

New services to resolve conflict between parents

Children in families with high levels of parental conflict are shown to have a higher risk of negative outcomes. Hertfordshire County Council has commissioned two organisations to provide free counselling and mediation to parents who want to improve their relationship (whether they are together or apart). These new services are currently operating as a pilot during 2016-17 for Broxbourne, Stevenage, Watford, Hertsmere and Welwyn Hatfield.

Couple Counselling – provided by The Counselling Foundation

- Couple counselling offers parents the space and structure to work with the issues that are affecting them and their children
- Counsellors will listen carefully to parents to make sure they clarify the problem areas in their own terms and help them decide what steps they want to take next. Counsellors will always let the work proceed at the client's pace
- Counsellors will focus the couple on how to increase stability in family life, improve communication, reducing anxiety in themselves and family members, and conflict resolution
- Both parents will need to participate, and they will be able to access 6 – 8 sessions.

Mediation – provided by Herts Young Homeless

- Mediation offers fair and unbiased support to help parents recognise for themselves what issues need to be resolved to reduce conflict
- Mediation is very practical and focuses on what needs to happen to help differences get resolved. It works best when used to prevent a situation getting to crisis point
- Mediators will not judge, tell anyone what to do, take sides or give advice. They will help parents to find their own solutions and make lasting changes in how they talk to each other, resulting in fewer arguments and improving family relationships
- Both parents will need to participate, and they will be able to access 6 – 8 sessions.

Criteria for accessing free mediation and counselling

- Must be parents or parents to be of a child or children (at least one child aged under 18, or expecting a baby)
- Both parents want to take part, improve their relationship and reduce conflict
- There must be an eCAF or Families First assessment in place
- The family must live in one of the following districts of Hertfordshire: Broxbourne, Stevenage, Watford, Hertsmere or Welwyn Hatfield.

How to refer parents to the new mediation and counselling services

1. Check the family meet the criteria above
2. Decide whether mediation or counselling is most appropriate for the family
3. Download and complete a referral form for for [mediation](#) or [counselling](#)
4. Send the completed referral form direct to the provider using [HertsFX](#) - the contact details are on the forms
5. If you do not have a [HertsFX](#) account, contact CSS@hertfordshire.gov.uk for assistance – *do not send personal data using an unencrypted email system.*

More information

The mediation and couple counselling services will be available to refer to from **17th October 2016**. You can find the referral forms plus additional tools that support this pilot in the 'Practitioners section' at www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/familiesfirst

If you have any queries, please contact CSS@hertfordshire.gov.uk
01992 555020

