

10 February 2005

GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSALS ON FALSE ALLEGATIONS WARMLY WELCOMED BY NASUWT

Commenting on NASUWT's formal response to the DfES consultation on *Proposals for Dealing with Allegations against Staff*, which closes on 10 February, **Chris Keates, General Secretary of NASUWT**, the largest union representing teachers and headteachers throughout the UK, said:

"These proposals reflect the vigorous representations made by NASUWT to the Government. They build on the commitment given in the DfES *Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners* published in July last year and I warmly welcome them.

"The cases NASUWT submitted for joint critical review between the Union and DfES officials to inform the development of the proposals highlighted the inadequacy and injustice of the current system.

"The consultation document builds upon that joint work and addresses many of the concerns NASUWT identified.

"Although the measures suggested do not include a statutory right to anonymity for those against whom an allegation is made, the Association of Chief of Police Officers' guidance makes it absolutely clear that anonymity up to the point of charge must be preserved. This is a very important development. It has the potential to be highly effective when combined with the new procedure to identify, in a matter of days, rather than months or years, whether there is any substance to an allegation.

"Experience from NASUWT casework has demonstrated that the longer a case is under investigation the more likely it is to attract media attention.

"NASUWT will monitor closely the impact of proposals once they are implemented fully and welcomes the stated intention of the Government to do likewise.

"NASUWT has suggested in its response to the consultation a number of areas where the proposals can be strengthened, but overall they represent a major step forward in striking the right balance between protecting teachers and their families from the trauma and devastation of false, malicious and exaggerated allegations to which all those who work with children are so vulnerable and ensuring that children are protected from abuse.

"These proposals are another excellent example of the benefits which can be secured not only for our members but for teachers in general through working in social partnership with the Government.

"As these proposals regrettably relate only to teachers in England, NASUWT will press, through the appropriate channels, for their implementation in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland where teachers are equally vulnerable."