



1. Title: Parent Mediation Service
2. Area (Local Authority and Region): Hertfordshire
3. What was the issue? [100 words max] <p>Local Authorities may find themselves with a conflict of interest when receiving complaints from parents about unresolved bullying incidents as they are required to support both parents and schools. Hertfordshire has developed an independent parent support service that responds to parents who have exhausted the school's procedures without achieving resolution.</p> <p>Hertfordshire had already established an advocacy service to support minority ethnic parents experiencing racist incidents. The two services work independently but liaise as appropriate.</p>
4. What action was taken? [100 words max] <p>Initially funding was found to establish a pilot service, running in two districts. This limited the promotion of the service but enabled us to test the level of need and establish quality systems. The successful bid came from Parentline Plus and the local group Mediation Herts. Together they provide a service where parents receive initial telephone support which helps parents identify their best next steps. Parentline Plus are well-placed to listen to parents' concerns, and signpost parents to a wide range of alternative services as appropriate. Where the case is more complex Mediation Herts provides full mediation services.</p>
5. What impact has this had (so far)? [100 words max] <p>Almost half the cases referred went to full mediation. Support was for the most part initiated by parents but some schools also approached the service with unresolved cases.</p> <p>One parent's feedback was that she had felt empowered following the mediation, and had subsequently found the school to be receptive and accommodating. "I will recommend this service as it is very good to have another person who doesn't either disagree or agree but helps – just by listening to your side".</p> <p>Some parents referred did not pursue contact. Providing another route ensures the LA has not been deemed to have abandoned parents.</p>
6. How did the above action help to embed anti-bullying work in your area? [75 words max] <p>We are now developing the service county-wide. This service is a key part of the parent support aspect of our county anti-bullying strategy.</p>
7. Additional information (OPTIONAL): <p>http://www.thegrid.org.uk/learning/hwb/bullying/parents/#mediation</p> <p>Karin Hutchinson, Anti-bullying Adviser. Karin.hutchinson@hertcc.gov.uk</p>