

Member engagement and the NFER research programme

Purpose of report

For discussion and direction.

Summary

This report sets out proposals for further member engagement with the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and includes the NFER's Education and Children's Services Funded Research Programme from Winter/Spring 2012 in **Appendix A**.

Recommendations

Members are asked to consider:

1. the most effective way to increase member involvement in the NFER research programme;
2. if the role of member champion for Children and Young People Board commissioned research should be developed;
3. and if so, if they would be prepared to become a champion for individual research projects.

Action

LGA Officers to proceed as directed.

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Background

1. At the January Children and Young People Board members discussed potential areas for commissioned research activity during the 2012/13 financial year. As part of this discussion, it was noted that the research programme should be member-led and that there was a need for greater member involvement in the individual projects. At a subsequent discussion at the Office Holders meeting on the 29 February it was agreed that member engagement be put on the agenda at the March Children and Young People Board.
2. At the Office Holders meeting, Councillor Lakin (in his role as NFER Programme Champion) described the importance of a member-led programme where areas for commissioned research work were generated by Children and Young People Board members and other lead members. Office Holders agreed that a member-led programme would help to ensure that any research commissioned would be on issues that were of real concern to members at the local level and that outputs would be of benefit to local authorities. Members are asked to agree that LGA officers contact lead members through the lead member networks and ask them to suggest areas for research. Suggestions would then be collated and a draft programme of work developed for Children and Young People Board to consider at the July 2012 Board meeting.
3. The important role of Children and Young People Board members was also discussed. LGA officers are seeking approval for the proposal that each commissioned project has a member champion from the Children and Young People Board. The benefits to research projects of a member champion include:
 - 3.1. sense checking of project proposals to ensure that they are focused around local needs and issues; and
 - 3.2. that any outputs from the research (for example, research reports and papers) meet the needs of members and officers at the local level.
4. The role of champion will depend on the nature of the project but it is likely that it could include:
 - 4.1. providing comment on the research proposal developed by LGA officers and NFER research staff in advance of formal project sign-off;
 - 4.2. reviewing research tools including draft questionnaires and interview guides;

28 March 2012

Item 3

- 4.3. if appropriate, being interviewed as part of the project;
 - 4.4. providing a sense-check of the draft report;
 - 4.5. being a member of a small Steering Group. Generally the Steering Group would meet twice during the duration of a project; and
 - 4.6. leading discussion on project findings at Children and Young People Board meetings.
5. Two Board members (Councillors Bellotti and Lakin) are currently project champions and members are asked to consider if developing the champion role to all NFER projects would be useful and if so, if they would be prepared to become champions for one or more projects during 2012/13?