

'Every child matters,' says Brown

Chancellor Gordon Brown has spoken of how the death of his baby daughter Jennifer helped teach him that "every child is precious".

Speaking at the Hay festival in Powys, Mr Brown said the experience "made me believe that every child matters, they deserve our best endeavours".

"We have a duty as a society for every child to make the best of themselves."

He was invited to talk about his book, *Courage*, the proceeds of which are going to the Jennifer Brown Foundation.

The chancellor's daughter died in 2002. He and his wife Sarah now have two children, aged three and 10 months.

Mr Brown told an audience of more than 1,000 that providing an education for the 80m primary school age children who are without it and preventing five million child deaths from disease were "something that this generation could achieve".

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An overflow area at the Hay festival, with Gordon Brown's event a sell-out

In a wide-ranging interview with Mariella Frostrup, Mr Brown promised to draw up proposals for constitutional reform "within a few weeks" intended to "create a better mechanism for people to become more involved".

Gordon Brown

'Taken seriously'

He praised the Make Poverty History movement and recognised how people were turning to pressure groups more than political parties.

Mr Brown, who is soon to take over as prime minister, said he had learned over the last 10 years that politics was not just about "pulling a lever and dictating from on high".

"I'm saying I've changed my view, I don't think you can solve problems without consulting people."

Rather than a government of the people it was "government involving the people".

He recognised people could e-mail, blog, text and petition, and had also in recent months "privately and quietly" experienced for himself citizens' forums.

"People deserve to have their views taken seriously, not just instant response - debate.

"I'd like to usher in a great national debate, where people can contribute and where we are ready to listen and learn," he added.

MP opt-out

During audience questions Mr Brown won applause when he criticised the freedom of information exemption for MPs' expenses.

"It will be corrected, I hope," he said.

On the media glare he and his family will face when he becomes prime minister, Mr Brown said he had to accept it but would want to protect his children.

"People want to know who you are, what you're doing and what makes you tick. People have a right to know all that in modern politics."

But he derided the Big Brother culture where people were "famous just from appearing on TV," rather than achieving or inventing something.

Mr Brown said the world had changed from the one he grew up in, with children exposed to the internet, commercials and "video violence" .

As for the government's role, he said: "We should be there to do more. I don't consider this the nanny state, not censoring or being heavy-handed, but parents and teachers need our support to deal with a more complicated set of problems than my

Four of Mr Brown's eight heroes, featured in his book *Courage*

parents had to deal with."