



MEDIA RELEASE 16/01/09

Muriel Gray first Patron for Additional Support Needs Mediation in Scottish schools

Broadcaster and journalist Muriel Gray is to be the first Patron for Scotland's Additional Support Needs (ASN) mediation, which helps resolve disputes between children or their parents/carers and education staff.

Education authorities are required to make provision for independent mediation by the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, which gives adults and children the right to request access to mediation services. The main service providers in Scotland are RESOLVE, Common Ground and Parent to Parent, with a total of 14 trained mediators working within Scotland handling 50 cases a year.

Muriel Gray will join a panel of speakers at the Scottish Parliament on Thursday 22 January addressing the theme 'Communication is the key'. Other speakers include Ewan Malcolm, the Director of the Scottish Mediation Network; Robert Brown MSP; and Marion Wood, Manager of the Pupil Support Division of Education and Childcare Services for East Lothian Council.

Muriel Gray said:

"Raising a child with additional support needs has its own set of challenges which can not only exhaust and demoralize a parent, but make their goals and ambitions highly charged with emotion. Similarly, many teachers have passionate views on the education of special needs children.

Speaking as the mother of a daughter with complex special needs, I couldn't be more supportive of a scheme that intends to empower all parties concerned in any conflict of opinion. To provide an independent, calm and empathic environment in which both parties can fully express their views can only be a very welcome move forward. This is a wonderful initiative which I wholeheartedly support."

Ewan Malcolm, Director of the Scottish Mediation Network, said:

"When parents and children are in conflict with their education authority, mediation is a useful and productive option. Sometimes, the underlying issues causing the problem can be addressed if people are willing sit down together and have that

difficult conversation. Folk who are willing to talk face to face with the help of a mediator to keep the discussion on track, can come up with amazing solutions. So, we are delighted to welcome Muriel Gray as a Patron willing to highlight ASN mediation in Scotland."

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Notes to Editors

1. You are invited to send a representative on Thursday 22 January at 12.30 to Committee Room 6 at the Scottish Parliament to hear the panel address an invited audience of MSPs, local authority representatives, and key practitioners in the fields of mediation services and education. Refreshments will follow and there will be an opportunity to meet Muriel Gray and other members of the panel between 1.15 and 2.00 pm. **IMPORTANT: due to security restrictions on entry to the Parliament it is important to let us know if you intend to be present at this event. Please email lgilmour@childreninscotland.org.uk to indicate your interest.**

2. Children in Scotland's independent mediation service RESOLVE was set up in 2005 to assist local education authorities in meeting the mediation requirements in the Education (Additional Support for Learning)(Scotland) Act 2004. The service is free for parents/carers and children and young people. For more information visit http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk/htmlserv_res.htm

For press quotes or further information, please contact Lynn Gilmour on 0131 222 2443, or by email – lgilmour@childreninscotland.org.uk

Children in Scotland is the national agency for voluntary, statutory and professional organisations and individuals working with children and their families in Scotland. It exists to identify and promote the interests of children and their families and to ensure that relevant policies, services and provision are of the best possible quality and able to meet the demands of a diverse society. For further information visit: www.childreninscotland.org.uk