

## **Seizing the opportunities and shaping the role of the local authority in education – Presidential speech from the ADCS annual conference.**

Directors of Children's Services are seizing the opportunities offered by government policy, while seeking to influence government thinking on future policy direction, Matt Dunkley, president of ADCS said today.

Speaking at the Association of Directors of Children's Services Annual Conference in Manchester, Matt Dunkley said that where government has not yet expressed a position, such as on early years or on the role of the local authority in education, local government councillors and Directors should "*step up*" and lead the redesign of local services.

This should include, he said, building on local relationships with schools to improve education for all children and that even where schools were becoming academies "*structural solutions*" should not be allowed to create distance between education and other services for children. He said that this would require local authorities to "*demonstrate the value*" of their offer to schools.

As a national association, ADCS would be continuing to try to influence the direction of government policy to highlight "*potential challenges inconsistencies and unintended consequences*" where policies are being developed in different government departments in isolation. It felt at times, Mr Dunkley said, as if the role of the Director of Children's Services "*slips in and out of focus like a case of concussion*", particularly in regards to school.

Mr Dunkley continued that until roles and responsibilities of local authorities, maintained schools and academies were clear, the current debate about school funding was "*happening in a vacuum*". Referring to the government's vision for the role of the local authority in education as champion for children and parents, Mr Dunkley said he refused to be the kind of champion who cheers from the sidelines, and require the right tools to monitor performance and support improvement in schools.

### **Notes to editors**

- 1) The Association of Directors of Children's Services Ltd (ADCS) is the professional leadership association for Directors of Children's Services and senior managers in local authorities.
- 2) The ADCS annual conference on "The Changing Shape of Children's Services" is taking place at the Midland Hotel Manchester from Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> July until Friday 8<sup>th</sup> July.