

2.2 The future

RCN welcomes the Department's efforts to reform an education system which is failing too many children generally and rural children in particular. RCN urge the department publicly to paint a picture of what the reformed system will look like, emphasising how the changes will benefit all students and all schools and highlight in particular how the well documented challenges of delivery in a rural context will be addressed or mechanisms created to carry forward discussion on same. RCN feel that the draft order relies too heavily on the way things are rather than focusing on how they could be. The Department should consider creating the space to facilitate wider discussion and input to promote increased knowledge, understanding and community ownership of the future challenges.

2.3 A way forward

For its part RCN has embarked upon a pilot programme in the rural west which aims to explore how the range of stakeholders involved in education delivery in a rural context and those in rural communities can be provided with the opportunity to explore options for the future. Through providing the space for dialogue RCN hopes to promote conversations:

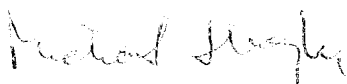
- between and within the community;
- between the community and the service providers;
- between different service providers; and
- between the service providers and Government Departments and funders.

Through this work we hope to promote and progress the debate on the challenges of rural education. Through building capacity within the community, to encourage engagement in local education development and delivery decision making and through promoting dialogue between the key stakeholders, enhanced trust and confidence can be developed, relationships built and creative solutions identified.

3.0 Conclusion

RCN hope that you find these comments useful. Should you require any further information or would like to discuss further the work we are undertaking please do not hesitate to contact Gareth Harper or myself.

Yours sincerely



Michael Hughes
Director