

Rt. Hon. Ed Balls MP
Secretary of State for Children, Schools & Families

By hand
28 June 2007

Dear Secretary of State

As Joint Presidents of the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) we would like to congratulate you to your appointment as Secretary of State for Children, Schools & Families which is a post that is absolutely vital to securing improved outcomes for children and young people.

The Association is the national leadership organisation in England bringing together all the statutory directors of children's services appointed under the provisions of the *Children Act 2004* and other senior children's services staff working in local authorities. The Association corporately, and our members individually are deeply committed to the principles and values of the *Every Child Matters* agenda to improve outcomes for all children, young people, their families and carers. The five 'Every Child Matters' outcomes are of paramount importance; we see these outcomes as the crucial link between schools and other services to children, be they universal or targeted, and whether they are delivered by local authorities or other public services, the voluntary or the private sectors

We are aware that you will receive many similar letters to this as you take up post. For that reason, this is a short letter; we look forward to engaging with you, your Ministers and officials in more detail in due course.

We welcome the restructuring that has created a Department for Children, Schools & Families, as we welcomed the changes that led to the creation of our Association in February this year. We believe it critical that we all work together to secure both the highest standards of achievement for all children and young people, and the very best outcomes across the breadth of Every Child Matters. One of the challenges we face, and of which you are no doubt well aware, is to ensure that services for children and young people, and for adults, are effectively joined up.

Since the publication four years ago of the Green Paper *Every Child Matters*, much has been achieved by central government and local authorities working together to improve outcomes for children and young people. As we look forward to the next 4 years there a number of challenges to be addressed:

- We need to maximise the capacity of children's trust arrangements and those of Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCBs) particularly with regard to safeguarding children and young people by raising the awareness of every organisation and professional group that works with them and of the public by continuing to improve practice and embedding it throughout all provision
- We need to work towards equity of funding across the broad range of services that make up the world of integrated children's services, with funding flexibility to develop local services that are more family-focussed – continuing

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to build on collaborative working arrangements between schools, colleges and other children's services

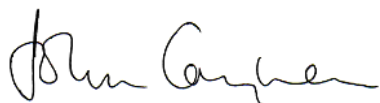
- It is clear that poverty is a major risk factor for children and young people and the role played by housing, planning, economic regeneration and leisure should not be under-estimated. These are policy areas for which directors of children's services do not have a direct statutory remit; however, we hope that as Secretary of State you will agree with us that the environment in which children and young people live, learn and play is crucially important to their well-being and that of their families
- We must work closely with the Department of Health, Strategic Health Authorities and Primary Care Trusts, as well as other health agencies, to raise the priority accorded to children's health within the performance management frameworks in the health service at every level
- As part of the Children's Inter Agency Group (CIAG), we are concerned to raise with you the crucial importance of strengthening the processes of joint commissioning of service for children and young people. We hope that as Secretary of State for Children, Schools & Families you will be keen to bring together these processes, which will present central and local government some major challenges
- We need to work to continue to strengthen and integrate the children's workforce
- We are writing also to the Secretaries of State for Home Affairs and for Justice about the policy tensions between a number of performance indicators on policing practice, specifically Offences Brought To Justice measures, and the statutory duty of directors of children's services to improve outcomes for all children and young people; early criminalization can have a devastating impact on children's prospects of achieving good outcomes.

We look forward to working with you and your officials, both through the Association and the Children's Inter-Agency Group (CIAG). We would welcome the chance to meet you, though we recognise the pressures on your time. In the meantime, we will do all we can to support you as you start with your new agenda.

Congratulations again on your appointment as Secretary of State for Children, Schools & Families.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely



John Coughlan
Joint President, ADCS



John Freeman
Joint President, ADCS

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