. They were keen to get things sorted out but did not have much time. Gail did not usually respond to their letters or phone calls.</p> <p>The mediator knew it was important to meet everyone involved in advance to hear their perspective on the situation. A short meeting with Agency staff highlighted their interest in making important repairs on the property and having a good reputation.</p> <p>At the face to face mediation, the mediator explained that everyone would have time to speak without being interrupted and discuss all of the issues of concern. Although sometimes difficult, it would be possible to have a discussion without any abusiveness.</p> <p>The agents quickly agreed to ensure the washing machine and shower were mended as soon as the debt repayment plan was in place.</p>

Mediation through the Cyrenians Homelessness Prevention Service is free of charge. You can choose whether or not you want to take part. The process is confidential and independent.

If you are experiencing problems like the ones described here please get in touch with us. You can talk over the situation informally or make a referral to:

**Pamela Shiels, Service Administrator
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Edinburgh, EH7 5QY
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This service is provided in partnership with Edinburgh Community Mediation Service.