

# SEN Mediation Newsletter

Wessex Mediation working with parents, schools and LA's to resolve conflict about SEN

Summer Term

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Training invitation for support services staff on 16 June 2009—2.00 pm—4.00pm  
Best Western Duke of Cornwall Hotel— Plymouth

Target audience - those who are working in a support service role i.e. those who won't have direct experience or knowledge of how mediation works in an SEN setting. This session is planned to improve awareness of SEN Mediation. Taking the training to Plymouth it is hoped to provide information and support to those services particularly in the Devon and Cornwall area; Please let me know if you wish to send staff by completing and sending me the downloadable application from [www.wessexmediation.co.uk](http://www.wessexmediation.co.uk)

### Workshop schedule for the coming year

The 2 workshops (Awareness of the Service and its objectives) Oct 09 / March 2010) are designed for Independent Parental Supporters and others who work with Parent Partnership Services. The workshop content will include;

- What is Mediation
- Why mediate
- How Wessex Mediation works
- What can parents expect in a mediation meeting
- When and how to refer to Wessex Mediation

Content	Proposed Dates	Location	Target Audience	Group size
Mediation Skills	12 Nov 09 13.30—16.30	Exeter	SEN Staff—All	20
Awareness of the Service and its objectives	8 Oct 09 14.00-16.30 4 March 10 14.00-16.30	Bristol  Dorchester	Parental Supporters and those who work with PPS's	20
To be advised	Mid June	?	To be decided	20

### Included in this issue

#### Page 1

- 16 June Training details ([apply now](#))
- New Workshops Schedule
- Case volume update
- Evaluation of training
- Profile of a Wessex mediator

#### Page 2

- Farewell to Lindsey
- Referral volume to 12 May 09
- Mediation = Skill / Process



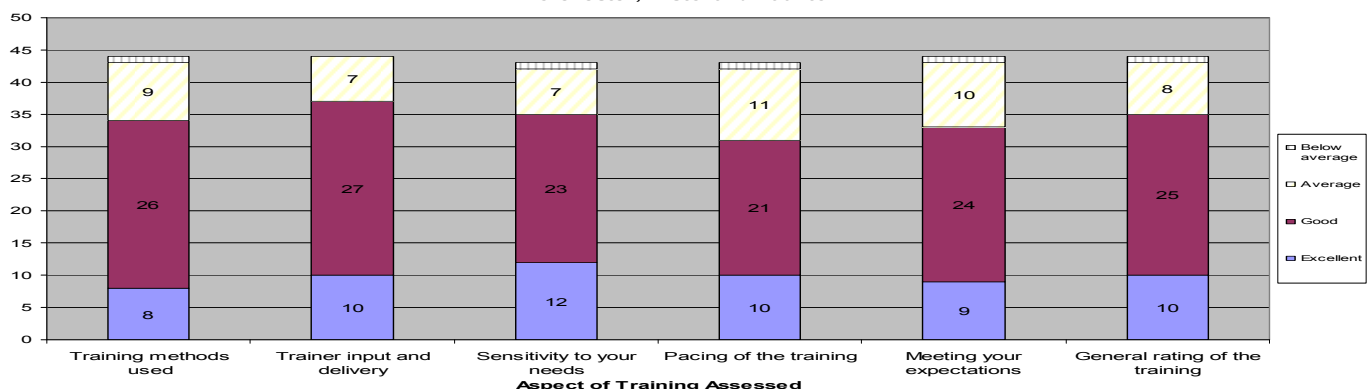
Charles Horn is one of the Wessex team of mediators.

As a self employed mediator he also works in other parts of the country on SEN cases. This includes casework involved with higher education and disability discrimination mediation.

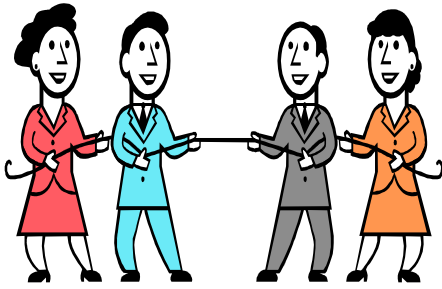
### Wessex has now delivered three workshops -Dorchester-Bristol -

Taunton. Two workshops (Dorchester and Bristol) dealt with mediation skills whilst the Taunton workshop dealt with – “the service, process and case studies”. A summary of the feedback provided from the three events is set out below. The training is delivered free of charge as part of the Wessex contract, there may be a small per delegate charge to cover the

Mediation Skills 2009 Delegate Evaluation  
Dorchester, Bristol and Taunton



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### Personnel Changes at Wessex

**Lindsey Halford joint coordinator of Wessex Mediation with Colin Gould has recently changed her job. Lindsay has been part of Wessex since its inception and will be greatly missed. We wish her every success and happiness in her new role.**

**Wessex will continue to operate as before but Colin will coordinate the service with the support of Yvonne and Sarah who are the clients main point of contact on**

**0845 0529487**

## Mediating the skill (practiced by many) Mediation the process (performed by Wessex)

Wessex mediation offers a process by which those locked in a conflict can consider ways of moving things forward. Its quite structured—as user friendly as this sort of thing can be. It is also bound by confidentiality in the meeting. It is structured in order to ensure equality in terms of input and status of the participants. The mediator is firmly in control of the process, the parties to mediation are firmly in control of what they will agree too.

Having delivered three workshops it is clear to me that there are lots people who by using their own interpersonal skills and subject knowledge mediate in an attempt to resolve SEN disagreements. During the workshops some discussion centred around what SEN Mediation is about and how the role of the mediator differs from

that of Parental Support Services. It was good to be able to discuss these issues and clarify that Wessex Mediation is not seeking to replace any of this valuable work. However there will be times when a more structured approach is required to the resolution of conflict.

When in dispute parties often arrive at a stated point of view, (a position) which they then seek to defend and argue. Their view is the right one! The SEN Code of Practice provides for an independent “process” where, in a “without prejudice” confidential setting ,Parents and advisors can meet with LA Officers, Headteachers, SENCOs, EP's S&LTs, Social Services or whoever is part of the decision making process in an attempt to resolve the SEN disagreement by working on the

problem together for the benefit of the child. By gathering key decision makers (who have ownership of the disagreement and the authority to settle) together, it is hoped that the issues can be worked on in a cooperative manner. The process has statutory authority and as such is given due credence by the parties but is conducted in a user friendly manner that allows an openness and frankness that may not have been possible in other settings or modes of communication.

So when should such cases be referred? The backstop position is when communication has broken down however there are often opportunities that present themselves along the way to avoid the breakdown occurring if mediation is utilised at an earlier stage.

## Referral volume: all LA's to 12 May 2009

The figures below reflect the referral activity for the period September 08 as we now move into the forth Quarter .

Of the 26 closed referrals 12 progressed to mediation, 8 reaching a full agreement and 4 with partial agreements.

Referrals			Cases Used	Current case status		
Referrals to Date	Referrals ongoing	Closed Referrals		Seeking willingness	Initial visits undertaken	Joint meeting taking place
39	13	26	27	3	6	4

Of the 14 referrals that did not proceed to mediation, 4 were assisted by Wessex to an extent that mediation was not required. 1 referral was signposted elsewhere, 7 referrals were regarded as not appropriate for mediation and 2 referrals, one of the parties stated they were unwilling to progress to mediation. The above table relates to mediation activity in 12 local authorities.

### From over Page Mediator Profile: Charles Horn

Charles trained as a lawyer and worked with the British Council overseas before he became group legal director of a UK based company, leaving to work as an independent Alternative Dispute Resolution consultant in the mid-90's, and qualifying as a mediator with CEDR in 1999, mediating over 400 cases since.

“We see the same people with the same issues arising time and time again throughout their lives” observes Charles, he believes; “as a responsible society we need to transfer those learning experiences more effectively, to do better in the future.” Communication is he believes is of course the key... “and the need to focus on conflict avoidance and management, even before it enters the realm of dispute resolution” says Charles, who views any ‘problem’ simply as ‘a solution that we haven't found yet.’ In more difficult SEN cases, Charles generally increases the participation list...from the case officer to the additional needs officer, form teacher to SENCO, PPO to any professional he can convince to attend: “It's quite remarkable that there's always something important that somebody hasn't previously said, or read, or heard, or asked, or considered - which is the key to resolution, and what we look for in all mediation meetings”.