

Settling rows is Michael's job

■ He uses his skills as the master of mediation

By **SAM CHADDERTON**
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WADING into the middle of a row is not advisable. But for one East Lancashire professional it is the essence of his business.

Michael Dawson, 58, from Darwen, is an accredited mediator and says that the high cost and aggressive nature of formal litigation is seeing more and more disputes being resolved through apologies, settlements and agreements.

Mr Dawson said he chose to make the most of his negotiation skills following a 38-year career in quantity surveying and insurance loss adjusting. Whether it is arguments between neighbours, businesses, employers

and employees, tenant and landlord, and even husband and wife, Mr Dawson has seen it all.

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He said: "I help people find their own solutions. Mediation techniques can be used wherever there is a dispute between two or more people.

"It is voluntary and informal so it avoids the pressures of a court appearance.

"But as it is confidential and without prejudice, whatever is said within the mediation can't be repeated inside court should the parties fail to agree.

"It is very quick because both parties agree a date and can set time limits."

Options range from a simple apology, a swap of assets, the offer of further or free work, future promotions, joint ventures, retrospective discounts, free advertising, staggered or delayed payments and many more which are within the control of the parties themselves, but not available to judges.

"Very often all a claimant wants is a genuine apology, recognition they have been affected, and a commitment that it will not happen again," he added.



HERE TO HELP Mediator Michael Dawson