

**DEA response to DCSF Time To Talk Consultation
for inputting at www.dfes.gov.uk/timetotalk/airyourviews.cfm
October 2007**

Question 1

What have been your best experiences of support for children, young people and their families?

We welcome the creation of DCSF in that support for children, young people and their families is best when joined up.

Our experience concurs with the findings of the Primary Review Community Soundings that although there is “a deeper pessimism about the world in which today’s children are growing up”, “Pessimism turned to hope when witnesses felt they had the power to act”

(<http://www.primaryreview.org.uk/Publications/Interimreports.html>).

The Primary Review also recognises the importance of the global context. This is essential in understanding significant issues that affect young people.

Question 2

What would you stop or improve about support for children, young people and families?

For children to be ‘happy, healthy and successful’ there needs to be less separation between child as learner and as client/service user. The focus on learning provides a framework for support.

The extent of testing and league tables tend to distort learning and disempower learners.

Support should be responsive to the issues that matter to and impact on young people.

Question 3

What needs to happen so that support is tailored to meet the needs of individual children and young people?

Schools need to become more democratic for both students and the school workforce in the sense of greater dialogue taking place.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child needs to be included explicitly in the curriculum and in professional development for the children’s workforce. Article 42 says ‘States Parties undertake to make the principles and provisions of the Convention widely known, by appropriate and active means, to adults and children alike’

Wellbeing stems from: optimism for a better future, potential to act on it; exploring issues that matter to you; sharing action with others; being able to define for yourself what communities you belong to. These need to be central to support.

There needs to be recognition by all policy makers and practitioners that every child is part of a global society. The children's workforce needs support to respond to this.

Question 4

What do you think your role is and what more could you do for children to be happy, healthy and safe?

DEA promotes 'education that puts learning in a global context, fostering critical and creative thinking; self-awareness and open-mindedness towards difference; understanding of global issues and power relationships; and action and optimism for a better world'. This is very relevant to the Children's Plan.

We have 250 member organisations who support our mission. These organisations could be engaged in the education system to support teachers and learners to get a more global education, which would contribute to the five outcomes.

Question 5

What is the role of parents - mums, dads, carers - and what more support do they need?

Question 6

What is the role of the local community and what more can they do?

The focus on 'local community' as a specific and clear actor as in the question leads to policy which is not based in reality.

Young people have multiple identities and belong to more 'communities' than one defined purely by geography. There is a danger in policy makers/ service providers imposing their conception of young people's geographical and cultural identities on them.

Local communities are shaped by what happens globally. Global issues can provide a way in to understanding local issues. As well as reinvigorating learning, a more explicit focus on the global dimension can lead to a deeper understanding of the school as a community and the school in the community when localities are seen as meeting points for global interaction as described by expressions such as 'the world in our neighbourhood' and 'the global in the local'.

In thinking about what type of education system should be enabled to flourish, more sophisticated national debate on the aims of education would be a good starting point. An unsophisticated consumerist understanding of education that sees education as a product that you get, or as purely for training for the labour market, does not lead to young people's wellbeing.

The media often plays a negative role in its portrayal of young people.

Question 7

What is the role of Government and what more could they do?

Children and young people need to be able to access support at places and times that are suitable for them and on their own terms.

Ring fence youth service funding in LAs to at least meet targets set out in Transforming Youth Work

Support Citizenship Education, especially teacher training, and the humanities generally.

Put a greater emphasis on wellbeing and on learning. 'Standards' does not necessarily equate to quality on current measures.

The children's workforce need more time to reflect on their work and develop professionally.

DCSF should fund the voluntary sector which is supporting education, including the national network of DECAs (www.globaldimension.org.uk/localsupport)

Question 8

What more needs to happen to keep children and young people out of trouble?

Education is for more than training for the world of work or education for a consumer society. The causes of young people's disengagement can be the result of government policy, for example, the testing regime in schools does not contribute to young people's enjoyment. A sense of optimism for the future is essential.

Young people must be seen as providing solutions not only as the cause of problems.

More needs to be done to prevent negative labelling of young people.

The government needs to follow through on its commitment to provide 'places to go and things to do' that are genuinely attractive and accessible to children and young people. This should include a variety of opportunities and trained and resourced staff.

Question 9

Do you have any further comments?

We would welcome more detailed discussion of these issues