What role could mediation and conciliation play preventing family/friend evictions?

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What actions could be taken to prevent homelessness arising from family/friend evictions? Under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, those at risk of homelessness within the next 56 days are owed ‘The Prevention Duty’ by their local council. Whilst amalgamated data is collected and published on prevention outcomes, there has not, to date, been empirical research exploring the connections between the interventions taken under The Prevention Duty, with the accommodation outcome. As “The Prevention Duty” is the main statutory tool applied by English councils to (attempt to) prevent homelessness, it is a subject I feel requires examination. Family/friend evictions are one of the main triggers for homelessness approaches nationally. Mediation is often mooted as a potential intervention here, but there are no studies on its efficacy. As family/friend evictions are a disproportionally high reason for homelessness in my own local authority area, and we do not offer any mediation/conciliation services, I will undertake an experiment, where this intervention will be offered to half of prevention approaches over a fixed period. I will examine if mediation/conciliation has a statistically significant impact on accommodation outcome in my council area, and hopefully provide ‘proof of concept’ for undertaking wider studies with larger sample sizes.

Nicola O’Keeffe is a Local Authority Housing Policy and Project team manager, and Chartered Member of the Chartered Institute of Housing. She has worked in local government housing/homelessness services, both operationally, and strategically, for over 15 years. She is interested in how we can create and use evidence to understand what works (and what does not), when seeking to end homelessness.