



SEND: Wider Disagreement Resolution Advisory Group meeting

27 July 2016

Summary

DfE reported on key developments that included:

Brief update on the wider implementation of the SEND reforms that included details from Statistical First Release data showing good progress and findings from the summer LA implementation survey. A range of tools and support has been provided to help local areas with process improvements and to better engage with parents: <http://ehcpjourneys.com/>.

Disagreement resolution developments, including latest (June) quarterly Tribunal appeals data and recently published statistics on mediation and appeals in the SEN2 LA survey (January 2016) show that 1,400 mediation cases were held in 2015 and over 75% were resolved without the need to appeal to the Tribunal in that year.

Tribunal pilot update: a further 4 local authorities joined the pilot in February 2016.

Closure of pilot – a request to close the Tribunal pilot with effect from 31 August was awaiting approval from Ministers. Regulations for the closure came into effect on 31 August 2016 that include Transitional Provision to allow requests for recommendations made before that date to continue until completed. The timing will help ensure the research team CEDAR has enough time to gather evidence to report to DfE by January 2017 in preparation for the final report that will be published at the same time as the Secretary of State and the Lord Chancellor lay a report on the outcome of the disagreement resolution review before Parliament in March 2017.

Judge Meleri Tudur provided an update on Tribunal matters, which included a reported rise in the number of appeals, and an overview of the pilot appeals from the Tribunal's perspective including the nature of issues raised. She confirmed the Tribunal's continuing commitment to improving the service provided, with the implementation from 1 August 2016 of a shorter appeal timetable for all appeals with a reduced timescale from registration to hearing from 22 weeks to 12 weeks, in line with the timetable previously offered to phase transfer appeals.

Mairi Ann Cullen of CEDAR from the University of Warwick, presented data from the second local authority survey and early findings on the effectiveness of mediation.

The next meeting is to be held on 20 January 2017 to discuss the final report by CEDAR and the Government's response to the findings of the disagreement resolution review, which is due to be laid in Parliament in March 2017.