

ADCS response the interim report of the Family Justice Review

31st March 2011

Responding to the interim report of the Family Justice Review, **Matt Dunkley**, Vice President of the Association of Directors of Children's Services¹ (ADCS) said:

"A review of the family justice system is long overdue – the delays and costs in the current system are unsustainable and bad for the welfare of the children concerned, and that such delays have been allowed to increase to their current levels contradicts the system's claim to put the needs of children first.

"We are therefore delighted that the review reiterates the importance of a focus on the child's needs and views and look forward to building on the recommendations made in this review to create a family court system that actually puts the welfare of the child at the centre of all decision making. Situating the Family Justice Service within the Ministry of Justice must not hinder this aim nor cause conflict or confusion with policies for vulnerable children , including in children in care, emanating from the Department for Education.

"We look forward to further discussions around the shape of the court social work service and the development of clear roles and responsibilities for case management, care planning and for ensuring the safety of children involved in both private and public proceedings. There are clear challenges around the practical implementation of these proposals that the next stage of the review will have to address and local authorities will need to be deeply involved in those decisions. Some of the recommendations will require primary legislation and structural change over a long period, but some of the issues identified in the review need a speedier response to improve the increasing delays and costs . We would like the next stage of the review to identify those areas where there are quick wins – in particular around the use of multiple assessments and the duplication of effort in managing the system."

Notes to Editors:

1. Matt Dunkley is currently Vice President of the ADCS. He becomes ADCS President on 1st April 2011.
2. The Association of the Directors of Children's Services Ltd (ADCS) is the professional leadership association of Directors of Children's Services and their senior management teams in local authorities.