

## **Additional Support Needs (ASN) Mediation**

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 as amended, requires every education authority to have independent mediation services in place for resolving disagreements relating to matters concerning the exercise of any of the authority's functions under the Act in relation to children and young people.

In Aberdeenshire, SACRO provides independent Additional Support Needs (ASN) Mediation Services which puts the needs and views of the child or young person at the centre of the discussion. Although they may not be involved in the actual mediation process, their views can be included in whichever way is most appropriate for the case.

Mediation is voluntary so all parties must agree to take part and services are available, free of charge, to parents, children or young people.

If a parent disagrees with anything about their child's education, they should first raise their concerns with their child's teacher. The next step is to speak to the Head Teacher or Quality Improvement Officer. If the problem cannot be resolved and the disagreement is about the education of children with additional support needs, mediation can be considered.

Mediation brings people together to work with each other to resolve a disagreement. Everyone has an opportunity to express concerns and negotiate solutions. Everyone is involved in the decision making and the focus is always on the best outcome for the child or young person. The aim of mediation is to ease the resolution of disputes, prevent disagreements from escalating and avoiding the breakdown of the relationship between parents/carers or young people and the school or Local Authority.

ASN mediation may be accessed through a request to the Head Teacher of the school attended by the child or young person or to the school's Quality Improvement Officer. A request can also be made to the local authority by directly contacting the Principal Educational Psychologist / Service Manager (Inclusion, Equity & Wellbeing) via [ecs.asnadmin@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:ecs.asnadmin@aberdeenshire.gov.uk).

The Principal Educational Psychologist / Service Manager (Inclusion, Equity & Wellbeing) will issue a referral form which requires the name, address, telephone number and email address of the person who has requested mediation along with the name of the child and the school they attend. Once completed, the person who requested mediation will forward to SACRO, an independent and impartial third sector organisation with fully trained and accredited mediators.

Once contact details of the person requesting mediation has been received by SACRO, an appointment letter will be sent to them including information on what to expect from the initial visit. SACRO will undertake a person-centred needs assessment with all parties. This will determine what support each individual will require to enable them to engage fully in the process so that everyone can articulate

their needs/wants from the process. SACRO will then develop a bespoke action plan to address those needs through the function of mediation .

An impartial and safe meeting space will be identified so that all parties can feel comfortable enough to share ideas and discussion. A virtual meeting may be appropriate.

The mediator will establish a positive and constructive atmosphere, setting ground rules and guidance for respectful and productive interaction. All meetings will have a facilitator to ensure that there is someone available if one of the parties needs a break. The mediator will help all parties identify and explore their choices whilst remaining independent and impartial throughout. Mediators will facilitate communication and help clarify points of contention or confusion. They will motivate everyone to find a way to work co-operatively towards finding a mutually acceptable solution.