

# TORBAY MEDIATION SERVICE

## CURRENT POSITION

The Torbay Mediation Service was stepped up in 2020 with the declared intention of:

*‘the engagement of an **advice and mediation** service for parents of pupils who are at risk of permanent exclusion from education establishments.’*

At the first lockdown the service was not needed for exclusions work so the capacity was used to support families in accessing the support arrangements in the community and from schools.

On return to mandatory full-time education on site. The service has worked with the children outlined in the table below.

The service has been successful in supporting 60 of the 70 referred children to remain on their school roll. In part, this has been through onward referral to VCS partners for 38 children and their families.

	Referrals		Remained on Roll		Referral to VCS Partner	
	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary
<b>2021/22</b>	28	11	26	7	7	5
<b>2022/23 to Date</b>	21	10	20	7	19	7

## REASONS FOR REFERRAL

	Total	Secondary	Primary
<b>Attendance</b>	39	19	18
<b>Risk of Exclusion</b>	19	15	4
<b>Home/School Communication</b>	9	5	4
<b>Other</b>	3	1	2

The service has not generally been used by schools and families for its intended role. It is far more likely to be engaged as an attendance intervention between that which the school provides and more formal processes.

This is useful work but does overlap other services, such as SENDIAS, and the expectation on schools to provide a full suite of attendance interventions themselves. Given the challenges the local area faces in implementing the expectations within the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2022 Attendance guidance, any overlap and confusion is unhelpful.

At the same time, the Local Area has stepped up Risk of Exclusion meetings and case conferences that have multi agency representation to address risk of exclusion. This represents a duplication of effort.

## IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

The Mediation Service and Vulnerable Pupils Team are working to ensure that the local area achieves the best value from the service for the remaining 8 months of the contract. This includes:

1. Signposting the service in Risk of Exclusion meetings and Case Conferences.
2. Shifting attendance cases back to schools and the AIO in complex case meetings.
3. Monitoring referral reasons with the service lead and encouraging signposting to more appropriate providers.

## FUTURE SERVICE OPTIONS

The service that was set up by the Forum is due to come to an end in October 2023. The service was established at a time when other panels and provisions were not in place to support needs.

There is an opportunity to re-consider the need for this service moving forward and the potential to pivot the work into wider system change and new duties that are expected with the local area.

Options for consideration:-

- The mediation service is continued
- The mediation service is ceased at the end of the contract in October 2023.
- The funding attached to the mediation service is diverted to support attendance work that will be required from September 2023 onwards within the context of Family Hubs.
- The funding attached to the mediation service forms parts of the savings required within the DSG Management Plan.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- That School Forum consider the options that are available to them.
- If the mediation service is to cease a notice is provided to the current provider to share a decision that the contract will not be extended in October 2023.