

Stuart Gallimore inaugural Presidential address

(19 April 2018)

Thanks Alison.

How quickly a year passes. I recall this time last year, feeling calm and relaxed as I listened to Alison make her inaugural address and now here I am making my own not feeling nearly as relaxed or nearly as calm but what a thrill!

Like others before me, I intend to start my speech with some notes of thanks.

Firstly, to East Sussex County Council - I would like to thank the Leader of the Council, Councillor Keith Glazier, the Lead Member for Children and Families, Councillor Sylvia Tidy and the Lead Member for Education, Councillor Bob Standley all of whom have taken the time to be here today. I would also like to thank the Chief Executive, Becky Shaw. Thank you to all of you for generously allowing me time away from the ranch to carry out my ADCS duties.

To my senior staff team at the Council, who I'm delighted to say are here today, Fiona, Liz and Lou, I say thank you to you too, given you're all going to be extra busy, on a daily basis you make me look better than I am, and my PA Vicky Stanton who's always one step ahead of me.

I'm so pleased that my wife Judith and our three children – Amy, Noah and Harry-Joe - are here today too. Thank you for your love and support, Judith I couldn't do this stuff without you. Amy, Harry-Joe and Noah – I take great pride from being elected President but that pales into insignificance at the pride I have in being your Dad as you grow into remarkable young people.

The role of the DCS is perhaps the most challenging in modern local government. That role is made all the more do-able by having good professional and personal networks. My South East DCS colleagues are incredibly supportive – indeed the region seems to have become something of a repository of former ADCS Presidents - I almost said retirement home – John Coughlan, Matt Dunkley and new boy to the region, Dave Hill! I know I can rely on all of my South East colleagues to keep me grounded.

And Alison, what can one say? We've said our thanks to Alison this morning in private, but let me take this opportunity to say publicly, what a brilliant President you have been. You have given your time and energy in the most generous way. You have led us well and given the Association a new strap line – **a country that works for all children**. It's more than a strap line of course, and I shall return to that in a moment.

I am looking forward to working with Rachel Dickinson, DCS Barnsley as my Vice President – I can only hope that Rachel feels as welcome and supported as she joins the Presidential team as you made me feel. Rachel and I were members of the fabled Cohort 5 on the DCS Leadership Programme. I can see one or two others from the cohort in the audience today (hello friends). What a privilege it was to be involved in that leadership programme with you.

Recently I've been thinking about circularities...I know, I really should get out more! It's over 30 years ago since I did my CQSW at Leeds Poly. My first post-qualifying job was at Halton Council. On the day I started that job, one Mr. Andrew Webb was being interviewed for his first team leader post. I'm delighted to see you here today, Andrew. It was my passion for social justice that propelled me into social work. That passion remains alive and well – a young person's life chances and their ability to access opportunities must not be defined by their parents' past or the community they live in. Mine were not, and I'm sure that's the case for almost all of us here in this room today. It simply cannot be right that the best predictor of a child's future remains their parental wealth. But it seems to me that the working-class struggles that my mum and dad were brought up in, although it may have skipped a generation, is right back front and centre in the work we and our staff do with children and their families today. The outdoor toilet may be a thing of the past, but the indignity of shared bathroom facilities in temporary accommodation most certainly is not. Is it any wonder that we have children arrive in school not ready to learn?

We are seeing material, sometimes abject family poverty. Today, there are over 4 million children living in poverty; by 2020, the Institute of Fiscal Studies estimates there will **be five million children**. We are seeing families at our front doors or in the MASH that we have had no previous knowledge of, or engagement with. There are foodbanks up and down the land helping working families to survive. I'm really grateful for the support they do provide to support children and families, but their existence is a stain on our society. There are new glass ceilings in place for young people today, in addition to the old glass ceilings that never were quite shattered. That feels like a burning social injustice and it's our job, colleagues, to help children and young people through that. That is why we need to focus relentlessly in local and central government, in charities and in communities, on creating the setting conditions for a country that works for all children. This necessitates a wide lens view of social policy, an integrated approach that seeks to ameliorate the impacts of poor housing, family poverty, insecure work, social isolation and mental ill-health. I warmly welcome the fact that the new-ish Secretary of State Damian Hinds, and Children's Minister Nadhim Zahawi have active interests in social inclusion, that needs to move from an interest to action.

That brings me to my presidential policy priorities for the coming year. I intend to carry forward and build on the work that Alison kick started, in the ADCS position paper *A country that works for all children*. I see no reason to flip flop on presidential priorities every year...in any case, I am as you can see, more of a Doc Martin's man than a flip flop man.

So, two of my priorities for the year will be:

Number one, - making the case that a country that works for all children needs properly resourcing. Yes, that means money and I make no apology for banging that drum. The LGA has estimated that by 2020 the funding gap in children's services will be at least £2billion. I know there are sceptics in the Treasury and elsewhere who believe that because some LAs spend less than others and achieve the same or better outcomes for children, that must mean efficiencies are possible elsewhere. Let me tell you, they are not. In Councils like my own, which have long

been high performing and financially efficient – there's simply no fat left to trim; there are no more efficiencies to be made. Instead, authorities up and down the land have found themselves having to cut back on early help services, children's centres and youth provision often in the face of strong local opposition and at a time when many families are on the receiving end of cuts to wider public services, and frankly make no financial sense to cut. Cuts that we know will put additional heat into the system and reduce our ability to improve outcomes for children and families.

The danger is, however, that just like Oliver Twist, we are seen as constantly wanting more without identifying where else it might come from in a tight fiscal climate. I won't stretch the Oliver Twist reference too far – you'd have to pick a lot of pockets to generate £2billion. But, if, for the sake of argument, we accept the £2bn deficit by 2020 it is interesting to consider that in 2015/16 local authorities spent nearly £1bn transporting children to and from educational settings. Surely this is an area ripe for review when we consider all that has changed since the legislation was passed in 1944, placing a responsibility on local authorities to get children to school. Clearly there will always be children with additional needs for whom this transport is vital but in the current economic climate this cannot be a level of universal expenditure that can go un-reviewed when we look at the vital services we are cutting back on.

We've had a go at some predictive modelling to see if we can get a grip on projected rises in demand for some of the key statutory safeguarding services. I am grateful to Carole Brooks who has done this work with us.

The projections are based on historical patterns since 2010, evidenced from data returns by LAs to DfE and to ADCS for our safeguarding pressures research.

Let me give you a flavour:

- By 2022 there will be over 300,000 children with an EHC Plan. That would represent an increase of over 30% since 2010
- By 2022 there will be close to a quarter of a million Section 47 child protection enquiries undertaken. That's an increase of 180% since 2010
- By 31 March 2022, we predict there will be more than 60,000 children subjects of child protection plans. An increase of 56% since 2010
- Children in care figures increase every year, which is not necessarily a bad thing for the children concerned. By 2022, we think there'll be 77,000 children in care, an increase of 20% since 2010.

That's enough figures.

Let me tell you about **priority number two – we need a workforce that's fit for a country that works for all children**. Over the last three and a half years, the DfE's social care reform programme has focussed relentlessly on social work practice. I warmly welcome Minister Zahawi's view that his office is an advocate for social workers, I am proud of my background as a social worker. But, there is a plethora of other roles in the wider children's workforce that are absolutely central to the endeavour of improving outcomes for children and families. I wonder if the Minister could persuade the Treasury to invest in the workforce operating at the very earliest

of early help opportunities. We know that prevention is better than cure. Investing in the earliest possible help is the only way of narrowing the outcomes gap for children. And, over time it is the only way we can reduce the funding deficit in children's services.

My other two priorities are again paired. There are two cohorts of adolescents that are particularly vulnerable because they are less visible, 'hidden', missing from mainstream education. As the 1944 Act puts it, these are children "educated other than at school". I put these young people into two groups, but they do of course overlap because young people's lived experience is rarely linear.

Youngsters missing from mainstream education because they are in:

- Alternative Provision, or
- They've been permanently excluded from school (legally or otherwise), or
- Because their parents choose (or are strongly urged by school) to home educate, or
- Parents choose to send them to an unregistered educational setting – illegal school to you and I – or,
- They are without a school place because of delays in school admissions processes.

I worry about these young people because frankly being without a mainstream school place not only profoundly impacts on their outcomes but can also expose them to increased risks of radicalisation, sexual and other forms of criminal exploitation. A country that works for all children must first and foremost be a country that makes its expectations about going to school clear. Statutory school-aged children should go to a registered school – every day during term time.

That said, I have some sympathy with those parents who for ideological reasons think that home schooling is better. But, I want to be assured that parents who choose to home school are in fact competent to do so and their children have access to a broad curriculum that sets them up for adulthood. And, whilst I do not conflate the two, some parents who claim to home educate do send their children to illegal schools with extremely restricted curricular. The failure to have a register of home educated children compounds our ability to protect them.

The second group of adolescents, though smaller in number are perhaps even more vulnerable than those missing mainstream education. They are the young people who are:

- In hospital or, if they've won the lottery, have managed to get a tier 4 CAMHs bed; or
- those young people who are in sub-optimal placements because they cannot get the placement they really need, a welfare bed in a secure children's home; or
- in the secure estate. LA children's services have done a really good job of reducing the number of young people in custody; down from around 3,000 a

few years ago, to just under 1,000 today, although numbers are beginning to rise again. Those of you who have a STC or a YOI on your patch will know precisely what I mean when I say it's difficult to balance one's general duty as a DCS to promote and safeguarding the health and wellbeing of children in your area, with your specific responsibilities to individual children on your patch, who are at risk of significant harm.

I intend to make a lot of noise about parlous state of the secure estate.

A word on sector-led improvement and the development of Regional Improvement Alliances if I may.

Sector-led improvement is what it says on the tin - local authorities taking responsibility not only for their own performance but for the performance of the sector as a whole. Therefore, ADCS has been working with the LGA and Solace on developing RIAs – a model of improvement that aims to catch local authorities before they fall and puts the sector in a central role in the improvement journey of children's services. The development of the DfE's Partners in Practice programme further strengthens the view that the skills, knowledge and expertise for support and improvement lies within the sector. Looking back only a couple of years ago this would have been unthinkable, with some holding the view that the experts were outside the system not within it often at significant cost and limited benefit to the local authority involved. Improvement can never be the prerogative of the few but must involve harnessing the expertise of the many. Every LA has something to give, every LA has something to learn.

Although a regional approach cannot and will not guarantee authorities don't go into intervention, a more open regional approach that presupposes all authorities will be open with their peers about the challenges they face, the help they need or the support they can provide, can only be a good thing and reduces the likelihood of intervention. Put this alongside the more proportionate ILACS inspection regime and there is clear cause for optimism that we are moving in the right direction.

Speaking of moving in the right direction, it's time for me to conclude my remarks. I am looking forward to my year as ADCS President, not least because I shall get to do my other two big speeches as President in the fair city of Manchester which has some of the very best record shops in the country. One must console oneself somehow in the fallow years when Glastonbury is not on!

Thank you.

I'm delighted that Indra Morris, Director General at the DfE has been able to join us to say a few words, Indra, over to you...