



07/08

# Tower Hamlets Mediation Service

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ Annual Report 2007/2008

# Acknowledgements and Special Thanks

## List of Mediators April 2007 – March 2008

Abdul Jalil, Adele Ratenbury, Angela Broome, Anita Sagnia, Alan Turner (Jyoti), Alicia Williams, Alvin Attry, Amina, Asma Ahmed, Aziz Rahman, Bertie, Catherine, David Western, Dharma Bandu, Emily Knox, Elas Miah, Eva Buckholt, Farhana Choudhury, Frida Anderson, Hannah Pennock, Helena Duong, Howard Grange, Hussain Ibrahim, Jo Galbraith, Jo Whitaker, Jil Cove, Juan Manuel, Kamna Muralidharam, Kalpna Patel, Kef Chowdhury, Layla Aktar, Linda Cremin, Lucky Aktar, Maria Moralies, Maria Razak, Marilyn Lancer, Michelle Cheng, Monica Pellegrini, Mostak Ahmed, Nozrul Choudhury Islam, Nuria Khatun, Nurul Ali, Ray Eden, Richard Reindorp, Samuel Leon, Sara Dilmamode, Sarah Fox, Sayra Bibi, Shopna Rahman, Shahida Ali, Stephen Davids, Stephen King, Tim Earney, Wais Mahdi Ali

## Also other volunteers who gave us their time and energy

Ray Eden (resident DJ and general support), Clancy Hood (IT support), Shopna Rahman (general office administrative support), Ruzina Ahad (general office administrative support), Jude Boardman (life coaching skills), Victoria and Nehar (ELBA), The Great Girl Team from Citigroup (for all the hard work in the garden and for decorating our training hall)

## MC Members

Julien Foster (chair), Richard Reindorp (treasurer), Emily Knox (secretary), Susette Barry, Jil Cove, Njemileh Minkah, Dr Kalam, Jyoti Alan Turner, Farhana Choudhury, Deen Rahman, Catherine Guelbert, Jo Eden

## Employees

Irene Grindell (director), Sue Fox (community mediation co-ordinator), Minaz Rahman (neighbour caseworker and homeless caseworker), Jo Flanders (youth and conflict co-ordinator, to June 2007), Stephen Davids (youth and conflict co-ordinator, August 2007 to April 2008), Hanna Bibi (youth and conflict outreach and development worker; community mediation support worker); Abdul Jalil (support worker for youth and conflict project, October 2007 to December 2007), Foisol Uddin (support worker for youth and conflict project, January 2007 to July 2008); Anjumanara Hussain (office manager, June 2007 to February 2008), Nora Ann McCarthy (temporary administrative support, December 2007)

## Contractors

Sallie Greenhalgh (bookkeeper), Jude Boardman (management support)

## List of Interpreters

Amina Hirsi Somali, Deen Rahman Bengali, Kinsey Abdullah Somali, Onye Lo, Michelle Cheng, Shajeda Hussain Bengali, Shopna Rahman, Ruzina Ahad



# Contents

- Director's report
- Chair's report
- Community mediation co-ordinator's report
- Neighbour review
- Citigroup's team building day at THMS
- Youth and conflict project report
- Homeless mediation caseworker's report
- Financial statement

© Tower Hamlets Mediation Service 2008

Tower Hamlets Mediation Service  
The Toby Club  
Vawdrey Close  
LONDON  
E1 4UA

Telephone: 020 7702 8305  
Fax: 020 7702 8303  
Email: [admin@thms.org.uk](mailto:admin@thms.org.uk)

Company No. 3217046  
Charity No. 1060643

Layout and printing by Upstream Ltd  
[www.upstream.coop](http://www.upstream.coop)

## Funders

London Borough of Tower Hamlets  
The Tudor Trust  
Comic Relief  
Poplar Harca Housing Association  
Gateway Housing Association  
(formerly Bethnal Green and Victoria Park  
Housing Association)  
Toynbee Homes  
Toynbee Island Homes  
Tower Hamlets Community Housing  
Old Ford Housing  
East End Homes



## Director's report - Irene Grindell

A very busy year for THMS with lots happening and lots of changes. We came to the end of the Supporting People Contract at the end of March and look forward to working with Tower Hamlets Homes, the new managing agents for the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH). More staff changes and the very sad loss of the Youth and Conflict Project which came to an end in March 2008.

One of the joys of working at THMS had been the interaction with young people always so full of beans. They have a different perspective on life and helped me feel younger being around them. Due to problems with funding and partnerships we were unable to continue with the project but hope to assist those organisations working with the amazing youth of Tower Hamlets. THMS was asked to run an intergenerational project on a neighbouring estate for the Living Safely Partnership with LBTH which began in November 2007, on the back of the success of the Cleveland Project in 2006.

The Management Committee grew in numbers and strength this year. We now have 13 members: Jo Eden, née Flanders, formerly Y&C Co-ordinator, joined the board with Catherine Guelbert and Deen Rahman. Julien Foster remained as chair assisted by Emily Knox as secretary and Richard Reindorp as treasurer. Well done for a hard year's work and for your efforts and commitment. Jil Cove gave wonderful support throughout the year, carrying out staff appraisals and probationary meetings. Thank you all though individually as

you all play a vital role in the development of THMS.

Welcome aboard all our lovely new Volunteers. We had 2 Foundation trainings this year as we were surprised by the number of men who completed the first one leaving us in an unprecedented position of having more male mediators than females. As it is our practice to send out mixed pairs we had to run a second training to even things up! Both trainings were very well attended and appreciated by the Volunteer mediators. Feedback received was very encouraging. We strive towards excellence and we feel proud of the training we offer our volunteers who carry out most of the visits and face to face meetings. When we meet the potential mediators we are constantly amazed at the skills and expertise they bring to THMS. We know that we learn from you as much as you learn from us. It is always a two way street. This year we signed up over 30 volunteers, all special people willing to give of their time and skills.

We talk of the THMS Egg on the training. The idea is THMS provide a clear structure with process and principles. The yolk of the egg and the white: well that is you, my lovely volunteers - the values, confidence and strength that each of you brings to share with THMS. Without that the mediation process would be much weaker. You add strength to the process.

All in all a very busy and demanding year.



## Chair's report - **Julien Foster**

This is my final Annual Report. I step down after four rewarding years as Chair and more years on the Management Committee. I am delighted that I leave THMS in positive shape with a lease and funding for our work recently secured from Tower Hamlets Council. The next annual report will cover my final months as Chair...but by the time it is published, there will be a new Chair in place. This report gives me the opportunity to wish my successor and the organisation well for the future.

Now, feeling a little like an Oscar winner, I begin a long list of thanks – in alphabetical order because you are all vital. My gratitude and that of the entire organisation goes to our various funders who give us the financial resources allowing us to carry out our work in the community. Thank you to all my colleagues on the management committee. Constitutionally, I am merely a first among equals; and I could not have asked for greater support or wiser counsel during the year. Irene Grindell has led her team of staff through ever-changing waters during the year and I thank her and those members of staff who have served the organisation dedicatedly. Our funders, our management committee and our staff keep the organisation alive. But finally, I pay tribute to our volunteers who are the sparks giving this organisation life itself. Thank you all and in this, my final report, I include members of THMS past and present. What is the collective noun for mediators, I wonder? A resolution?



As many of you know, I practise as a barrister in family law. Despite Irene's constant encouragement, I have never qualified as a mediator. Nevertheless, I find on a daily basis that basic principles of mediation which I have picked up over the years come in very handy: to listen; to learn; to try to identify a win-win solution. Of course, there are times when it proves necessary to do things which go against the grain: to judge; to advise; to criticise. And, if agreement cannot be reached then at the rawest level, I try to win and to cause the other party to lose. What sometimes frustrates me is that although mediation is a buzz word in the field of family law, the concept is too often misunderstood by people I meet. On one occasion, I saw in a family court something described as mediation which was so far from my understanding of the word that the principle of "trust the trainer" went out of the window. I realised it had all gone wrong when my client, who was unwilling to reach agreement, was issued with naked threats by the so-called mediator. What a wasted opportunity that was. The almost inevitable consequence was that my client became even more defensive leading to yet more litigation.

But I am optimistic about the future for mediation as a way of resolving disputes. What I know is that it can provide opportunities which traditional forms of dispute resolution - from the duel to court proceedings - simply cannot. As I say goodbye to THMS, I encourage all of you who read this report to spread the word.





## Sue Fox, Community mediation co-ordinator poses a question

Working for THMS as co-coordinator this past year has been both challenging and rewarding. As usual the energy and enthusiasm of the volunteers has kept THMS on top of its game. This leads me on to a question I continue to ask myself about the nature of mediators and why we do it.

What does it mean to be a mediator? What makes us so special? Why do we want to help others in their time of conflict? I think that it takes a special kind of person who will put themselves into the types of situations that we do as community mediators. What do we get out of it? I don't believe that it is an entirely selfless act and this is my question. I can only obviously speak for myself here. What do I get? Well I do know that if the mediation session goes well I do feel a real sense of goodness, that there is something bigger than me. Well maybe I am scoring up brownie points but I do not think it is that. I take away a sense of perspective on my own life and the bigger picture. I am constantly reflecting and putting together the pieces. I suppose I am looking for a greater sense of meaning in this world that has so much suffering and conflict. I so want to make a difference.

Now how it is for you may be completely different but I think that as mediators we all possess those wonderful skills that make us compassionate and real human beings. As Marshall Rosenberg says 'we connect with what's alive in us and others to see the real beauty.'

I also believe that there is goodness and beauty in all of us and mediation connects us to it. One of the many poems I love reminds me of the strength of positive thinking, a must have when dealing with other people's conflicts and indeed our own.

*If  
If you think you are beaten, you  
are*

*If you think you dare not, you  
don't*

*If you'd like to win, but think  
you can't it is almost certain  
you won't.*

*If you think you'll lose, you've  
lost For out of the world we  
find*

*Success begins with a fellow's  
will- it's all in the state of mind.*

*If you think you are outclassed,  
you are*

*You have got to think high to rise  
You have got to be sure of yourself  
before you can ever win a prize.*

*Life's battles don't always go to the  
stronger or faster man*

*But sooner or later the man who wins  
is the one who Thinks he can.*

*Anonymous*



## Neighbour review – Sue Fox

Another exciting year for THMS, lots of referrals and new interest in community mediation. Since I have now been working for THMS for three years I have a good feel for the pattern of neighbour complaints. I have noticed a change in the type of complaint referred to us, problems with parquet flooring being top of the list. With the demise of carpet the normal domestic noise from the upstairs neighbour is now exacerbated. With fewer close knit communities where people got to know their neighbour over garden fences etc., communication, or the lack of it, adds to the problem.

This year I have personally mediated on 25 neighbour cases, working with new and experienced mediators, helping people talk to their neighbour with a view to resolving conflict. I have held 8 Face to Face meetings of which all bar one was a success.

As part of the process we contact all our clients two weeks after their case is closed for feedback on their experience of mediation. We use this information to improve the service we offer. It also impacts on the THMS training for volunteer mediators as we can introduce new aspects or expand on an area that has been brought to our attention by a party.

Some of the feedback we have received from the parties once their case has closed is included below.

*“I found both mediators very good and I felt much better just by telling them my problem. They listened really good” Party 2 Jan 2007*

*“Mrs. .... Thought the service is excellent and the mediators were brilliant and she will recommend to everyone, it works even without a Face to Face” Party 2 May 2007*

*“I think people should use this service, I can see how it works. It’s just a shame my neighbour did not use this opportunity” Party 1 September 06*

*“The situation is the same but I feel much calmer and supported by the listening and understanding of the mediators, which is much better” Party 1 October 2007*

*“The two girls that visited me were absolutely wonderful and helpful” Party 1 May 2006*

*“I am very happy with the situation, the situation is so much better”*

So, with all that goodness in mind I am aware that there are obvious many different reasons as to ‘why we do it’ as there are many forms of mediation itself. To be a volunteer community mediator is special. It does differ from commercial, family, divorce etc and I think our motives behind it are usually and pleasingly altruistic.

A big big thank you to all our volunteers, past present and future who do indeed make this planet a bit nicer to be on.

## Citigroup's team-building day at THMS

THMS were delighted to accept an offer from East London Business Alliance (ELBA) during the summer. ELBA were trying to provide team building exercises for their partners in the city and the Isle of Dogs. We were approached and asked did we have a project that needed a large bunch of volunteers. YES indeed we had.

15 wonderful young and energetic ladies from Citi Group turned up on a hot summer's day to transform our weed-ridden garden into a beautiful oasis of peace and tranquillity. They also painted our very dingy training room from a dirty pink to a lovely neutral colour. Thanks to Travis Perkins in Bethnal Green for all the discounts and Crown paint who donated 6 litres of new paint. It was so uplifting for the staff and we really enjoyed holding some of our meetings outside on our new garden furniture!







## THMS Youth and Conflict Project 2007-2008 – **Hanna Bibi**

This year was a sad year for the wonderful Y&C project, as we ran out of funding at the end of the financial year. We were all saddened at its demise but myself in particular. It was an amazing project with fantastic potential but we ran into problems with outreach work and not having the right contacts to support our work out on the streets.

### **Key objectives and achievements for the Youth and Conflict Project**

#### **Key Objectives**

- Increase awareness of the project and build on our current work with partner agencies.
- Deliver conflict awareness training programmes to young people.
- Provide Large Group Facilitation (LGF) service to agencies and organizations involved with young people.

#### **Key achievements over the year**

Youth and Conflict project embarked on a new journey this year. We were awarded a fund of £29,000 to deliver an intergenerational project on the Bancroft Estate London E1 which evolved out of the success of the work done by THMS on the Cleveland Estate in 2006. The Project



recruited 3 new members of staff, Stephen Davids (Youth & Conflict Facilitator), Abdul Jilale (Project worker) & Foizul Uddin over the period of one year to help deliver the new project.

The project built new relationships with young people, residents, youth workers, housing officers, stakeholders and partner agencies including: the Police Safer Neighbourhood Team; the Local Area Partnership; the London Borough of Tower Hamlets anti-social behaviour case investigator; the local housing office; the Racial Hatred Inter Agency Forum; Tower Hamlets Youth Service; the Rapid Response Team; Magic Me; and Age Concern.

### **Key findings from the project were:**

There were at least 4 separate groups of young people on the Bancroft Estate each with different issues and needs.

- Major territorial issues on the Bancroft Estate and the surrounding areas.
- Almost 90% of residents living on the estate were identified as either leaseholders or freeholders which was a dominant factor for most of the residents' reluctance to be involved in the project.
- Lack of support to the Estate and to the project from potential partners is problematic and has a long standing effect.

The Youth and Conflict project delivered training to organisations across the borough, including Parents Advice Centre, Swanlea School, Arbour Youth Centre and Tolerance and Diversity. This included a unique piece of training for Tower Hamlets College. Students identified as 'disadvantaged and low achievers' were chosen by the College to partake in Conflict Awareness and Conflict Resolution Training. The training was very successful and greatly welcomed by the College which resulted in THMS being invited to deliver more training sessions to Tower Hamlets College Sixth Formers.

Our young people from Cleveland and Resolve project passed their OCN on conflict resolution and were given their certificates at a certificate evening in Tower Hamlets College. This event was well attended by other youth services from the borough.

THMS was part of an organising team from Peer Work Consortium which held a peer work open day for all young people in Tower Hamlets. This was well attended with over 300 young people and organisations from across the borough. The open day gave a chance for young people to network and find out information on youth work and other related work that is taking place in the borough.



## Homeless mediation caseworker's report - **Minaz Rahman**

Tower Hamlets Mediation Service continued to work with Tower Hamlets Homeless and Housing Advice Services throughout the year. Our Contract manager Leighton Davis is a joy to work with and very supportive of the work we do.

The concept of homeless mediation is a way of working towards the prevention of homelessness. The majority of our cases involve the breakdown of communication between parents and their adult-children, which leads to stressful living conditions and can result in homelessness. I manage the casework and carry out all the visits so I have a deep understanding of the process by now and have been able to support the team well whilst providing a strong service to the clients involved.

This type of mediation is particularly difficult as we are often dealing with

many complex issues and intense feelings however we strive to work with the parties to deal with some of the issues.

Family conflict can often be overwhelming and the parties need support and empathy from the mediator which we excel at.

We have delivered 2 training sessions in understanding conflict and conflict resolution to the Homeless and Housing Advice team; one of these sessions included exercises to assist the staff to deal with difficult behaviour and communicating in stressful situations. The staff enjoyed the training and felt that they got a good understanding of the basics.

We received 22 referrals from 1st April 2007 to 31st March 2008. We hope to continue a successful partnership with the unit in the coming year.







## Statement of financial activities including income and expenditure account

|  | Unrestricted<br>funds (£) | Restricted<br>funds (£) | Total<br>2008 (£) | Total<br>2007 (£) |
|--|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Incoming resources</b>                        |                           |                         |                   |                   |
| Incoming resources from generated funds          |                           |                         |                   |                   |
| Voluntary income                                 | 16,000                    | —                       | 16,000            | 16,000            |
| Investment income                                | 1,533                     | —                       | 1,533             | 720               |
| Incoming resources from charitable activities    | 131,814                   | 70,338                  | 202,152           | 165,676           |
| Other incoming resources                         | 150                       | —                       | 150               | 250               |
| <b>Total incoming resources</b>                  | <u>149,497</u>            | <u>70,338</u>           | <u>219,835</u>    | <u>182,646</u>    |
| <b>Resources expended</b>                        |                           |                         |                   |                   |
| <b>Charitable expenditure</b>                    |                           |                         |                   |                   |
| Charitable activities                            | 126,505                   | 45,541                  | 172,046           | 168,738           |
| Governance costs                                 | 9,648                     | —                       | 9,648             | 11,221            |
| <b>Total resources expended</b>                  | <u>136,153</u>            | <u>45,541</u>           | <u>181,694</u>    | <u>179,959</u>    |
| Net incoming resources before before transfers   | 13,344                    | 24,797                  | 38,141            | 2,687             |
| Transfers between funds                          | —                         | —                       | —                 | —                 |
| <b>Net movement in funds</b>                     | <u>13,344</u>             | <u>24,797</u>           | <u>38,141</u>     | <u>2,687</u>      |
| Balances brought forward at 1 April 2007         | 103,745                   | —                       | 103,745           | 101,058           |
| <b>Balances carried forward at 31 March 2008</b> | <u>117,089</u>            | <u>24,797</u>           | <u>141,886</u>    | <u>103,745</u>    |



## Balance sheet

|                                       | 2008            |                | 2007            |                |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
|                                       | £               | £              | £               | £              |
| <b>Fixed assets</b>                   |                 |                |                 |                |
| Tangible assets                       |                 | 147            |                 | 295            |
| <b>Current assets</b>                 |                 |                |                 |                |
| Debtors                               | 8,677           |                | 22,915          |                |
| Cash at bank and in hand              | 153,840         |                | 92,444          |                |
|                                       | <u>162,517</u>  |                | <u>115,359</u>  |                |
| Creditors:                            |                 |                |                 |                |
| Amounts falling due within one year   | <u>(20,778)</u> |                | <u>(11,909)</u> |                |
| Net current assets                    |                 | <u>141,739</u> |                 | <u>103,450</u> |
| Total assets less current liabilities |                 | <u>141,886</u> |                 | <u>103,745</u> |
| Income funds                          |                 |                |                 |                |
| Restricted funds                      |                 | 24,797         |                 | —              |
| Unrestricted funds:                   |                 |                |                 |                |
| Designated funds                      | 90,994          |                | 90,275          |                |
| Other charitable funds                | <u>26,095</u>   |                | <u>13,470</u>   |                |
|                                       |                 | <u>117,089</u> |                 | <u>103,745</u> |
|                                       |                 | <u>141,886</u> |                 | <u>103,745</u> |



## Mission statement

Tower Hamlets Mediation Service helps to resolve conflicts between neighbours, youths, and communities. As trained mediators we listen with care and consideration to what is happening to the person involved. We help people in conflict to understand and communicate with each other, and to find positive ways for a peaceful situation.