

## REDUCING TENSIONS IN A STAND-OFF BETWEEN WARRING GROUPS

*“Tensions immediately reduced and a situation that could have had fatal consequences was alleviated.”*

### BACKGROUND

**Tensions had escalated between two groups with a history of hostility and violence. A caller who knew both parties was worried that one of the parties was on the verge of violence and contacted Peaceful Solutions.**

### LISTENING AND LEARNING

Both parties agreed to speak with the Dialogue Road Map Facilitator independently as a first step.

The first party was extremely angry and spent the first part of the meeting threatening violence. It took time to understand the problem but using compassionate and empathic responses the Dialogue Road Map Facilitator established that he was the father of a baby and the baby's mother was now in a relationship with the other party.

He had been told by a friend of the mother that her new boyfriend was not going to allow him (the father) to see his baby. He had taken this up with the mother in a discussion which became heated and ended badly. The mother's boyfriend had jumped to her defence and threatened the father for verbally attacking his girlfriend.

The second party had been in a relationship with his girlfriend for six months. During this time he had heard her complain that her baby's father had provided no financial support and became hostile when she asked him for money. On one occasion he came home to find her in a distressed state. She said the father had been there, shouting and telling her that no one was going to stop him seeing his child. The second party decided to defend his girlfriend and went to the first party demanding he stop his aggression.

Each of the parties consulted their respective friends who fuelled the dispute by supporting their side as being right. Threats were passed by proxy and tensions were spreading. The caller felt the problem had grown disproportionately.

### ASSESSMENT

It was clear that although both parties were defending something precious (the first party his relationship with his baby and the second his girlfriend), the actual dispute was based on gossip and misinterpretation. The mother's friend had meddled, with potentially fatal consequences.

### REMEDY

**Working with the parties prior to a face-to-face meeting the Dialogue Road Map Facilitator was able to establish that the second party did not want to stop the father from seeing his baby, nor to pass comment on the issue of financial support for the baby. He was simply asking that he treat the baby's mother with respect. The first party wanted to be sure that he could see his baby.**

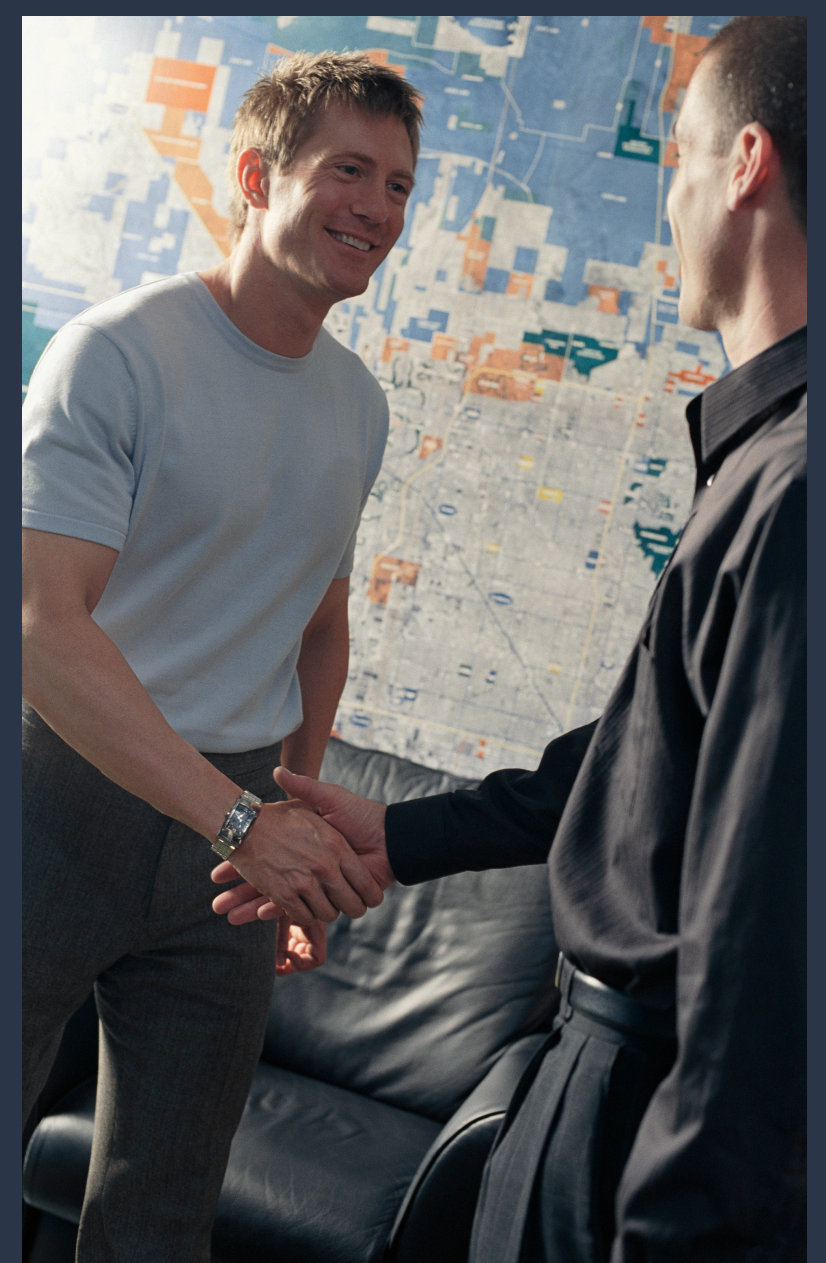
**He felt shame and embarrassment that he could not provide financially, and constantly felt the mother was holding this as a threat. It was this sense and their inability to communicate with each other that triggered the angry reactions.**

### OUTCOME

Having done so much ground work, the face-to-face meeting was relatively straightforward.

The miscommunication was cleared up and an understanding reached about the needs of each party.

Tensions immediately reduced and a situation that could have had fatal consequences was alleviated.





## PREVENTING ESCALATION IN A PRISON

*"If further disputes arise we would happily return to the Dialogue Road Map process and not let it lead to violence."*

### BACKGROUND

**Kyran\* came to Dialogue Road Map (DRM) facilitators because he was in dispute with a fellow prisoner on his wing and didn't want the situation to escalate.**

**This situation had not been going on long and the dispute was over certain language used, and a debt between Kyran and the other party, James\*.**

### LISTENING AND LEARNING

We learnt that prior to the dispute there was a friendship between Kyran and James. A tit for tat situation had developed, with a serious power imbalance due to the debt involved. Kyran just wanted his money back and to remain civil with James in the future.

James couldn't pay back the debt because he had no money and was not earning enough. He was worried the situation would lead to violence. James also mentioned to facilitators he was receiving homophobic comments from Kyran, and their friends were not helping the situation. James initially had concerns about mediation and was worried he would not be listened to by Kyran during this process.

### ASSESSMENT

The power imbalance due to the debt was evident. However it was also felt that, with the right guidance, the former friendship between James and Kyran provided common ground for the dispute to be resolved. This would require a number of one-to-one sessions with each party in a safe environment before bringing them into the same room. We felt the best approach in mediation was to focus on an agreement between James and Kyran regarding the debt before working on the friendship.

### OUTCOME

Both parties felt towards the end of three joint sessions that they were heard and had a better understanding of how each other felt.

The mediation came to an end when James agreed to a payment plan option from Kyran to repay the debt slowly. They both also agreed that if any further disagreements or disputes were to arise they would both happily return to the mediation process with DRM facilitators and not take the conflict elsewhere within the prison or let it lead to violent behaviour.

### REMEDY

**We explained the mediation process and the steps needed in order to ensure safety and fairness throughout. We had two one-to ones individually with James and Kyran focusing on their respective needs in this dispute, always checking in at the end of a session to ensure that what was discussed with DRM facilitators was not taken back out onto the wing, and what they should do if they felt unsafe or that things were going to escalate. Both James and Kyran eventually agreed to a joint mediation process.**

**Before each joint session we asked James and Kyran to come at different times so we could have five to ten minutes to make sure they were ready before putting them in a room together. We agreed to having as many sessions as it took to resolve the dispute, ensuring James and Kyran would never take this conflict elsewhere in the prison. At the beginning of each session James and Kyran were both given uninterrupted time to speak to a facilitator so the other participant could hear clearly how they felt. Both James and Kyran expressed feelings of being offended by one another and agreed they were both in the wrong. We focused on their common ground of needing some space from each other and not enticing other friends to get involved.**

**The need for understanding from James was strong, and Kyran needed respect in regards to the debt and the friends around them, both of which we worked on together.**

\*Names have been changed and do not relate to any person/s of the same name

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## SETTLING A BUSINESS DISPUTE THROUGH PRINCIPLED NEGOTIATION

*“Both sides accepted some responsibility for the extra costs.  
Most importantly, the relationship was intact for the future.”*

### BACKGROUND

**Able Advertising\* commissioned Perfect Printing\* to print a high quality brochure for a blue chip client. Perfect Printing was a regular and trusted supplier who had consistently delivered competitively priced printing at short notice. The production manager from Able Advertising briefed the printer rep that this brochure had to be of a higher quality than the usual standard and that the delivery date was crucial. The value of the order was £35,000. When the brochure came off the press the production manager did not like the quality and ordered the brochures to be re-printed.**

**The new printing was acceptable, the brochures were delivered to the client and everyone was happy.**

**When Perfect Printing sent their invoice, they charged the original £35,000 plus £19,000 for re-printing. Able Advertising was furious since they had clearly stated that the quality had to be higher than usual. They argued that the printer hadn't advised them of any extra costs at the time and refused to pay the £19,000. Perfect Printing argued that the quality was higher and down to personal preference, and that they could easily get an expert witness to prove the printing was to an acceptable industry standard. Furthermore, they argued that they carried out the instruction to reprint despite this messing with their production schedule given the importance of delivering this brochure on time. Perfect Printing chased payment and threatened court proceedings through their lawyer when Able Advertising refused to pay. Able Advertising took advice and was told about mediation as an option.**

**They proposed this to Perfect Printing who accepted. The case was referred to Peaceful Solutions.**

### ASSESSMENT

Both parties were aware of the high cost of litigation in terms of time and money and, although they wanted to settle, could not find an acceptable solution.

The underlying problem was that the production manager and the rep had become locked into a personal dispute about what was acceptable as high quality. With both of them having to report to their respective managers and not wanting to be responsible for the extra costs incurred, it was easier to blame the other.

### REMEDY

**The Dialogue Road Map (DRM) enabled both sides to feel heard. Both parties accepted some responsibility for the extra costs involved in reprinting. They were able to celebrate that the brochures had been delivered on time and well received by the client.**

### OUTCOME

Most importantly, the relationship was intact for the future. Based on the promise of future work they agreed to split the extra costs 60/40. Able Advertising paid 40%.

Mediation was a logical approach to this case. Businesses often find themselves in disputes which ruin relationships with clients or suppliers. An independent Dialogue Road Map facilitator can ensure that a settlement is reached with no loss of face on either side.

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## MEDIATING BETWEEN TEENAGE BOYS IN A POSTCODE CONFLICT

*“They agreed to leave all postcode wars at the gates  
and to ensure all their friends were informed”.*

### BACKGROUND

***Peaceful Solutions intervened in a youth conflict between excluded boys to assist with their return to school. The head teacher requested support with ‘back to school’ interviews with Year 11 boys who had been excluded for fighting. We agreed to invite the boys for Dialogue Road Map (DRM) mediation on a voluntary basis and to extend the invitation to their parents.***

***There had been two separate, unconnected fights, therefore two separate mediations were required. The boys and their parents all agreed to participate. On the day a private room was allocated in the school building and the mediations were run in succession. Two DRM facilitators were present.***

### FIRST MEDIATION

At first the two boys were detached and silent. The Dialogue Road Map facilitators did not put pressure on them to talk, instead engaging with the parents. The parents were from different religions, cultures and backgrounds. Dialogue soon revealed their common concerns for their sons’ futures and frustration at the futility of postcode battles being fought on the streets between youths.

Hearing their parents speak caused a noticeable energy shift between the boys. Seeing their parents’ engagement had a positive effect and one of the boys told the other that he liked him and didn’t have a problem with him but got mad when he heard him ‘diss’ his ‘endz’.

Building on this the Dialogue Road Map facilitators encouraged the other boy to respond and he apologised for his behaviour. The meeting concluded with all parties agreeing to move on from the postcode war and allow friendship to reign whilst in school.

### SECOND MEDIATION

The boys were keen to put their points across and default to blaming the other. By remaining empathetic the facilitators were able to help each boy take responsibility for his part in the fight. The parents were fully engaged in and supportive of the process. At one point the parents tried to insist that the boys shake hands. The facilitators explained that they should only do this if they felt fully able to and should not feel under pressure to ‘perform’. It became clear the reluctance was about who made the first move.

The parents were from diverse cultures but had in common a long-term residency in the area. The Dialogue Road Map facilitators took the pressure off the boys while they spoke with the parents, who expressed true commitment to the community and living in peace.

The mediators then checked in with the boys who said they were ready to shake hands. The mediators brokered the handshake so that they both stood up and came forward at the same time. They agreed to leave all postcode wars at the gates and to ensure that all their friends were informed. They would tell everyone that the matter was over and not up for discussion.

### OUTCOME

The staff immediately reported a change in the boys’ behaviour towards each other and subsequent check-ins have shown the process to have been successful. Six months had elapsed at the last check-in and the agreements have held. The school has decided to adopt restorative processes and Peaceful Solutions is embarking on a staff, student and parent consultation.

The parents’ participation facilitated the collaborative, non-judgmental process and had a deep, lasting effect.



## OVERCOMING INNER DEMONS, MAKING A CHANGE

*"The client has been able to gain stability in his life and a real sense of focus, purpose and composure".*

### BACKGROUND

**Client came through Peaceful Solutions founder Maria, who had supported Andy\* for some years as he worked to get back on his feet financially after years of drug and alcohol abuse which had led to serious debt problems. Andy is a gifted artist and works as a graphic designer in the advertising industry.**

**He has struggled to re-establish his art since coming off drugs and continues to work in advertising, although he finds the advertising world increasingly at odds with his value system. He suffers from low self-esteem and lack of confidence and has a strong drive to succeed, as well as fear of 'failure' when measured against his high standards of what constitutes 'success'. As a child Andy was a gifted sportsman, pushed by parents and abused by coaching staff.**

**Support offered was for three Dialogue Road Map (DRM) facilitators to work with him, with the initial brief to offer DRM listening and lots of empathy. 'Contract' with the client was that support would cease if he started using again. With a couple of relapses, Andy remained clean for the entire support period.**

### LISTENING AND LEARNING

The DRM facilitators found that Andy could initially talk at length without pause; whatever his current story was in each session it was very present for him. From the start he confirmed feeling heard and understood; he found the DRM listening and empathy helpful, and feedback and support were introduced later. Over time he became more comfortable with exploring the feelings and needs associated with his story, the sense of lurching from crisis to crisis lessened, and there was more dialogue about what progress and change looked like both in the past and in the future.

Specific references to his childhood traumas only surfaced occasionally during our sessions, but crises in his life 'sent him back' to a sense of failure and judgement familiar when he gave up sport and when he hit rock bottom financially. We talked extensively about blocks to returning to making, exhibiting and selling art. There was a strong underlying need to be creative again.

### ASSESSMENT

Facilitators recommended two sessions a week initially, moving to one session a week and less frequent in the final three to four months. The DRM facilitators began by taking it in turns to listen within a single session and as relationships were established took turns to lead, a session at a time. All three facilitators were present for all sessions.

Andy was used to DRM listening having had sessions before, and was open and honest about what was present for him and whether feelings and needs that we identified had 'landed for him' and were useful. As the trust between the DRM Facilitators and Andy strengthened, feedback was introduced which helped Andy to see what progress he had made towards meeting his immediate financial and other 'security' needs, and to work on strategies for planning and implementing changes.

### OUTCOME

The client has been able to gain stability in his life and a real sense of focus, purpose, and composure. He has met his need for connection by finding a partner and is meeting his needs for financial security through a full-time job.

He is also managing to negotiate relationships in the workplace more successfully without running away from difficult situations.

He can envision a time in the future where he will be able to leave advertising and have a fulfilling life as an artist, although he still becomes frustrated when he achieves a major milestone and finds he's not 'fixed' but that there is still work to do!

### REMEDY

**We learnt that feedback and support sessions were helpful in providing him with a safe space to not only vent his frustrations, but also to unpack his immediate and deeper needs and develop successful strategies for meeting them. Recovery times following crises shortened dramatically during the period. The DRM Facilitators have worked with this client for just over a year and are now working through a process of ending this phase of support.**

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