

News Release

## **Education specialists engage with employers and relocation professionals to support globally mobile families**

**Thursday 25 February 2016** – International schools and education consultants joined HR, employers, and mobility and destination services providers at London's Institute of Directors on 19 February to share perspectives, knowledge and best practice at *Re:locate* Global's first International Education Forum.

With cross-border working and overseas assignments increasing, the event, which attracted more than 40 delegates, encouraged deeper understanding and dialogue around how schools, employers, HR, mobility and destination services providers could support families in making the right education and schooling choices, whether they were undertaking an international assignment or a domestic relocation.

The event was a useful opportunity for schools and other education professionals to understand the process behind relocation and global mobility, discover what employers need to make informed decisions about school choices, and engage with the employers and relocation professionals who are influencing and supporting parents embarking on a relocation move or an international assignment.

Highlighting the importance of this first-of-its-kind event, Fiona Murchie, *Re:locate*'s managing editor, said, "For employees with families asked to go on an international assignment or to relocate to support a project in their home country, sourcing appropriate school places is paramount.

"Global mobility surveys tell us that family issues, including education, are one of the main reasons for assignment failure. We know that assignment failure can be so costly to employers, as well as individuals and their families, and sometimes, without the reassurance of a school place, people may refuse the assignment or relocation move.

"To help employers to support families engaged in global growth, we need to understand where people have knowledge gaps, what their challenges are, and what they would find most useful. We can do this better by engaging, working together, sharing knowledge and creating solutions, as we are doing today."

Fiona Murchie pointed out that, although some parts of the world, including Asia Pacific and the Middle East, were well known to have shortages of school places, moves to destinations like Europe could present their own challenges, as the schools most popular with relocating families were often oversubscribed.

Given the shortage of international schools outside the capitals and major cities of the UK and Europe, parents need support from their employers if they are to find appropriate schools. The services of an education consultant who knows the state and private systems inside out can be invaluable in allaying parents' concerns, as Debbie Bowker, of Bowker Consulting, confirmed.

### **Enabling good decisions**

Representatives from schools in the UK, the US, the Middle East, China, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Spain and Hong Kong joined HR and mobility practitioners to give presentations and participate in roundtable discussion based on the question 'Do we do enough to help people make decisions?'

During a day rich in insights and discussion, key topics included finding schools in the global mobility context, growth trends in the international schools market, helping parents to choose a school, international curricula, exploring education options in the Middle East and Asia Pacific, and settling children and supporting the family.

In her presentation, Diane Glass, business development director at the International School Consultancy, suggested that employers looking to ensure smooth moves should get to know schools and what they offered.

"The international schools market has almost tripled in size since the year 2000, and I foresee this figure will double again over the next ten years," said Ms Glass. "In Dubai alone, there are 255 international schools. There are 21 cities around the world that have more than 100 international schools, so there is a lot of choice – more options for matching the right child with the right school."

As Dr Richard Pearce, a consultant in international education and former international school admissions officer, pointed out, "International education is not a system; it's an arena." Because of this lack of standardisation, particularly across curricula, and the fact that not all schools are accredited, it can be hard for HR to advise relocating parents on the best options and the calibre of a school.

An added complexity is that, while the numbers of expatriate students in international schools continue to increase, 80 per cent of international school students around the world now come from wealthy local families.

Diane Glass believes that the demand from local families for quality international education and schools is a positive development for families in global transition. "For a start, there is far more availability," she said. "There are many international schools located in most major cities around the world now, and most of the main relocation destinations."

It is important, though, that relocation professionals are aware of the immediate challenges facing families as a result of demographic shifts. "There is more competition for places, both for expatriate and for local students, and there are more schools at capacity with long waiting lists, Diane Glass said. "Places like Hong Kong, for example, have big problems over demand."

With this in mind, Ms Glass spoke directly to professionals helping families to place children in one of the thousands of international schools across the world.

“Meeting children’s learning needs is the singular biggest challenge for parents during relocation,” she said. “So, what can you do to ensure the best possible outcome for relocating families? The first thing to do is to know the schools and make sure you’re fully informed of all the available international schools, not just two or three of them, in the area.”

“You need to develop a relationship with the admissions director at the schools. You need to understand the unique offerings of the schools and know that there are regional variations, and develop ongoing relationships.”

### **Supporting children and families**

A major theme to emerge from the sessions was the importance of schools in supporting children and families through their transitions to ensure a successful relocation. The importance of getting the right fit between children and schools was emphasised by speaker after speaker.

Dr Richard Pearce told delegates, “The most important thing is getting the fit right, because a good fit means good learning – quite apart from avoiding the problems that come from a bad fit. When a child arrives in a new country, they bring their early training with them. If it isn’t recognised, there will be a bad fit. There’s a risk of culture shock.”

Andrew Scott, Dwellworks’ vice president of account management, Europe, had a unique perspective as a provider and procurer of services. He described the role of destination service providers in finding homes and schools for relocating employees, helping to open up the dialogue about what is needed from schools in order for employers and relocation management companies to help relocating parents make choices about schools and curricula.

He also explained the importance of matching school and housing requirements and the desired flexibility around admissions and entry to meet business needs.

There were plenty of tips from employers around the role of schools in supporting children and families through transition to ensure a successful relocation, including the importance of language and cultural immersion and mother-tongue programmes, which can enable families to be globally mobile and help ensure retention.

A very successful event ended with the question ‘Do internationally educated students have the edge in today’s global marketplace?’ There was plenty of encouragement here for HR looking for future talent to grow their organisations.

In her closing remarks, Fiona Murchie said, “It is fantastic to see HR, mobility and education coming together to share challenges and solutions. It’s clear from the response we’ve had and everyone’s involvement here that there is an appetite for greater collaboration on this issue, and that employers, educators and service providers care about people and families and want to support them.

“Today is a small step towards sharing ideas about how companies can grow internationally and how important it is to support relocating employees and families.”

The event saw the official launch of *Re:locate* Global’s new annual *Guide to International Education & Schools*, which ensures that HR and employers have enough information at their fingertips to deal confidently with parents who need school places in their new location, to understand the education and family issues involved, and to make fair and informed decisions around education provision and support for families. Directories of schools, school associations and suppliers are included.

Schools and school associations wishing to advertise and be included in the online directories should call Bridget or Susana on +44 (0)1892 891334, or email [ads@relocatemagazine.com](mailto:ads@relocatemagazine.com)

- ENDS -

For press enquiries and photos, please contact:

Claire Tennant-Scull, online editor

[claire@relocatemagazine.com](mailto:claire@relocatemagazine.com), Tel +44 (0)1892 891334

Fiona Murchie, managing editor

[fiona@relocatemagazine.com](mailto:fiona@relocatemagazine.com), Tel +44 (0)1892 891334 or Mob +44 (0)7836 504483

General editorial

[editorial@relocatemagazine.com](mailto:editorial@relocatemagazine.com) Tel +44 (0)1892 891334 Fax +44 (0)1892 891336

Website: <http://www.relocatemagazine.com/>

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## Notes for Editors

*Re:locate* Global is the leading independent multimedia publisher for the relocation and global mobility market, providing thought leadership, practical information, news and features for HR, global mobility managers, global teams, and those relocating, operating or setting up new operations overseas.

It is unique in combining coverage of the hard topics, such as immigration and tax, with the softer employee support issues, from schools to property, cultural awareness and partner careers. Its media and events (which include the prestigious *Re:locate* Awards) not only showcase thought leadership across management, HR and global mobility, but also help to shape the agenda across the many sectors that contribute to managing relocation and supporting relocating employees and their families.

Underpinned by more than 25 years' experience in global mobility, *Re:locate* has been established for ten years. Its senior team combines understanding of the HR and global mobility market with business drivers and a knowledge of management thinking and the wider impacts on company and regional growth caused by changing global markets, demographics, economics and geo-political factors.

The company's mission is to make connections, build networks, create opportunities for business, and enable the successful relocation of employees and their families, ensuring that organisations flourish in a globally mobile world.

The *Re:locate* website, [relocateglobal.com](http://relocateglobal.com), is the gateway to a range of influential multichannel, multimedia products and services. Updated daily and reaching 200 countries, it includes regional and subject-specific digital magazines and is the online home of a fast-growing community of HR, global managers, relocation professionals and experts dedicated to global mobility.