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Following the announcement of the outcome of Sharon Shoemith's appeal in her case against the Secretary of State, Ofsted and Haringey Borough Council, **Matt Dunkley, President of ADCS** said:

"ADCS has not commented on the details of this individual case so far and it would be inappropriate to do so now. However this case has highlighted the importance of clear lines of accountability, both locally and nationally, for the protection of vulnerable children. This includes clarity about the role of Ofsted and of the Secretary of State in reassuring the public that the system is sound, the role of the local authority as employer and provider of children's social care, and that of the Director of Children's Services as the statutory post holder. It is important that, when the public require reassurance, the key players within the system offer a considered and mature view of the complexities of child protection work and the implications of that complexity for personal accountability.

"The judgment comes at an interesting time for the role of the Director of Children's Services – a recent survey of local authorities shows that a third have, or are considering, merging the DCS role with other responsibilities. Local authorities should be free to make their own arrangements in the interests of children and families, and some will feel that there are benefits in further co-ordination of services to vulnerable adults and children. However, the judgment underlines the importance of clarity in responsibilities for the most vulnerable. What is vitally important is that local authorities ask themselves serious questions about these arrangements, does this strengthen or dilute accountability for the outcomes achieved by children and young people locally and is this clear to local residents? Is the "spine of accountability" for child protection clear and transparent? Does it provide directors and lead members with the levers they need to build excellent services for families?"

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