

**ESRC Funded Knowledge Exchange Programme
Dispute resolution in additional support needs:
Working together to improve children's and families' experiences**

**Think Tank 1
Communicating effectively with parents of children
with additional support needs**

Venue: Room 1.18 Paterson's Land, Moray House School of Education,
University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, EH8 8AQ

Date: Thursday 19 May 2011, 9.30am – 2.30pm

Ensuring that children with additional support needs receive the help they need is clearly of critical importance, but disagreements may sometimes arise between parents and the school or local authority in deciding on the nature and extent of additional provision. The Government is keen to ensure that any issues are speedily resolved, using informal negotiation or mediation rather than court or tribunal wherever possible. However, recent research conducted by the Universities of Edinburgh and Manchester found that parents were often dissatisfied with the outcome of informal negotiation and mediation has, to date, not been extensively used. In our research, parents expressed a preference for the tribunal over mediation or adjudication on the grounds that it clarified the issues and produced enforceable recommendations. This knowledge exchange project aims to:

- consider what can be done to improve communication between parents of children with additional support needs and professionals;
- enhance understanding of different types of dispute resolution;
- identify how each dispute resolution process may be used more effectively.

This is the first think tank in a series of three. It focuses on developing a better understanding of the communication difficulties which may arise and what can be done to build more productive working relationships between parents and professionals, using mediation where appropriate. Subsequent think tanks will consider how to use the tribunal constructively and how to engage children in ASN decision-making.