

**CURRICULUM VITAE**

Until December 2008, Daryl Agnew was a Children's Services Advisor with the Department for Children, Schools and Families. She has been a HMI, a registered inspector with Ofsted, and deputy director of a local education authority. She began her teaching career as an English and drama teacher at a Sheffield comprehensive school. She joined Navigate in January 2009 as full time Director of the Group's consultancy services.

**For someone who has spent her whole working life in education, it is something of a surprise to hear that you left school early. How did that happen?**

"It wasn't by choice. I had one of those old-fashioned fathers who believed that education after sixteen wasn't important for girls and insisted I leave school. I became a trainee with Southampton City Council which was a really useful grounding in local government but I really wanted to be a teacher. In those days, if you worked for three years you could get a grant to study for a degree independently of your parents.

**Why teaching?**

Like lots of people who have had a good experience of education I was very attracted to teaching. The school I went to had a strong academic tradition but also provided a well rounded, liberal

education. Sport, arts and drama were very important parts of my school experience. You know when people say, "Where were you when President Kennedy was assassinated?" Well, I was rehearsing in a Gilbert and Sullivan

school production! I loved being a student and spent four years in London where I did my teaching practices. I then moved to Sheffield and taught in comprehensive schools in the inner city.

**What came next?**

For seven years I taught English and drama. I really enjoyed teaching and especially being involved in extra curricular activities. I ran drama clubs and produced the school plays. In 1983 I was appointed director of a curriculum development project funded by Sheffield and the Equal Opportunities Commission about sexism in education. I was later appointed to an advisory post for equal opportunities, one of the first such posts outside of London at that time.

**Is this the beginning of your interest in what is now called 'school improvement'?**

Yes, when I was in the Advisory Service,



Sheffield set up a unique school focused development programme for teachers, in partnership with the two universities in the city. Equal opportunities was a core component of a year long secondment programme concerned with the management of change and improving teaching and learning. In many respects, the programme was ahead of its time. My next move to Barnsley was as the adviser for 14-19 education. As a general adviser, I had responsibility for a group of schools and we carried out 'school reviews' that were in some ways a forerunner of the Ofsted school inspections.

**How did you get involved in the wider canvas – working directly with local authorities?**

Since working in Sheffield, I'd always been interested in the impact that a local authority can have on schools. As an HMI, I became part of Ofsted's LEA inspection division and visiting a wide range of local councils you become very aware of the difference the culture of a department can make, the importance for schools of local authority leadership, from both senior officers and elected members. Good well run local councils are a vital part of the education mix, providing democratic accountability and leadership that can support and enable schools to thrive. Sometimes though, the welcome could be a bit overwhelming. I remember one of my first primary school visits where the headteacher kept referring to me as 'Her Majesty's Inspector'. One of the children

asked if I had been sent by the Queen. I didn't have the heart to tell him I had only been in the job about a fortnight.

**And your next move?**

I then spent about 18 months as deputy director in Haringey – this was before the integration of children's services – and although I enjoyed the job tremendously, I was commuting weekly. My youngest child was still at school and I had no desire to uproot. I then joined the DFES as an adviser and after a further period working with a range of London boroughs I returned to the Yorkshire and Humber region.

**What was your role with the department?**

As a Children's Services Adviser, the major focus is on the implementation of Every Child Matters, working with local authorities on the integration of their services and the establishment of Children's Trusts. The role was both a monitoring role on behalf of DCSF but also about providing challenge and support.

**What do you do when you are 'off-duty'?**

I still retain my interest in the arts and enjoy going to live music, films and especially the theatre. I've just been to a terrific revival of 'A Taste of Honey' at the Royal Exchange in Manchester. One of the things I still miss about being a drama teacher is being involved in school drama productions – particularly in the run-up to Christmas. I would just love to do that again.

**Sometimes the welcome could be a bit overwhelming**