

KIDS London SEN Mediation Service

Annual Service Report 1 April 2008 - 31 March 2009

Introduction

During 01 April 2008 - 31 March 2009, 91 referrals were received, mainly from parents. Many of these 'parent' referrals were as a result of parents being informed about our service in Local Authority letters or discussions with LA officers and Parent Partnership Services.

We resolved over 70% of the cases referred to us through a combination of informal discussions and face to face mediations. Communications by us with parties over the telephone and by email often act as a catalyst for resolution at a local level.

93% of cases which went to face to face mediation resulted in full or partial agreement. Three months after mediation took place, 74% of participants reported to us that outcomes for the children involved had improved.

Quality Assurance

68% of mediation participants completed evaluation forms. 97% reported that they were satisfied with the mediation process and 100% were satisfied with the service received. See participant feedback below.

In recognition of the high standards that we set as a Mediation Provider, we have again this year been accredited by the **Civil Mediation Council**.

Pro active Service- This year we have been:-

Working with several Local Authorities to review standard letters that are sent to parents. This service has been well received by LA's that have taken up this offer.

Providing training and staff development opportunities for Local Authority staff and Parent Partnership Officers, to promote good practice.

Encouraging SEN mediation for Schools- Our experience is that many of the disputes that are referred to us start at School. Many schools and some LA's are unaware that KIDS London SEN Mediation Service could be used as a means of resolving school-based SEN disputes. We have been working with LA's to raise awareness.

Appointed by the DCSF - to provide independent mediation services nationally to Academies and Local Authorities in disagreements about the naming of Academies in Part 4 of Statements of Special Educational Need.

Part 4 Disagreements

01 April 2008 – 31 March 2009 saw an increasing number of mediated cases relating to Part 4 of a child's Statement of Special Educational Needs. Part 4 cases can pose significant challenges in working with parties who have a determined view about where the child should be educated. We have found that our intervention in such seemingly intractable cases can provide resolutions to disagreements over the named school. Through attending mediation, parties have been able to discover a solution which has proved creative and helpful to the benefit of all involved.

Please see below for a Part 4 Case study resolved by mediation.

Contact us:

Audrey Dorival- Mediation Manager

Kirsty Dennis- Service Co-ordinator

Tel. 020 7837 2900

Web: www.londonsenmediation.org.uk

Address: KIDS London SEN Mediation Service, 49 Mecklenburgh Square, London
WC1N 2NY



Case Study

Part 4 Case Study Resolved by Mediation

Mrs Roberts* contacted us after receiving a revised final statement for her son, William. The local authority were providing home education for William who was aged 17 and who had Asperger's Syndrome. William had not been able to attend school for over 2 years, after being bullied at secondary school.

Mrs Roberts and her husband were both keen for William to attend an independent residential college for young people with Asperger's Syndrome. Mr Smith from the local authority explained that they had been unable to name a school for William on the statement as they wanted to rule out two possible local placements, before they could consider alternative provision. They were also uncertain whether a residential placement was the most appropriate provision to meet William's needs.

At the mediation it was agreed that Mr and Mrs Roberts would visit one of the LA's suggested schools with William, and also that Mr Smith would (a) revisit the local placement to reassess its suitability based on new information that had been provided at the mediation and (b) investigate the costs of sending William to the residential college. The parties agreed to meet three weeks later to discuss the visits and decide on the appropriate placement.

Three months after the mediation, Mrs Roberts contacted us to say that William is now attending the residential college. She credited the mediation with being instrumental in both parties being able to reach an agreement on the key issues :“The agreement was very specific - there was no fudging of issues and it was signed by everyone. It was clear and precise”.

Mr Smith (LA Officer) also found benefit in attending the mediation, and also thought that the agreement was helpful as it “kept all to task” and that “the mediator was excellent, well informed and very facilitative.”

(*Names have been changed to protect anonymity).

Promoting Good Practice Training for Working with Parents of Children with SEN

Many Local Authorities have taken advantage of our training services. We have delivered training across London on the following areas:

- **SEN Mediation in Action**- A workshop looking at how mediation can be used in disputes over special educational needs and the benefits mediation brings.
- **Communicating Effectively with Parents**- A look at approaches to working with parents and an opportunity to reflect on parents' perspectives.
- **Excellent Email and Telephone Communication**- An opportunity to improve day to day communication with parents.
- **Managing Effective SEN Meetings**- A workshop which focuses on how to prepare for SEN meetings with parents and how everyone involved can get the best out of such meetings.

Here is what some of the people who've attended our training courses have said about the training:

“It was an inspiring opportunity to step out of the activities of the PPS role and to consider perspectives and strategies that could underpin my approach with parents and strengthen the quality of the service.”

Parent Partnership Officer

“I will use some of the strategies learnt today when dealing with disagreements between schools/ parents.”

LA Assessment Officer

“I have learnt how to listen more. I will use what I've learnt today in every part of my job as we do get a lot of conflict regarding my job. I think I have learned how to put people at ease more and actively listen to what is being said.”

Senior LA Officer- Transport and Finance

“I intend to apply what I've learnt today to my next meeting with parents and also at the annual review meetings.”

SEN Casework Officer



Below are comments made by participants at mediation meetings during
April 2008 to March 2009

"An excellent service."
LA Officer

"For the first time we came face to face with people we've only heard about or spoken to on the phone. It humanised the process and gave contact with a 'faceless' bureaucracy. Wish I had contacted you sooner!"
Parent

"The mediator was able to express both sides of the argument clearly, impartially and concisely. More beneficial for a dispute to go to mediation where things can be discussed than the matter going straight to a tribunal court."
School Representative

"Excellent chance to work through all issues without getting stuck on disputed points."
Parent

"[Our daughter] has 2 nights residential at school each week. She was quickly able to access residential; tribunal would not have taken place yet. She is very happy and clearly benefiting from the arrangement. [Mediation] was very useful. We felt we were properly listened to by the LEA - not judged on paper information. [The agreement] stated clearly the resolution arrived at. Transition to adult services is now under way."
Parent

"[We were] able to talk face to face in a calm, controlled manner. Able to discuss other issues than those first brought up and reach agreement on those as well. Without this process we would not have been able to come to a resolution."
Parent Partnership Officer

"We explored other ways to support my son with the school. We were able to mediate in a calm, effective manner. [Since the mediation] my child has been happier in school. The mediation service was brilliant."
Parent

"Useful to meet with parents involved to get a better understanding of parental views and child's needs."
LA Officer

"Enabled discussion by those with greatest involvement and knowledge. [Since the mediation] the statement has been issued, including items agreed in mediation meeting."
Parent

"It enabled the parent to have a very clear picture of the support his son is getting. It showed that home and school have a good working relationship."
Parent Partnership Officer

"Very useful, the mediator was excellent, well informed and very facilitative."
LA Officer

"The mediation was very useful to all parties."
School Representative

"[Mediation was] very helpful- able to engage parents in facilitated discussion."
LA Officer

Working with Parent Partnership Services

It is evident to us that Local Authorities who have an effective and proactive Parent Partnership Service have a head start in establishing and sustaining good working relationships between parents/schools/ local Authorities.

We often signpost parents to their local PPS for further information and advice. It is fundamentally important to us that parents feel fully supported and have access to information so they can make informed choices and decisions. PPS have a key role to play in this context and our services complement each other.

The majority of PPS officers who have attended mediations have found the process exceptionally supportive of participants and beneficial for all taking part.

Feedback from Parent Partnership Officers

"My first experience of the mediation process in action. Very informative, useful, and as Parent Partnership Co-ordinator, I have learned from it. (Hopefully, will use some of the techniques in my work with parents/LEA)."

"We were able to talk face to face in a calm, controlled manner. Able to discuss other issues than those first brought up and reach agreement on those as well.

Without this process we would not have been able to come to a resolution. This was my first experience of mediation and I will be pushing the LA hard to use the service much more frequently in the future."

"The mediation meeting gave me a chance to be able to re-emphasise the parent's views and opinions and also to get a really clear understanding of what could be offered from the other people taking part. I thought the whole process was conducted in a very professional way without being too formal."

"Very good service. Very easy for all concerned. Well managed on day."

"Mum was able to use a strategy (asking for a break) that helped her contain her feelings."

"Very positive experience. Very needed service for parents."

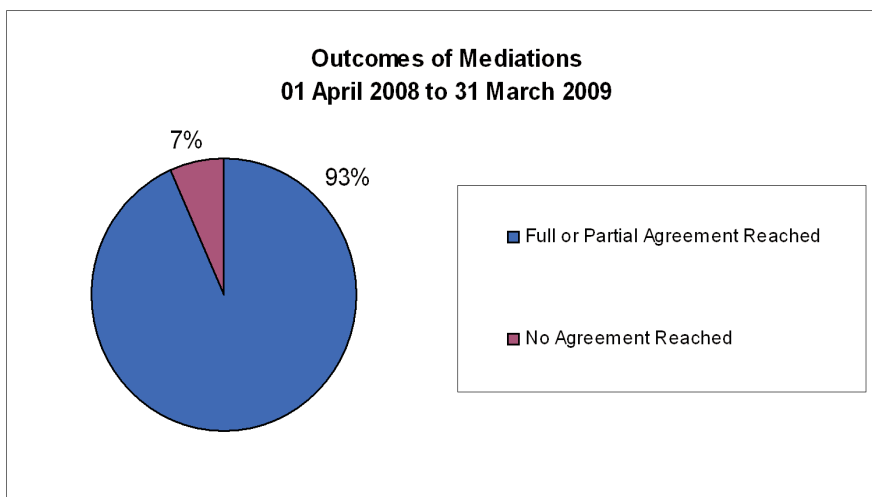
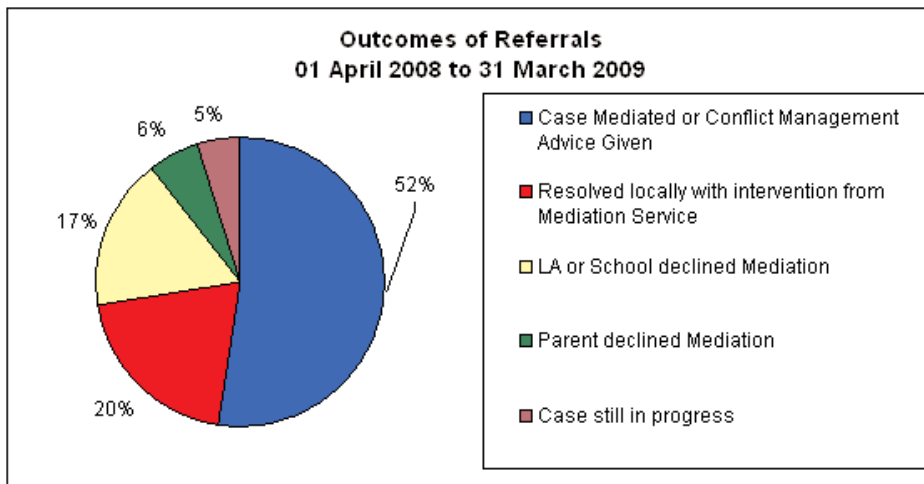
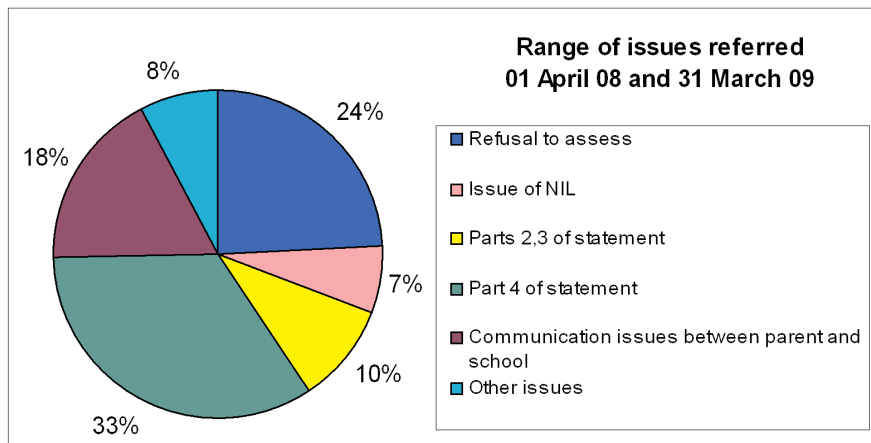
"It gave the opportunity for the parent to meet the LEA Officer. It allowed time for me to talk with the parent and the nursery officer about long term strategies vis à vis tribunals, future requests for assessment etc."

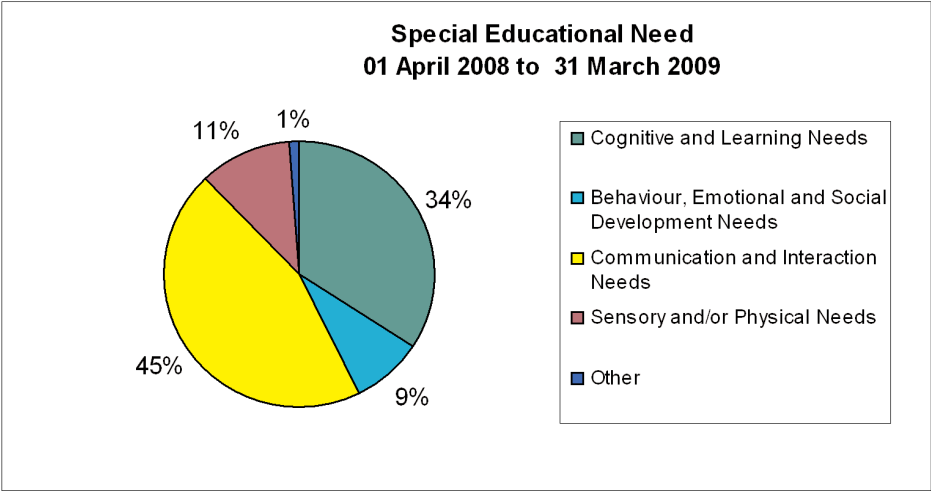
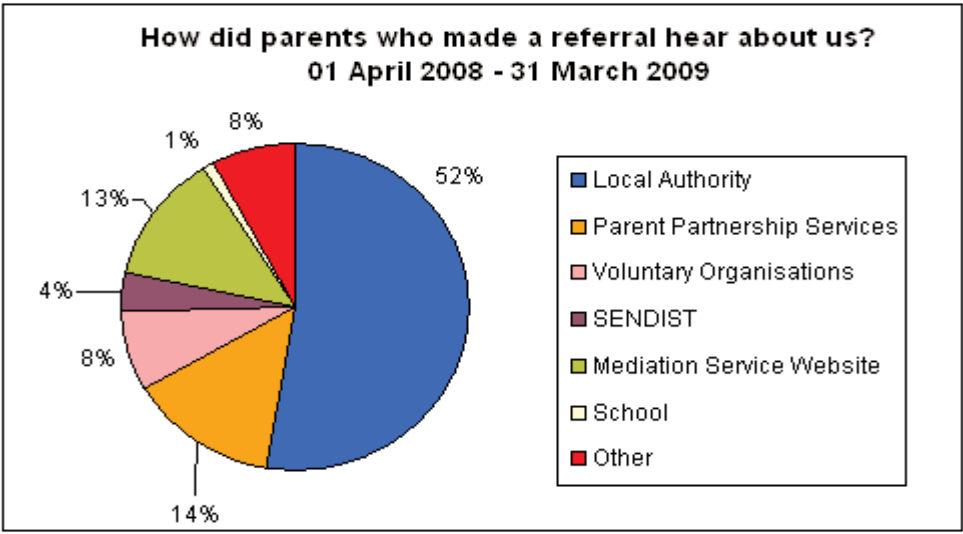
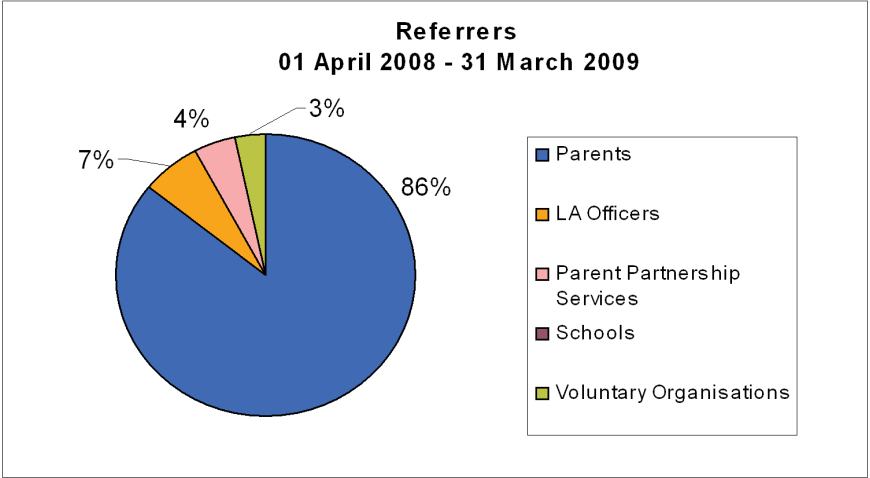
"Gave the LEA information they did not have. It was very useful."

"It enabled the parent to have a very clear picture of the support his son is getting. It showed that home and school have a good working relationship."

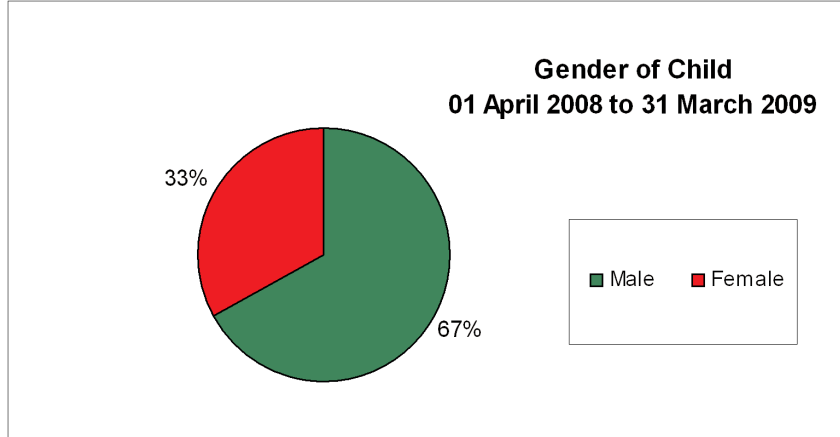
"Yes there was an unexpected benefit- better communication with school."

KIDS London SEN Mediation Service- Statistics
01 April 2008 - 31 March 2009
91 Referrals

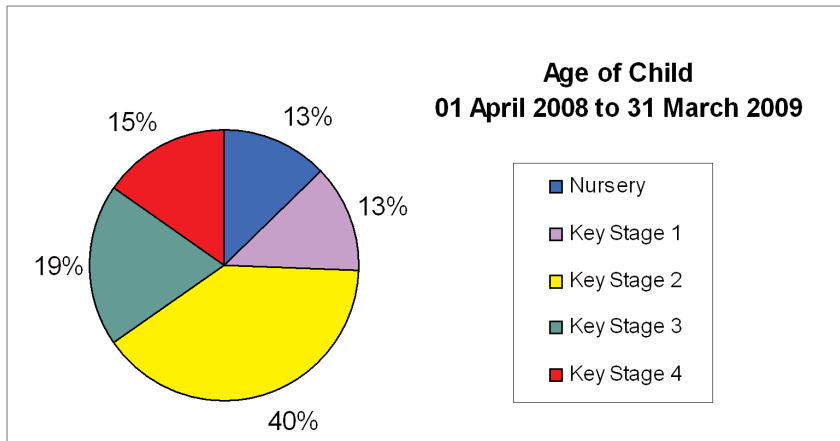




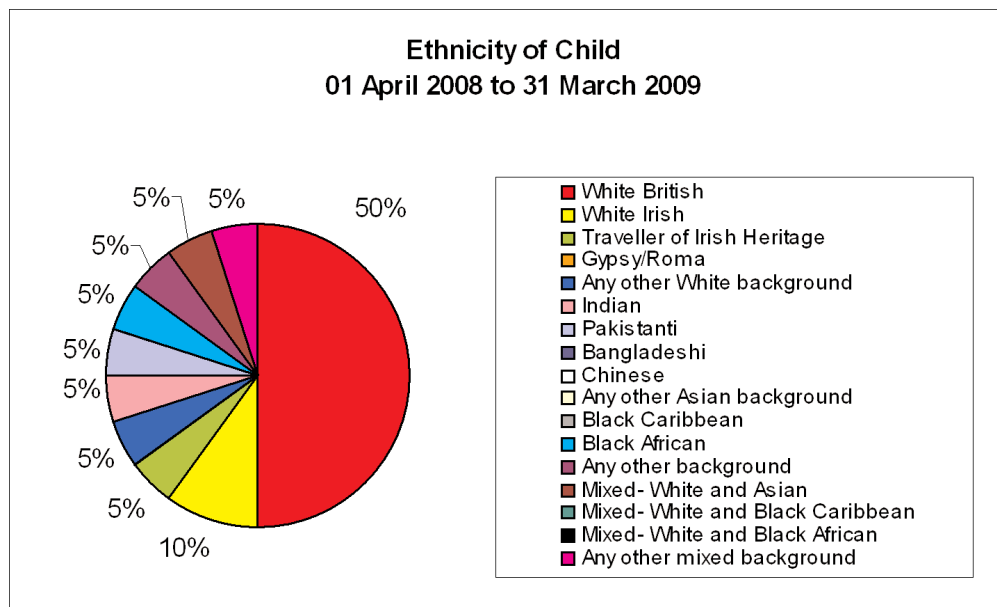
Gender of Child
01 April 2008 to 31 March 2009



Age of Child
01 April 2008 to 31 March 2009



Ethnicity of Child
01 April 2008 to 31 March 2009



Background Information on KIDS

Name of Organisation: KIDS – founded in 1970
Registered charity No. 275936
Company limited by guarantee Reg.No. 1346252
Registered Office: 49 Mecklenburgh Square, London WC1N 2NY

Tel.no. 020 7520 0405
Website: www.kids.org.uk
Fax. No. 020 7520 0406

KIDS is a national charity providing services to children with disabilities and their families. We are currently based in five regions: Yorkshire and the Humber, West Midlands, London, South West and South East England. KIDS manages the London SEN Mediation Service and has individual service level agreements with 27 Local Authorities. This service enables Local Authorities to fulfill their statutory responsibilities as per section 332B of the Education Act 1996 and the provisions in the Education (Special Educational Needs) (England) (Consolidation) 2001.

In addition to the London SEN Mediation Service, KIDS currently provides over 140 services to disabled children and their families:

Direct work with disabled children

This includes Home Learning (Portage) services for very young disabled children, specialist nurseries and crèches, integrated support within Children's Centres, short breaks for disabled children both community based and residential, playgrounds and play schemes, specialist youth groups (including drama).

Direct work with disabled young people

This includes short breaks for disabled young people both community based and residential, transition support and our national Youth Inclusion Network.

Support for Parents of disabled children and young people

This includes Parent Partnerships, parent forums, training for parents (e.g. Makaton) and Key Working.

Support for Siblings of disabled children and young carers

This includes siblings groups, Young Carers groups and the inclusion of siblings in KIDS playgrounds.

Training and Guidance for professionals working inclusively with disabled children and young people

This includes our Playwork Inclusion Project, our West Midlands Inclusion Development Service, our Young People's Inclusion Guidance, publications, our National Training Department and our partnerships with bodies such as Play England and National Association of Family Information Services.

