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MEDIA RELEASE

**ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS MEDIATION
ANNOUNCES NEW PATRON**

Muriel Gray, the well-known Scottish journalist and broadcaster, has agreed to become the first ever patron of Additional Support Needs Mediation in Scotland.

Mediation is now available for parents, carers, young people and education staff as a route for resolving conflict when disagreements cannot be solved at local levels.

Sandra Mitchell, co-chair with Morag Steven of the Scottish ASN Mediation Services Forum, said:

“We believe that good communication is the key to preventing and resolving disputes so we are delighted that Muriel, an extremely talented communicator, is to endorse and support ASN Mediation and positive communication in the forthcoming national campaign in November 2008.”

She added: “The main message that we want to get across from our campaign is that *communication is the key*. We know that effective communication and treating others with respect can be the first step on the route to resolving any disagreement.”

More details of the campaign launch will be issued soon.

Background

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 legislated that all local education authorities must provide independent mediation for parents, carers and young people and staff in situations where disagreements cannot be resolved in school or at local authority level. Meeting the needs of the broad spectrum of children with additional support needs is a multifaceted and often complicated process, and it's not surprising that sometimes parents and teachers disagree.

When disputes at schools are not addressed or resolved, they can become a destructive force, spoiling working relationships. We should not underestimate the effect that badly managed conflict can have on adults and children.

RESOLVE:ASL and Common Ground Mediation are the two largest ASN Mediation Services in Scotland. They cover 20 local authority areas and provide independent mediation for all kind of situations where there are disputes within the educational framework, and have mediated in over 100 cases over the past three years with very successful outcomes, mostly repairing and restoring broken relationships between families and schools. While most councils now inform parents of children with additional support needs of their right to access independent mediation, unfortunately some families are still not aware of this option. That is one of the main reasons why a national awareness raising campaign about ASN mediation is being launched.

The Scottish ASN Mediation Services Forum is part of Scottish Mediation Network www.scottishmediation.org.uk

**For more information contact Chris Small
Tel 0131 222 2419 / email csmall@childreninscotland.org.uk**