



Portsmouth Mediation Service **Annual Report 2020/21**



Trustees' Report year ending March 2021

Trustees' Report year ending March 2021

The Trustees present their report and accounts for the year ending 31st March 2021.

Structure Governance and Management

The charity is a company limited by guarantee.

The Trustees, who are also the directors for the purpose of company law and who served during the year were:

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Fiona Armstrong | (appointed June 2015) |
| Philip Winchester | (appointed December 2018) |
| Alan Davis | (appointed November 2019) |
| Tom Shaw | (appointed November 2020) |
| Jenni Wessels | (resigned November 2020) |
| Nicholas Wells | (resigned March 2021) |



Phil Winchester (left) welcomes our newest Trustee Tom Shaw

Trustees are recruited from interested individuals, volunteer mediators and representatives of the community.

None of the trustees has any beneficial interest in the company. All the trustees are members of the company and guarantee to contribute a sum not exceeding £10 for payment of the company's debts and liabilities in the event of winding up.

The trustees have paid due regard to guidance issued by the Charity Commission in deciding what activities the charity should undertake.

The charity is managed by the trustees who may exercise all the powers of the charity. For the past year, the day-to-day operation of the charity has been carried out by the Service Manager who reports to the trustees. All policy and strategy are decided by the trustees sitting as a group on a regular basis.

The Portsmouth Mediation Service (PMS) operates for the benefit of residents in Portsmouth and for the benefit of social housing residents in the wider Portsmouth area. A substantial proportion of the work of PMS is with Portsmouth City Council.

The trustees have and continue to assess the major risks to which the charity is exposed and are satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate exposure to major risks.

As Chair of the Trustees, I would like to thank Jenni Wessels, a departing trustee who has been a stalwart of support to trustees, staff, and volunteers over a long period and despite relinquishing her role as a trustee, continues to be an active supporter and guide to PMS.

Public Benefit

The trustees confirm that they have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the charity's aims and in planning future activities. The trustees refer to public benefit throughout this report.

Vision

PMS aims to operate as a 'Centre of Excellence and Influence' in seeing Portsmouth established as a Restorative City.

Mission

Through a journey of assessment, mediation and restorative practice, we will partner with other envisioned people and organisations to help seek the peace and prosperity of a 'Restorative Portsmouth'.

Achievement and performance

The core work of PMS continues to be the assessment service provided to Portsmouth City Council (PCC). The start of this review period saw PMS commence a new five year contract with PCC, with the option of a two year extension. The award of this contract demonstrates the esteem with which PMS staff are held by PCC in illustrating their confidence that PMS will continue to provide an excellent service at excellent value to the city.

Impact of the pandemic

The past year has seen PMS continue to operate in a different world to that which most (if not all) of us have experienced in our lifetime. In the weeks following the initial lockdown, the volume of referrals being made to PMS did slow somewhat. This coincided with a review of how we conducted our work, with each of us developing and improving our IT skills and being introduced to new ways of communicating. Familiar words such as 'zoom' and being 'socially distanced' took on a new meaning. 'Zoom' probably being the one used the most!

Staff and volunteers at PMS quickly adapted to new ways of working and communicating and achieved great success in continuing to restoratively rebuild relationships. This was so important as the initial slowdown of referrals did not last very long.

Training

This year saw significant development in the restorative training undertaken by PMS. Shortly after lockdown restrictions were imposed, staff were due to undertake a five day training course to be delivered to Surrey Mediation Service. The training looked to be in jeopardy, however the team at PMS created a package that could be delivered remotely. A trial run was undertaken with internal volunteers and was subsequently successfully delivered to Surrey Mediation. The package has continued to be delivered and is an important source of income for the charity. This was a great example of the creativity and adaptability of the team at PMS.

A new way of working

Financial issues remain at the forefront of considerations for the trustees. Fundraising opportunities have become increasingly difficult. Financing from the public sector is limited. Costs of running PMS in recent years have continued to exceed income. Prior to the pandemic, the trustees were considering ways to reduce costs, which perversely, the covid restrictions have shown can work.

As such, from the beginning of 2021, PMS have moved from 'office' working to 'home' working. Prior to doing so, the view of all staff was obtained, and they were unanimously supportive of the change.

PMS has provided appropriate office and IT equipment to each staff member, the outlay of which was crucial for the success of home working. Initial indications are that significant savings are being made by no longer paying rent, rates, and utility bills. Whilst meetings in person were not allowed during much of this review period, the use of 'Zoom' and 'Microsoft Teams' has grown to enable contact and support amongst team members to continue.

It would be remiss of me not to thank 'Oasis Church Portsmouth' for their support as a 'landlord' over the years which has been invaluable to the work of PMS. Although we no longer work from their premises, Oasis have continued to be supportive in continuing to be our postal address and port of call when premises are required.

Summary

Special thanks go to Portsmouth City Council who continue to be a valued supporter of the work of PMS. Without their support, the delivery of services the public would be significantly more challenging.

The Trustees wish to express thanks to our service manager Steve Rolls and his dedicated team of talented staff and volunteers who make such a positive contribution to the community.

Should you be inspired to become part of our team as a volunteer or a trustee, we would be delighted to provide further information.

Phil Winchester

Chair of the Board of Trustees

On behalf of the Board of Trustees



Looking forward to Life after the Pandemic

During a PMS AGM, a couple of years ago, a very experienced and key operator in the voluntary sector remarked that PMS was providing a champagne service on a beer budget.

In last year's Annual Report, I predicted that Portsmouth Mediation Service will in a very positive way look a lot different this time next year. I don't think a year or so ago many of us thought that we would be coming out of another National Lockdown. Let's hope the gloomy predictions of a third wave caused by the latest variant prove to be unfounded. In any event PMS has emerged from this challenging year in relatively good shape.

The game changers for us have been the successful move to remote working and a new hybrid model that has resulted in us closing our office with its costly overheads and the transference of our 6-day community mediation training course online which has enabled us to provide more courses and generate a previously untapped new income stream. I am extremely grateful to our fantastic team who have pioneered and embraced these changes. Before Lockdown it was inconceivable that we would have even considered these as possibilities let alone implement them.

Our new streamlined way of working has resulted in huge productivity gains which we were able to invest in our service to the tenants of Portsmouth City Council Housing. Never has our assessment service been in such demand and so valued by housing staff and residents alike. At the height of the first Lockdown, we were seeing an 80% increase in referrals. Many people felt anxious and isolated, residents in blocks of flats felt trapped with the noise from furloughed neighbours that would usually be at work and children that were home schooling. Environmental Health Services were suspended, and the Police were distracted with new Covid 19 issues. It's against this backdrop that I want to pay here a special tribute to our assessment team; they were for many isolated residents literally the only lifeline they had. I know that many people were very grateful to be able to talk about difficult situations with our caring and compassionate team. For many of our clients being heard is the first step in the healing process. Here is a paragraph from a letter we received several weeks ago.

Firstly, thank you for everything that you did to help with the situation that I found myself in a few months ago as you know I was at the end of my tether as to what to do and how to cope with my neighbours. This frustration, hurt and anger manifested in an unusual way and I was under an enormous amount of pressure. I felt that the only thing that people were seeing was the problem and no one was listening to my story as to what had actually led to the situation.

What you actually did for me as time and phone calls went on was to give me a platform to speak, or rant, to explain what had happened and how I felt, and also as times and events went on an opportunity to be believed and understood, and for that I am grateful, because nobody had listened to anything, I had to say for a very long time.

It's not just the residents of PCC Housing that are the beneficiaries of our assessment service, another reason for the huge increase in demand is the increasing value that housing officers place on the service. In our annual feedback survey 32 out of 37 respondents 'Strongly Agreed' they would recommend Portsmouth Assessment Service to other housing officers.

As the national vaccination program continues to gather pace, there are early signs that the economy is beginning to heat up. This will be great news for many people who have lost work and business over the past months. Nonetheless I don't think the dividend here will quickly cancel out the government debt that has been run up in a bid to protect people and their jobs. We see this financial pressure on the nation's finances sinking down to local authorities and squeezing their budgets further. This will of course be a concern to many local voluntary organisations and charities like ourselves. Indeed, this squeeze on the council coffers and services will need the voluntary sector to step up another gear. If the Big Society is to work, we will need to see a much more strategic and connected approach from those who hold the public purse strings. PMS remains committed to local partnership working and will this year be a more active contributor and collaborator with The Portsmouth HIVE. In our opinion the so-called Big Society needs local authorities with more joined up thinking and less ring fencing.

During a PMS AGM, a couple of years ago, a very experienced and key operator in the voluntary sector remarked that PMS was providing a champagne service on a beer budget. We are determined and motivated to move forward with our big restorative vision for Portsmouth by continuing to take the small steps of Faith that lead to big benefits for our communities.

I have said many times before that when we encounter (as we always will) conflict or disagreement we arrive at a junction where there are only two available roads to go down. Either the Retributive / Punitive pathway or the Restorative Road. One route leads to destruction while the other is a pathway that gets brighter and brighter and always ends in a win/win. Ironical then that a legal industry makes billions of pounds whilst the peacemakers are scratching around. Frustrating also that business and organisations largely fail to recognise how the creation of a restorative culture could save them a fortune on their bottom line. In the pages of this report, you can read John Swindell's article on Restorative Leadership. With the financial pressures of the public sector, we do see an opportunity to open up new funding by working innovatively in the marketplace to help bring peace and prosperity.

As I write this, we are hoping that this year's AGM will unlike last year's Zoom event take place face to face also enjoying some good food and drink. Voting at the PMS AGM is restricted to its members. We are delighted that this year's campaign to recruit new members has been so successful. Please let me encourage you to consider becoming a member of PMS and joining likeminded citizens who wish to see the spread of restorative practices across and beyond the city. Being a member allows you to signal your support without necessarily taking on a formal role. Importantly, it gives you a voice and a vote at the Annual General Meeting and therefore being a part of setting the vision and direction of the future of PMS. You can find more details on our web site and its quick and easy to join.

We are this year celebrating the 25th Birthday of PMS, you can see in the pages of this report some of the great people from the PMS past who helped lay down solid foundations, its ground that we the latest generation are able to build upon as we take forward our restorative vision for Portsmouth and the surrounding area. We are hoping that in the autumn of this year and with the worst of the pandemic behind us we will be able to celebrate this milestone with a conference and a party. We would love for our friends and supporters to join us in this celebration and enjoy some of the famous PMS hospitality with fine food and fizz! Look out for details on our social media!

The celebration conference will also provide a good platform to tell of the great restorative stories that are unfolding around the city. Everyone at Portsmouth Mediation Service is as motivated as

ever to help work with families and communities to create a positive restorative culture. There are new spheres of life where our peace-making skills and experience will be employed. Look out for new and exciting developments within the University of Portsmouth as we continue to collaborate with the Student Wellbeing Service, the Student Union, and The Business School. There are also some exciting restorative steps taking place in the Portsmouth property market as we seek to partner with PCC and the Portsmouth and District Property Landlords Association (PDPLA) in helping landlords and tenants who get caught up in disagreements and dispute to find a restorative solution.

For the first time since PMS was founded, we will this year have introduced a Family Mediation Service, which will significantly enhance our proposition to the people of Portsmouth. You can read more about this exciting development in the pages of this report.

We are also looking forward to getting back into the classroom with our amazing teach peace program and we are excited about our ongoing partnership with Southampton Mediation Service as we partner with them in The Solent Restorative Partnership (SRP) - here again we will resume our focus on working with our friends in the NHS to help reduce the huge financial and emotional burden inflicted by various levels of conflict.

Thank you again to everyone who is on board this amazing restorative journey, the PMS family has many talented and skillful people who are passionate about people, it remains a huge privilege for me to seek to serve the restorative champions who help bring transformation in every area and sphere of city life. This family of course includes our dedicated Trustee for whose guardianship and governance I am personally very grateful. I look forward to another great year - another exciting chapter.

Thank you for your support and Interest in PMS.

Steve Rolls
Manager



Two Game Changers for PMS

Two game changers for us have been the successful move to remote working and the transference of our 6-day community mediation training course online.



Laura Rook pictured bottom left, says. "Remote working has improved the overall quality of our family life, it allows me to stop and start my work easily, I no longer waste time travelling or parking or locking up the office, I feel I am more productive and focused, and I have a working space that's created and set up just how I like!"

Our team have done a brilliant job in transferring this course online and have now delivered five 6-day mediation courses over Zoom, including two for the volunteers of Mediation Surrey. The course has been so successful and the feedback so exceptional that we do not now have any plans to resume this training face to face

COMMUNITY MEDIATION TRAINING COURSE

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For details and reservations, E-mail steve@portsmouthmediationservice.org.uk

The Portsmouth Assessment Service (PAS)

Portsmouth City Council Housing Officer Feedback Survey March 2021 - What Housing Officers say about Our Assessment Service (PAS).

Supported by



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CITY COUNCIL

"PAS is such an important service. Housing Officers have increasingly more and more to deal with on a day-to-day basis. Just knowing that there is a service who is happy to take on mediation and low level ASB, helps us so much. A totally invaluable service. Response time for referrals is super quick which is also great as we are able to tell our tenants that we are dealing with their concerns and this makes them feel listened to. You couldn't do anything better, but it would maybe be good to have a named officer per housing office who pops in from time to time. I know this used to happen and I know this is not something that is do-able under the current circumstances, but maybe when things get back to normal. Kate Aston is an absolute credit to PAS and all the staff are great. Just wonderful keep on the good work."

"PAS are independent specialists who diffuse potential conflicts really well. This stops me from potentially making things worse or having conflicting roles with one tenant (i.e. supporting them with financial issues whilst being viewed by them as not supporting them when trying to resolve an issue they may be having with their neighbours). It also frees up my time to concentrate on other aspects of my role"

"Fast allocation and contact with tenants; very thorough intervention; are able to put the time in to get to the root of the problem where I cannot; importantly for me - it puts some distance between dealing with neighbour disputes and housing which enables me to continue to contact those tenants if there are other issues e.g. rent. The service is invaluable"

"My dealing with everyone at PAS has always been positive"

"It's great! thank-you for all your help"

"Great service, always recommending it to tenants. Always get a quick and helpful response from the team and they couldn't be more helpful than they already are"

"Everyone in PAS works extremely hard. I know Tina deals predominantly with all the Wecock Farm cases, but when she is off, all the other guys and girls pick up the cases with ease. All tenants that I have referred to PAS have been happy with the services received"

"I am very satisfied. I have found that the PAS officers have always explored every avenue with the cases I have referred. This makes it much easier when going back to the customer with the outcome, whether that be action or no further action. Also, a lot of the customers I have referred

through have been tricky to communicate with or reason with and I think they have all been dealt with very well and appropriately"

"PAS is generally very good at engaging with both sides of a conflict and either finding a solution or managing the expectations of the residents"

"PAS make our tenants feel comfortable to discuss issues that may be quite sensitive and private. Very happy with my dealings with PAS"

"I think it is good that PAS officers remain approachable by tenants they have worked with once their case is passed back to HOs"

"The service is important in helping our residents to work through issues they may have with one another with the hope of being able to get on"

"I think I have said it all above. I will continue to refer to PAS and feel they are an invaluable service"

"I think the service is great and cannot think of anything you could do better. Everyone is really helpful, and you all do a great job"

"No challenge is too small, and you don't give up at the first hurdle"



"The customer circumstances are fully understood, and the service is tailored to each customers need. Customers receive clear guidance and advice. Housing Officer are provided with good communication / update either by e-mail or in a telephone conversation. Some situations are not always resolved, and, in some cases, this is never possible, however the customer is generally equipped with the tools to manage the circumstances"

"Particularly good at coming up with practical idea / solutions and conveying them to customers"

"My referral was dealt with very quickly with a good outcome and I received a detailed report back"

"Officers are always on hand for help/advice and cases are looked into promptly. I always receive good feedback from my cases and the reports are clear to understand so I have a good idea of how it has been dealt with"

“Contact is always prompt and informative. PAS officers always either find a solution or signpost to another service /back to us without leaving a case unresolved”

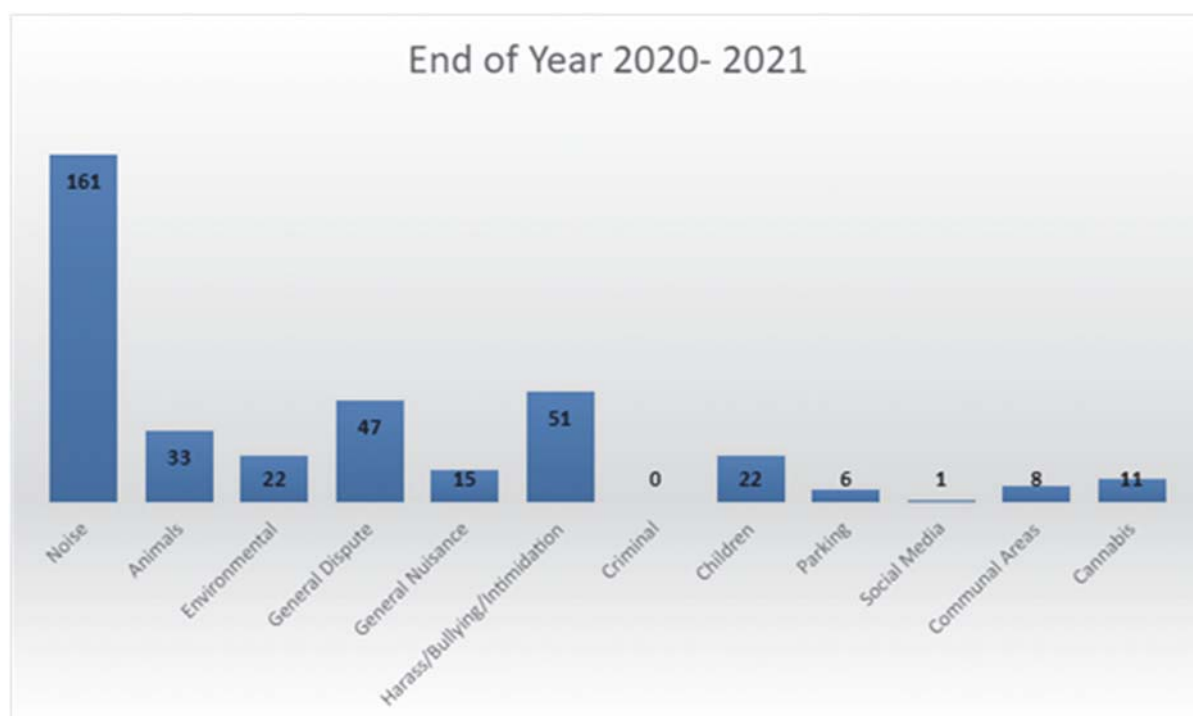
“Communication is always good. There is always, at the very least an improvement on the situation after PAS involvement”

“PAS provides dedicated time to a situation which is positive. The communication with Housing Officers, both within the time the case is active and when it is closed, should be made easier and more visible outside of the ASB Database”

“PAS officers (particularly Tina) are very thorough and build a good relationship with tenants, this eases my workload”

“I think the fact it is an independent service really helps. I think the officers are extremely good at 'thinking outside of the box' and coming up with very practical, common sense solutions to problems. Firstly, housing officers might think in a more narrow way and within the confines of the role and secondly, some customers might think we are being biased in favour of the other party when suggesting something. I try to be open and honest and manage expectations with my tenants, but I think PAS can be more so because of being independent”

“I believe that the PAS team offer an essential service to the Housing Department of Portsmouth City Council. PAS help to maintain harmony within the local community and play an integral role in preventing initial conflicts between tenants potentially escalating into larger problems. There are timely interventions, free up much of the workload for Housing Offices, which enables Portsmouth City Council to offer a much more efficient service to our customers”



Breakdown of the type of cases from April 2020 to March 2021

My Social Worker Placement with Portsmouth Mediation

“PMS managed to convince a sceptic like me and make me understand that people are more than their mistakes and to see them for all the potential they have to be better”

For my first-year placement as a Social Work Masters student, I was taken on by PMS to train and work as a mediator for 70 days. What I got from the whole experience far exceeded my expectations and I have come out of it with more than just mediation skills.

My first highlight was the training itself. It was thorough and engaging and even though I did not fully grasp the concept of restorative practice at first, by the end of the extensive 6-day training, I was a firm believer. PMS managed to convince a sceptic like me and make me understand that people are more than their mistakes and to see them for all the potential they have to be better. This is not an easy thing to achieve in a society so focused on punishment and humiliation. I firmly believe that the lessons I have learnt will be a firm foundation for me to be the kind of social worker who impacts a long lasting and valuable change in the community.

During my time with PMS, I managed to speak to some clients and attempt to solve the disputes they were involved in while mending their damaged relationships with the other parties involved. In dealing with situations where emotions are high it was then that I realised PMS does not only teach about conflict resolution but the value of human decency. It's surprising how just sitting there and truly listening to someone gets half the job done.



I was also fortunate enough to join the seasoned trainers to train the next batch of mediators. This just shows the trust this service has in its people which made me feel so empowered.

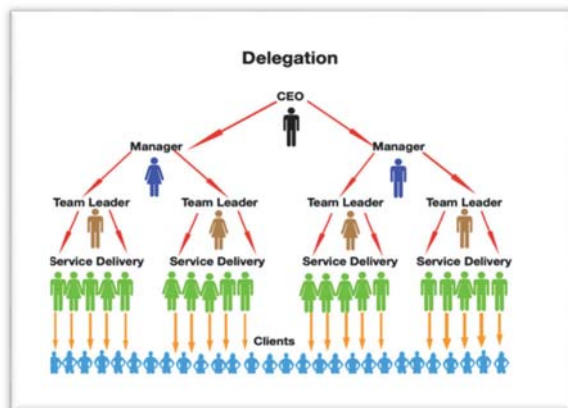
Having been given the firm understanding of mediation and all the goodness that restorative practice has to offer, it was truly an honour to be able to share that knowledge with other people. I believe the message of restoration that PMS focuses on is a gamechanger, and as I have come to the end of my placement, it is an ideology I will carry with me.

Mufaro Olisi (pictured top right helping to deliver The PMS Community Mediation Training)

The Profitability of Restorative Leadership

John Swindell has for many years been a huge advocate for Restorative Practice & Approaches, here he outlines the benefits for business managers & leaders.

As I reflect over the past 12 months, since the last annual report, so much has happened that has disrupted the normal flow of life but surprisingly the work of PMS and our Partners has continued at pace and Restorative Practices continue to become normative in many more spheres of life. One sphere that is of particular interest to me is how restorative philosophy, values and skills can create better leaders.

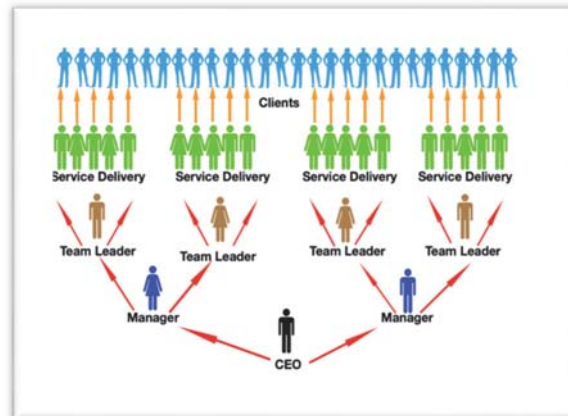


Traditional Leadership

The primary philosophy of traditional leadership, explicitly or implicitly, is that of delegation. This has a pyramid structure in which the more senior leaders are at the top of the structure and the people who deliver the product or service to are at the base. This type of structure is often portrayed with a diagram which leaves no one in doubt as to who is in charge.

This style of leadership is that of delegation and works on the principle of **"Do what I say."** That message then cascades down through each level until the service delivery personnel actually carry out the instructions.

The premise behind this style of leadership is that those in leadership know best on how the service delivery personnel should carry out their work.



Restorative Leadership

The restorative style of leadership is that of empowerment and works on the principle of **"What can I do for you."** That message then cascades up through each level until the service delivery personnel are supported and empowered to provide the service.

The premise behind this style of leadership is that those who deliver the service know how best to do that and they also know what they need to enable them to give a better service.

This bottom up, empowerment, leadership is becoming more widely used in forward looking organisations and companies and one of the early practitioners in the UK is Sir John Timpson who in a recent interview with the BBC said:

"Our upside down way of management, which has become central to the culture of our business, started about 20 years ago, when we discovered the secret behind great customer service. The secret is both obvious and simple: you can't create a great service culture by laying down lots of rules, running training courses or inventing a code of service. The only way is to trust frontline colleagues with the freedom to serve customers in the way they know best.

I was managing director for more than 20 years before I made this dramatic change to our management style."

The use of restorative principles, skills and philosophy helps to provide the means and methodology to turn the pyramid of traditional leadership upside down. For instance, the **'Social Disciple Window'** Principle of **'With'** not **'To'** or **'For'** both supports and empowers staff. Or the use of **'Circles'** for corporate problem solving and conflict resolution greatly reduces the pressure on the team leader to have all the answers, it also gets a greater commitment from the team, as well as avoiding potential unforeseen problems.

The use of 'Circles', 'Conférences' and 'Restorative Questions'

- ✦ To solve HR issues, lateness, absence etc. without taking it to HR dept. or higher authority
- ✦ Collaboration in solving team or departmental problems relating to the workload or other issues.
- ✦ To share and discuss ideas and future plans.
- ✦ Communal learning and sharing best practices.
- ✦ Resolving interdepartmental problems, arguments, or staff issues
- ✦ Debriefing after difficult cases
- ✦ For loan workers it provides support and the sense of team
- ✦ Blue sky or Creative thinking when looking at new ideas or plans.

Circle outcomes

- ✦ Sharing the decision-making process as all team members give some input to key decisions.
- ✦ Reducing the risk of unforeseen problems
- ✦ Creates a culture of High accountability/Low control.
- ✦ Better communication = better relationships = better productivity
- ✦ Less sick time and less pastoral issues
- ✦ Fewer problems for managers to solve because staff are resolving issues together.
- ✦ Strengthens corporate/team identity and corporate/team responsibility.
- ✦ Create confidence in the use of Restorative Practices.

Informal Restorative conversation outcomes

- ✦ Reverse and disperse personal anxiety.
- ✦ Honesty and openness
- ✦ Caring culture
- ✦ Supportive culture

- ✦ Stops cliques from developing
- ✦ Reduces gossip.
- ✦ Models and encourages RP.

Restorative leadership and management definitely improve productivity and creates a better working environment. However, it requires a paradigm shift in our thinking from 'I am in charge of the team' to 'I am responsible for the team's development'.



John Swindell
PMS Restorative Consultant & Trainer

Treasurer's Update

An independent examination has been carried out by Morris Crocker Chartered Accountants. Please find enclosed separate annual accounts and report.

During the course of the financial year, PMS has not had a designated 'Treasurer'. The Board of Trustees has continued to retain oversight of financial matters at their monthly meetings, with day to day and longer-term financial issues being conducted by the Chair of the Board of Trustees and our Service Manager, Steve Rolls. More recently, Trustee Tom Shaw has been undertaking a number of financial matters, aiding and adding a reassuring layer of scrutiny.

This financial year saw the commencement of a new five-year contract to provide services to Portsmouth City Council. This remains the primary source of income for PMS. Creativity of staff in designing and delivering online mediation training has added to income generation, a specific example being training provided to Surrey Mediation Service.

We have been given several donations, two specifically worthy of mention; £2,400.00 from the Charities Aid Foundation Bank (CAF) and £987.50 from the University of Portsmouth. The ever-present challenge of securing additional avenues of income has been made even more difficult in the climate of a pandemic. We have continued to secure funding through the continued provision of restorative services to Hampshire Constabulary's Police and Crime Commissioner.

It remains incumbent on us to manage expenditure in line with income. On a monthly basis, the Board are presented with detail of monthly income and expenditure together with a projection for the coming months.

Xero accounting software is now embedded as the tool for managing all financial matters, used by both staff and trustees.

The continuous hard work of staff and volunteers, led by Steve Rolls who seek to continue the development of a 'Restorative Portsmouth' is very appreciated by the Trustees

Phil Winchester
Chair of Board of Trustees

25 Years of Portsmouth Mediation Service

Founded in 1996 PMS is this year celebrating its 25th Birthday, we are hoping that in the Autumn of this year we can mark this major milestone with a conference event followed by some good food and fizz. Here we look back at some memories from the years gone by.



Pictured here against a banner with our old logo are some of our past volunteer mediators. Can you spot Tina Downie who has since progressed to be one of our experienced professionals?



This big grin belongs to Bill Moody pictured here with former Chair Marie Potter at Kathy Hands retirement lunch. Bill was instrumental in helping to set up Portsmouth mediation Service and was a true champion of the charity – serving also as a trustee.



Christmas 2015 and the professional team pose for the first ever PMS Christmas Card.



Pictured here in the centre is former service manager Margaret Lovell who successfully steered the service through some of the early years of this century.....Laura hasn't changed!



Pictured beneath the old logo is the Lord & Lady Mayoress at the opening of a new PMS office



Pictured here is our 20th Birthday celebration with The Lord Mayor of Portsmouth. You can see the now legendary PMS buffet ready for enjoyment!

Here is a picture from a team meeting at our old offices with our friends Mercedes and Caroline from Portsmouth City Council



Sort it Out - Generation 5



Each year the mediators and management board of The Sort it Out Service change as the existing students graduate and move on. PMS has already trained the new Generation 6 team who will take over in September. Here the Gen 5 board looks back on the success and progress made during this challenging locked down year

Sort it Out – Annual Report 2021

The students are currently in their final year at university studying Law. Instead of undertaking a dissertation, students were able to apply to work at one of the firms, organisations or charities that work in partnership with the university. Trustees were selected to work alongside Portsmouth Mediation Service (PMS) as mediators, as well as run the Sort it Out student resolution service within the university.

Each member of the Board assigned themselves a role within the Sort it Out service which are as follows:

- Isaac Dundas Chief Executive Officer
- Brandon Hawkes Chief Financial Officer
- Nina Brown Director of Administration
- Natalia Popiel Director of Communications
- Shared Responsibility Chief Operating Officer

Objectives and Aims

At the start of the year, the students discussed their aims and objectives for Sort it Out for the year 2020/2021. Recognising the likely continuing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the group aimed to perfect the online mediation process and create a process whereby parties to mediation received an equivalent service to in person mediations. The Sort it Out team also expected to be dealing with fewer cases than previous years due to students living away from University due to the pandemic. In light of this, the team also set the aim of updating and consolidating all Sort it Out documents.

The group also aimed to increase awareness of Sort it Out. With many events forced to cancel due to the pandemic, the team set the objective of doing this through continued use and promotion of social media and by reaching out to organisations, such as the Landlord's Association.

Achievement and Performance

By the end of the year the team had managed to successfully maintain the website as well as their social media presence, shining light on the work and services that the organisation can offer. The team has also managed to gain contact with the Landlord Association, having our services advertised in their newsletter.

The service has continued its successful relationship with the advice and wellbeing service, having attended a staff training day on restorative practice.

Each member of the team had the opportunity to go into a business school seminar, talking about restorative practice and how the service could be of benefit to them during their group work. This resulted in a case referral which we were able to successfully close.

The team have now consolidated all documents related to the service into one google drive in an attempt to hopefully make the process more streamlined for future generations. The team created a recording of a mock mediation which can be incorporated into the training package of PMS.

With regards to the success of cases, we predicted that Covid-19 would affect the number of cases that we would receive due to not many students living together. Regardless, the service opened around 9 cases over the year and of which a few were successfully closed.

Conclusion

Despite issues presented by the pandemic, the Sort it Out team continued to effectively run the service whilst completing the final year of their degree. Notwithstanding the shortage of cases this year, the team continued to be productive by updating documents and leaving the service in the best possible condition for Generation 6 to take over in September. The year was not without its challenges, but the group overcame each hurdle and developed both professionally and personally whilst continuing to effectively run the service.

Do you have the skills to become a Mediator / Restorative Facilitator?



Why not come have a chat with us?

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For further information e-mail Sue Austin at
sue@portsmouthmediationservice.org.uk

Portsmouth Mediation Service

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Extending our Family Mediation Service

Since the formation of Portsmouth Mediation Service, there has been a gap in our ability to provide a complete end to end family mediation service. That is all set to change as one of our key volunteers Hilary Keogh pioneers a new family service. Here Hilary outlines the journey to date and the key developments in this exciting story.



I originally contacted PMS back in 2014 as a potential volunteer. I had recently completed a workplace mediation qualification, mainly to help me improve the way I facilitated conversations I was involved in as a management consultant around organisational change and finding better ways to handle different perspectives. PMS really sparked my interest though and I started to think more about becoming directly involved in mediation and restorative practice. I spent my teenage school years at one of the United World Colleges - an education movement which aims to 'unite people, nations and cultures for peace and a sustainable future', and the world of mediation and restorative thinking seemed very aligned to this.

However, it was not to be! I ended up moving to Virginia in the US for a few years where I continued my mediation journey. I trained and was accredited in Virginia as a general (business, community, workplace etc.) and a family mediator and gained some valuable (and interesting) experience mediating both in and out of court settings.

When I returned to the UK I got back in touch with PMS, had a conversation with Steve and was kindly invited to one of the Wednesday morning team meetings. From there I started volunteering as a co mediator on community cases, which I absolutely loved. It was great working with the assessment team on cases and learning from the depth of knowledge and experience they bring. I also completed some restorative training with John which was hugely thought provoking and helped on PMS's community mediation training.

In late summer 2020 as we started to come out of lockdown and case numbers were high, I mentioned to Steve I was about to embark on becoming an accredited family mediator - I say 'embark' as becoming an accredited family mediator is quite a journey. It involves an initial set of training and then working under a supervisor (or 'Professional Practice Consultant') to observe, co mediate and then start to lead on cases, with a strong emphasis on reflective learning. Full accreditation will come once I have submitted a portfolio of cases that meet requirements set by the Family Mediation Council (FMC). The whole process can take 3 years, but with my experience from the US, I'm looking to go quite a bit faster!

Steve kindly offered that I could start to triage the family related enquiries PMS regularly receives via the website and occasionally from other services, with a view to me working with PMS to extend what PMS can offer to families. PMS can already handle 'in house' those cases that are

focused on improving communication - others we refer to local accredited family mediators. Taking on this work has been an excellent way for me to build my experience. It's been great to take cases that fall within our existing remit through to restorative agreements as well as see the kind of cases we could keep 'in house' in the future.

In April this year (2021) I facilitated a mind mapping session using an online whiteboard with Steve and other staff and volunteers to start to shape what our family service might look like in the future and our road map to get there. We looked at how we can set the service up in a way that aligns to PMS's vision, values, and ways of working - and that might also in time provide an income stream.

I've now completed my training and am classed as 'working towards accreditation' with the FMC. This means we are quickly working towards a time (potentially this summer/ autumn) when we will be able to keep more of the enquiries we get 'in house', start to promote the service more widely, and broaden what we offer to Portsmouth families and communities. We've set up a new family page on PMS's website and are regularly updating this as I progress through my accreditation.

Over the last year my work with PMS has given me a huge amount of valuable experience and I am very thankful for this. I'm also excited about how the family service is going to develop and strengthen over the rest of 2021 and beyond.

Hilary Keogh



SUPPORTING FAMILIES

PMS

Contact Hilary for our
Family Mediation Service
hilary@portsmouthmediationservice.org.uk

New Restorative Service for Landlord & Tenants

Portsmouth Mediation Service (PMS) is collaborating with The Portsmouth & District Property Landlords Association (PDPLA) and Portsmouth City Council, both key stakeholders in a plan to pioneer a new Restorative Service for Landlords and Tenants that get caught up with disputes and disagreements.

Referrals to this new Assessment Service should be made early on in any dispute affecting the tenancy or Landlord/Tenant relationship. Each party will have a conversation with an independent and impartial specialist Assessment Officer (AO) who is also qualified in mediation and restorative practice and who has extensive knowledge of the property market and how it operates within the law and guidelines etc.

The Assessment stage provides an opportunity for the parties to tell their own story to the officer



and importantly to be heard. This stage allows for the AO to coach, counsel, and mentor, to encourage and make suggestions, to inject some clarity and reality into the situation and with permission to relay key information to the other party. This early input and intervention will in itself solve

many issues and problems and prevent a host of cases from escalating to entrenched positions and long costly court hearings. The Assessment Officer will also be looking to signpost people in need of specialist help with a good personal referral to the appropriate support organisation.

In some situations and where appropriate the AO will help to bring both parties together for a face-to-face restorative meeting. At this stage, the AO will refrain from making any input/suggestions and facilitate communication in a restorative / mediation meeting where the parties are enabled to reach a joint agreement. The AO may enlist the support of a co-mediator to help facilitate the meeting. When people have an opportunity to come together, and repair broken relationships the likelihood of a mutually acceptable solution is hugely enhanced.

Pictured above are some of the PDPLA Landlords who have signed up for the pilot scheme

Portsmouth Mediation Service

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