

Children and Young People Board

Agenda

Wednesday 28 March 2012
11.00am

The Westminster Suite (8th floor)
Local Government House
Smith Square
London
SW1P 3HZ

To: Members of the Children and Young People Board
cc: Named officers for briefing purposes

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LGA Children and Young People Board

28 March 2012

There will be a meeting of the LGA Children and Young People Board at:

11.00am on Wednesday 28 March 2012 in the Westminster Suite (8th floor), Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ.

Attendance Sheet

Please ensure that you sign the attendance register, which will be available in the meeting room. It is the only record of your presence at the meeting.

Apologies

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Labour: Aicha Less: 020 7664 3263 email: aicha.less@local.gov.uk
Conservative: Luke Taylor: 020 7664 3264 email: luke.taylor@local.gov.uk
Liberal Democrat: Evelyn Mark: 020 7664 3235 email: libdem@local.gov.uk
Independent: Group Office: 020 7664 3224 email: independent.group@local.gov.uk

Location

A map showing the location of Local Government House is printed on the back cover.

LGA Contact

Lucy Ellender Tel: 020 7664 3173 Fax: 020 7664 3232;
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Children and Young People Board

Date: 27.10.11

Children and Young People Board - Membership 2011/2012

Councillor	Authority
Conservative (6)	
David Simmonds [Chairman]	Hillingdon LB
Paul Carter	Kent CC
David Pugh	Isle of Wight Council
Baroness Shireen Ritchie	Kensington & Chelsea RB
Derrick Murphy	Norfolk CC
Robert Light	Kirklees MBC
Substitutes:	
Susie Charles	Lancashire CC
Roy Perry	Hampshire CC
John Osman	Somerset CC
Labour (5)	
Rita Krishna	Hackney LB
John Merry CBE [Vice Chair]	Salford City
Catharine Grundy	Birmingham City
Paul Lakin	Rotherham MBC
Anne Burns	Cumbria CC
Substitutes:	
Ebrahim Adia	Bolton MBC
Catherine McDonald	Southwark LB
Liberal Democrat (3)	
David Bellotti	Bath & NE Somerset Council
Liz Green [Deputy Chair]	Kingston upon Thames RB
Kath Pinnock	Kirklees MBC
Substitutes:	
Peter Downes	Huntingdonshire DC
Independent (1)	
Apu Bagchi [Deputy Chair]	Bedford BC
Substitutes	
Gillian Ford	Havering LB
Paul Cullen	Richmondshire DC

LGA Children and Young People Board Attendance 2011-2012

Councillors	6.9.11	20.10.11	25.01.12	28.03.12	21.05.12	16.07.12
Conservative Group						
David Simmonds	Yes	Yes	Yes			
Paul Carter	No	No	No			
David Pugh	Yes	Yes	Yes			
Baroness Shireen Ritchie	Yes	No	Yes			
Derrick Murphy	No	Yes	Yes			
Robert Light	Yes	No	Yes			
Labour Group						
Rita Krishna	Yes	No	No			
John Merry CBE	No	Yes	No			
Catharine Grundy	Yes	Yes	No			
Paul Lakin	Yes	Yes	Yes			
Anne Burns	No	Yes	Yes			
Lib Dem Group						
David Bellotti	Yes	Yes	Yes			
Liz Green	Yes	Yes	Yes			
Kath Pinnock	Yes	Yes	No			
Independent						
Apu Bagchi	Yes	Yes	No			
Substitutes						
Susie Charles	Yes	Yes				
Roy Perry	Yes	Yes	Yes			
Catherine McDonald	Yes	Yes	Yes			
John Osman		Yes				
Pete Robbins			Yes			
Chris Maines			Yes			
Paul Cullen			Yes			

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Children and Young People Board

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Westminster Suite (8th Floor), Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

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	For discussion:	
1.	The Council Role in Education	3
	Lord Hill, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools, will attend to discuss the role of the Education Funding Agency, which will be launched on 2 April. There will also be an opportunity to discuss the recently published action learning research on the evolving council role in education.	
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Date of Next Meeting: 21 May 2012, Local Government House

The Council Role in Education

Purpose of report

To provide background information for the discussion with Lord Hill about the launch of the Education Funding Agency on 2 April and for the Board's discussion about the interim report of the LGA/Department for Education (DfE) action research into the evolving council role in education.

Summary

Lord Hill, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools, will attend to discuss the role of the Education Funding Agency, which will be launched on 2 April. The interim report of the action research on the council role in education that LGA is co-funding with DfE has recently been published and this report provides background information to inform the discussion at the meeting.

Recommendation

This report is to inform the discussion on the council role in education.

Action

To be taken forward by officers as directed by members of the Board.

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The Council Role in Education

The Education Funding Agency (EFA)

1. The Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) and Partnerships for Schools (PFS) will cease current activities at the end of March 2012. Their responsibilities and staff, along with a number of DfE staff, will move to the new Education Funding Agency (EFA) from 1 April 2012. The EFA will have between 750 – 800 staff, with 580 staff transferring from YPLA.
2. The YPLA is responsible for education funding for 16-19 year olds and for directly funding and overseeing the performance of academies. The Department for Education (DfE) deals directly with councils on schools funding for 0 – 16 year olds. The EFA will have a wider remit than the YPLA and will fund the education system for 3-19 year olds (or up to 25 for learners with a disability), including Academies, free schools, maintained schools and sixth form colleges. It will be responsible for the allocation and payment of approximately £50 billion revenue and capital funding each year and for the delivery of capital programmes.
3. A list of the functions of the EFA, taken from the DfE website, is attached as **Appendix A**.
4. In the run-up to the publication of the School's White Paper in 2010 the LGA lobbied intensively for the abolition of the YPLA, with its functions devolved to councils or taken on by DfE without the need for an additional bureaucratic tier between central and local government. The Chairman and his predecessor, Baroness Ritchie, have met with Lord Hill on two occasions to discuss the LGA's ideas for streamlining and localising the YPLA's (and subsequently the EFA's) remit. Our suggestions included:
 - 4.1. allowing councils to take over the calculation which replicates local schools funding formulae for academies on the basis that councils already do this for maintained schools and YPLA involvement is unnecessary duplication of a function that can be more cost-effectively delivered by councils for all school locally;
 - 4.2. allowing councils to take on the current roles discharged by the YPLA in relation to financial assurance for academies on a similar basis to that outlined above;
 - 4.3. allowing councils to take over the YPLA's functions in relation to school improvement and intervention for academies, to allow councils to fulfil their statutory duties to "promote high standards and the fulfilment of potential" of local pupils and fulfil the role proposed for them in the Schools White Paper

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“as champions of educational excellence”, for all local schools, without having to raise issues about the performance of local academies in different way with the YPLA, EFA and the Secretary of State; and

- 4.4. disbanding the YPLA and EFA’s regional structure, which means that it has to maintain 10 separate offices, which is only necessary if it is duplicating the detailed local functions of councils in replicating local funding formulae, financial assurance; and driving school improvement locally.
5. We have also proposed that in council areas where more than half of secondary schools are academies, the functions of the YPLA and EFA in relation to funding, financial assurance, monitoring performance and intervention in the case of underperformance should revert to the local council. We have argued that in those areas councils will have already demonstrated their willingness to take on the more strategic council role in the local education system envisioned by the Schools White Paper and that those councils should be trusted to take on this role for all local schools, including academies.

Interim report of the DfE/LGA action research on the evolving council role in education

6. The interim report of the action research that LGA is jointly funding with DfE has been published and a copy has been sent to the members of the Board. It is based on evidence from initial fieldwork visits to each of the nine councils taking part in the research; interviews with key national stakeholders, including LGA members on the Ministerial Advisory Group; and a brief review of relevant published literature and research outcomes.
7. The interim report presents a positive picture and demonstrates that councils and schools are working together effectively at a local level to tackle the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities presented by a more autonomous schools system. It is a particularly welcome finding that:

“Without exception, all the local authorities taking part in this research have recognised and sought to respond to the vision for a more autonomous and self-improving school system.”
8. Other findings of interest include:
 - 8.1. There were distinctive differences in approach between the primary and secondary sectors. Councils have been more light-touch and arms-length with secondary schools which they feel have the capacity, know-how and experience to thrive in an autonomous system alone or in partnership with other schools and academies. Primary schools, especially small schools, on the other hand, feel less confident about ‘going it alone’ and councils perceive a greater risk of fragmentation across the primary sector if there is no overarching local vision and closer support as the system evolves.

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- 8.2. Academies were keen to see the council taking an effective local leadership role on issues of strategic importance which went beyond the ability of schools to manage individually or collectively. They wanted the council to offer good quality services and were happy to buy into these where they offered good value for money.
- 8.3. On a day to day basis, local authorities have continued to discharge their responsibilities for ensuring the sufficiency of school places in the same way as they did prior to the Academies Act and the growth in the number of autonomous schools.
- 8.4. Of the three areas which form the focus of the Research, school improvement is the one which has undergone the most radical transformation over the last 18 months. In response to the direction set in the schools White Paper, and the ending of the national strategies and other ring-fenced grants, all the nine local authorities have fundamentally reshaped their school improvement service.
- 8.5. Six of the nine councils saw ensuring that vulnerable children were supported to achieve their potential as the most important aspect of their future role. They were explicit that their core focus had shifted from the universal to the targeted.
9. Key issues highlighted in the report, which will be the focus of the second stage of the research when the participating councils will be asked to test out new approaches to tackling their local challenges, include:
 - 9.1. The challenge of how to close poorly performing schools as good schools expand and the risk that well performing schools are forced to close in circumstances where it is not in the best interest of pupils and flies in the face of the wishes of local parents.
 - 9.2. How, within the context of more autonomous school system, councils can most effectively discharge their responsibility to champion the achievement of all children when they no longer have the direct means to hold schools to account for their progress.
 - 9.3. How the “reconfigured system” can “spot and then act on evidence of declining school performance”. The research found that “Academies were not convinced that local partnerships of schools had a workable role in identifying or taking action to address underperformance. They identified the risk that poor performance often goes hand in hand with a lack of self-awareness. To that extent they were relying on national mechanisms to swiftly identify and broker in support for underperforming schools.”
 - 9.4. Concerns were expressed that increased competition and diversification of traded services for vulnerable children and their families will adversely affect

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the quality, cost and viability of services; and will make it difficult for councils to get the information about individual children they need to make sure “that collectively the education system was meeting the needs of vulnerable children”.

The functions of the Education Funding Agency (EFA)

The Education Funding Agency (EFA) will be responsible for the operation of the education capital and revenue funding system and the delivery of capital programmes. Responsibility for the development of education funding policy will rest with the relevant policy directorates within the Department for Education. The EFA will provide advice to policy colleagues to support effective policy making. Decisions on funding policy are ultimately the responsibility of Ministers. Corporate services will be provided by the Department.

The Education Funding Agency (EFA) will be responsible for the following functions

- Calculation and notification of funding allocations to local authorities, academies and Free Schools and responding to queries about those calculations.
- Payment of the Dedicated Schools Grant and the Pupil Premium to local authorities for their maintained primary and secondary schools, including those with sixth forms.
- Payment of funding to academies and Free Schools.
- Ensuring academy and Free School funding agreement compliance.
- Responsive case management.
- Ensuring general funding compliance.
- Financial monitoring and assurance.
- Support for education providers in achieving value for money and ensuring efficient use of resources.
- Support to sponsors and education providers on funding and financial matters.
- Provision of advice and guidance as required by statute and as required by the sectors.
- Investigation of suspected fraud or financial irregularity.
- Provide advice to the Department's policy directorates to inform the development of funding policy.
- Calculation, notification and payment of funding allocations to 16-19 providers and 16-25 learners with learning difficulties or disabilities (LLDD) providers, and responding to queries about those calculations.
- Ensuring general funding compliance.
- Distribution of learner support bursaries to providers.
- Financial monitoring and assurance.

- Support to providers in achieving value for money and ensuring efficient use of resources.
- Support to providers on funding and financial matters.
- Provision of advice and guidance as required by statute and as required by the sectors.
- Investigation of suspected fraud or financial irregularity.
- Responsive case management.
- Support to Secretary of State in his role as Principal Regulator.
- Provide advice to the Department's policy directorates to inform the development of funding policy.
- Notification and payment of capital allocations to local authorities, schools and others.
- Financial management of schools capital programmes.
- Managing the co-location fund, the secure homes capital programme and PFI revenue payments.
- Making payments under the Voluntary-Aided (VA) Capital Programme (including VA PFI payments).
- Project management of Framework Academy capital projects and advise on procurement of new accommodation for academies.
- Delivery, project management, support and advice for PFI procurements.
- Provide Free School proposers with advice, support the Department's assessment of Free School proposals and purchase and hold land and buildings to accommodate Free Schools.
- Support to academy converters (including PFI), studio schools and University Technical Colleges through advice to providers and sponsors.
- Support to operational PFI projects. Liaison with HMT and other government departments.
- Manage framework contracts to support any schools capital project.
- Support and advice across capital programmes on ICT infrastructure and services.
- Support for Building Schools for the Future projects.
- School assets - administer applications, and provide evidence for recommendations to the Secretary of State on the disposal of assets.
- Building design guidance - provide advice and guidance on all aspects of school building design and construction cost matters.
- Pupil place planning - collect and review local authorities' pupil forecasts as part of the annual school capacity survey.

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Appendix A

- Stakeholder management, including relationship and market management in relation to capital investment.
- Allocation and distribution of capital funding to 16-19 providers.

Taken from pages on the DfE website: The Education Funding Agency: EFA functions (as of 31 October 2011):

<http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/armslengthbodies/b00199952/the-education-funding-agency/efa-functions-as-of-31-october-2011>

Item 2

Reform of adoption and care systems

Purpose of report

For discussion.

Summary

The Government published its Adoption Action Plan on 14 March, with proposals aimed at improving and speeding up the system. Legislative elements will be included in a Bill in the next Parliamentary session and a publication on the wider care system for children is expected in the summer.

This paper provides an overview of the Action Plan and an update on LGA activity.

Recommendation

That Members discuss the issues outlined in the paper.

Action

LGA officers to action as directed.

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Reform of adoption and care systems

Background

1. The Secretary of State made a speech on 23 February, reiterating the Government's commitment to improving and speeding up the adoption process and setting out the case for the forthcoming Action Plan. The Prime Minister made a subsequent announcement on 9 March on a number of proposals relating to ethnicity and matching; increasing the practice of concurrent planning; and better use of the National Adoption Register. The Adoption Action Plan was then published in full on 14 March, including the introduction local authority scorecards.
2. The LGA has been in discussions with the Department for Education (DfE) on the development of the proposals over previous months, in particular in relation to local authority performance and accountability.
3. The LGA programme, media and public affairs teams worked together closely in the weeks leading up to the publication of the Action Plan. This led to widespread coverage of the LGA's position on the day of publication, including in print and online media. Cllr Simmonds appeared on the Today Programme alongside the Minister and gave interviews on BBC News 24 and Sky News. On the Day Briefings were disseminated to members and Parliamentarians on the day of the Prime Minister's announcement and on publication of the Action Plan.

The Adoption Action Plan

4. The Action Plan is primarily aimed at reducing delay and speeding up the process. It contains three distinct but related sections:
 - 4.1. finding children loving homes without delay;
 - 4.2. valuing prospective adopters; and
 - 4.3. system Improvement.
5. 'Finding children loving homes without delay' includes proposed changes to legislation to make clearer that avoiding delay, not ethnicity, should be the key consideration when matching children and families; plans to make concurrent planning easier and encouraging its wider use; and legislation to require councils to place children on the National Adoption Register if they have not been found a family locally within 3 months in order that they can be matched with families in other authorities. Social worker training and assessment will also be updated.

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6. 'Valuing prospective adopters' is a series of proposals made by an Expert Working Group established by the Government. They are designed to speed up assessment, including a fast track process for foster carers and people that have previously adopted, and to improve the levels of information and support so that prospective adopters are encouraged, not deterred.
7. 'System Improvement' seeks to address delay and the variation in local authority performance. The action plan introduces local authority scorecards and sets out the intention for a tougher intervention policy.
8. The LGA argued strongly against the introduction of the scorecards, as they provide a very limited picture of performance and are not consistent with the wider Government approach to local performance and improvement. However, although the Government does not believe in strong central management of local government with targets, it considers action necessary in this case.
9. In response to feedback from the sector, DfE has made some amendments to the original scorecard format, such as including the average length of court proceedings locally and some contextual data.
10. The performance threshold for the child's overall journey from entering care to being placed with a family will be set at 21 months, rising to 14 months over the next 4 years. The scorecards will be published in the next couple of weeks and a significant number of councils are expected to be below the performance threshold. Importantly, however, the Government has stated that "the indicators alone do not give a full and authoritative picture of local authority performance so there will be no automatic link between the performance thresholds and intervention".
11. We expect the sector to have the opportunity to improve itself and that Ministerial intervention is to be used only as a last resort. The Children's Improvement Board will work with councils to ensure that improvement support on adoption is available to those areas that need it.
12. Further information on the content of the Action Plan is provided in the two On the Day briefings, which are **appended** to this paper.

Wider reform: A summer publication

13. Some of the changes in the action plan require legislative change and an Adoption Bill is expected to be included in the Queen's Speech in May. However, some proposals, including the role of the new Gateway for prospective adopters and extension of adoption will require further development. These will be included in the Government's summer publication

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on the wider care system for children. It remains unclear what form this publication will take.

14. Proposals for the wider reform of the care system for children remain less detailed than those for adoption and are currently being developed by the DfE. We understand that issues being considered include foster carer training, delegated responsibility, commissioning and improving outcomes for looked after children including in relation to offending.

Conclusion and next steps

15. The initial next step will be for the LGA to offer support to local authorities to help them prepare for the publication of the scorecards in the next couple of weeks.
16. Continuing this work in the longer term, influencing the reform of the care system is included in the 2012/13 business plan and Tim Loughton has publicly committed to the Government working with the LGA and the Children's Improvement Board.
17. In line with the discussion at the Board's January meeting, the process has started for commissioning several pieces of research from NFER in this area, with Cllr Liz Green as the member champion. This includes research on children's views of the care system and on different service delivery models for adoption and fostering.
18. We are currently planning a stakeholder roundtable meeting, in order to better understand some of the challenges in the care system for the wider sector and to develop ideas and proposals for improvements.
19. We are also planning a week of activity around the theme of corporate parenting to coincide with the LGA's Annual Conference at the end of June.
20. Members of the Board will be updated with further details on these pieces of work as they develop and their involvement and views sought.

Financial Implications

21. The LGA's work on this issue falls within the budgeted resource for the Children and Young People programme.

Adoption

9 March 2012

The Prime Minister has announced legislative proposals aimed at speeding up the adoption system to be included in a Bill in the next Parliamentary session. This is in advance of the publication of the Government's Adoption Action Plan, which is anticipated next week and will contain wider changes than those outlined in the announcement.

This brief provides background to the proposals and highlights the issues for councils raised by the Prime Minister's speech.

BACKGROUND

The Government has made addressing the fall in numbers of adoptions and the delays in the system a priority. Adoption rates fell 8 per cent between 2007 and 2011, but overall permanence orders, which include special guardianship with friends and family, have increased by 27 per cent over 5 years. The average time between a child being taken into care and being adopted is 2 years and 7 months. The system is complex and not completely within councils' control: there are significant delays in the court system, as highlighted by the Family Justice Review. An average case in the county court takes 60 weeks and many take much longer. The LGA has called for the Review's recommendations to be implemented; for a reduction in red tape; and has warned against the introduction of targets.

LGA Key Messages

- Achieving the best outcomes for children is the most important thing for councils. Adoption is right for some children, but for others long term stability might best be found with friends and family through special guardianship.
- Councils and social work professionals will continue to work on finding children secure, stable and loving homes. We agree that delays should be minimised. However, this should not compromise quality decision making by qualified professionals on what is in the best interests of a particular child.
- Five times as many children are approved for adoption as there are prospective adoptive homes and this fundamental shortage needs to be addressed. We also need willing people to come forward to help councils find stable homes for siblings, older children and those with health issues or disabilities.
- Councils are committed to continually improving services for our most vulnerable children and four in five local authority adoption services have recently been rated good or outstanding by Ofsted. The LGA and its partners are developing an £8million programme that will encourage children's services professionals to share information on what works. Helping councils to improve adoption processes will be a key part of this.

For more information please contact Jessica Thrift, Public Affairs and Campaigns Adviser
Jessica.thrift@local.gov.uk 020 7664 3034

SPECIFIC PROPOSALS ANNOUNCED

Ethnicity and Matching

The law currently states that due consideration should be given to a child's cultural and ethnic background, but also that the impact of delay on a child should also be taken into account. Changes to guidance have been made in previous years to emphasise that avoiding delay, not ethnicity, should be the key consideration when matching children and families. However, the Government considers that changes to legislation are necessary to make this clearer.

LGA View:

- There is no simple one-size-fits-all approach to adoption and social workers must be able to make the best decision for the individual child. They will consider a child's religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural backgrounds when trying to find their ideal home. However, these factors should not delay placing a child with a loving family if they are otherwise suitable.

Linking fostering and adoption

"Concurrent planning" is used to describe prospective adopters fostering a child under a temporary arrangement whilst the court makes a decision about adoption. This aims to increase stability for children in the system, allowing them to create bonds with carers more quickly and avoid moving between multiple placements. The Government proposes to make concurrent planning easier.

LGA View:

- Concurrent planning is already being used by a number of authorities to increase stability for children waiting to be adopted. Making it easier for councils to do this and reducing bureaucracy for foster carers to adopt is positive.
- There is a risk that some children will be fostered by families that want to adopt them, with the courts subsequently deciding that adoption is not the right option. Councils will work with prospective adopters to ensure that they are fully aware of this and supported throughout. It should be recognised that not all people wanting to adopt may wish to take this approach.

Use of the National Adoption Register

The Government will legislate so that councils will be required to place children on the National Adoption Register if they have not been found a family locally within 3 months in order that they can be matched with families in other authorities. This timescale is currently set out in statutory guidance.

LGA View:

- This proposal is to be welcomed. It will increase the likelihood of the right family being found more quickly and in some cases may result in a better match than could be found locally. It will not prevent councils from continuing the local search. However, any additional administrative or financial burdens as a result must be funded.

*For more information please contact Jessica Thrift, Public Affairs and Campaigns Adviser
Jessica.thrift@local.gov.uk 020 7664 3034*

Adoption Action Plan

14 March 2012

Further to the Prime Minister's announcement on the 9 March, the Secretary of State has today published full detail of the Government's Adoption Action Plan, which contains proposals aimed at improving and speeding up the adoption system. Legislative elements will be included in a Bill in the next Parliamentary session. A publication on the wider care system for children is also expected in the summer. The Children's Minister, Tim Loughton, has committed to working with the LGA on adoption and care reform.



LGA Key Messages

- Achieving the best outcomes for children is the most important thing for councils. Adoption is right for some children, but for others long term stability might best be found with friends and family through special guardianship.
- Councils and social work professionals will continue to work on finding children secure, stable and loving homes. We agree that delays should be minimised and while councils are rightly keen to reduce delays in matching children in their care to loving families, the Government's score card system risks shifting focus from the quality of placements onto just the speed of placements. Children in care and adopters should not be a commodity to be processed as fast as possible. Adoption's success as the best form of long-term care should not be put at risk by focusing on speed over quality.
- Scorecards do not provide a fair picture of performance and could deter prospective adopters if councils are wrongly deemed to be underperforming. They do not take into account the quality of placements; the excellent work some councils do in finding homes for children that are harder to place; or any improvements over the 3 years.
- Five times as many children are approved for adoption as there are prospective adoptive homes and this fundamental shortage needs to be addressed. We also need willing people to come forward to help councils find stable homes for siblings, older children and those with health issues or disabilities. It is widely recognised that finding adoptive parents for a newborn baby is much easier.
- The Government has rightly recognised that bureaucratic target settings and top-down micro-management of councils do not deliver better services. Local councils know that the best way to improve what they do is to understand their own strengths and weaknesses and to tackle problems directly. The Government has endorsed this approach through funding a major programme of sector self improvement for council children's services. The scorecard system is completely at odds with this new approach.

Briefing

For more information please contact Jessica Thrift, Public Affairs and Campaigns Adviser
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SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT

Adoption Scorecard

The Government is introducing a 'scorecard' for each local authority, with a range of indicators, heavily focused on the length of time the adoption process takes. There will be a number of contextual indicators, including in relation to adoption rates. The figures will be a three year average, updated annually.

LGA View:

- Whilst councils are rightly keen to reduce delays in matching children in their care to loving families, the Government's scorecard system is not the answer. It will provide a very limited picture of performance and could cause unnecessary and unwarranted reputational damage for some children's services departments.
- Councils are already faced with a system that has five times more children waiting for adoption, than we have adopters. Pitching councils against each other through targets and scorecards is a gamble that could actually prove detrimental to the adoption process. We cannot afford to put prospective parents off if their council is wrongly deemed to be underperforming
- Placements driven by government targets rather than the needs of a child could also be at greater risk of breaking down. The scorecards will not take into account the quality of the placement, nor will they acknowledge the problems that councils face when trying to find homes for siblings, older children or those with health issues or disabilities.
- The focus on only adoption also fails to take into account other options for permanence more appropriate for some children, such as Special Guardianship which may be awarded to family members or long-term foster parents. Although adoption rates have decreased, over the last 5 years there has been a 27 per cent increase in overall permanence orders.

Intervention

The Government will set performance thresholds for timeliness, which will be progressively tightened over the next four years. The Action Plan is clear that being below the threshold does not necessarily mean the council is performing badly. Delays could be due, for example, to the courts or as a result of children having particular needs which make them harder to find families for.

LGA View:

- Given that the scorecard data does not provide a fair picture of performance, it is absolutely right that there is no automatic link between the threshold and intervention. Further diagnostic work would be needed to fully understand the situation, including direct contact with councils.
- In line with the Government's wider policy on local government performance, we expect the sector to have the opportunity to improve itself and that Ministerial intervention is to be used only as a last resort.
- The LGA is a partner in a major programme of improvement for children's services. Through the Children's Improvement Board, it will work with local councils to ensure that improvement support on adoption is available to those areas that need it.

VALUING PROSPECTIVE ADOPTERS

A Working Group established by the Government has made a series of proposals designed to improve the system for prospective adopters.

A new training and assessment process

A radical re-design leading to a two stage process: initial training and preparation clearly separated from a streamlined assessment. It is anticipated that in the majority of cases the first stage should be complete within two months and the second within four. There will be a fast-track process for approved foster carers and people who have previously adopted. The Government accepts these proposals and will consult on regulatory change later in the year.

LGA View:

- The LGA has already called for unnecessary reams of paperwork to be scrapped to help speed up the system. These proposals, including making it easier for foster carers to adopt, are therefore very positive. The proposed pilots on a draft new assessment form should be carefully evaluated to ensure they are fit for purpose.

National Gateway

The Government accepts the principle of a new national gateway, which would provide a first point of contact for independent advice for prospective adopters. It would collect management information on how prospective adopters are handled. The Working Group has been asked to consider whether the gateway should have a wider role, including linking to the National Register.

LGA View:

- Five times as many children are approved for adoption as there are prospective adoptive homes. Proposals such as the Gateway aimed at increasing the numbers of adoptive families are helpful.
- Any management information collected by the Gateway would need to add value to the elements included in the scorecard. It would also be important for any information to be objective and not solely based on the views of adopters, representing only one side of the story.

Adoption Support and recruitment

An 'adoption passport' would be a guarantee of the support that adoptive families will receive, providing greater clarity and consistency. Proposals also include an extension to existing adoption support. Further detail is to be set out in advance of the summer publication.

LGA View:

- We advocate effective support for adoptive families, in particular to reduce breakdowns and help increase the amount of people willing to adopt children with particular needs. We will work with Government to develop these proposals. Such a passport should be at local level to enable flexibility to reflect the different challenges and services locally.
- Councils are managing cuts of 28 per cent; any requirement to extend adoption support must be fully funded.

FINDING CHILDREN LOVING HOMES WITHOUT DELAY

The proposals announced today follow the Prime Minister's announcement on the 9 March, where he outlined proposals to speed up the adoption system with regard to:

- legislative changes to ethnicity and matching;
- concurrent planning for adoption and fostering; and
- use of the National Adoption Register.

The LGA produced an On the Day Briefing in response to these measures, which can be accessed [here](#).

For more information please contact Jessica Thrift, Public Affairs and Campaigns Adviser
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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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Member engagement and the NFER research programme

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;

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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?

LGA

**Education and Children's Services
Funded Research Programme**

**Winter/Spring
2012**



Funded research programme

The Local Government Association (LGA) has, for many years, commissioned a programme of research and information from the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) funded by the Revenue Support Grant top-slice from the Department for Communities and Local Government. This work offers a unique opportunity for the LGA to address policy development and improvement support issues of key interest to local government, which are unlikely to be prioritised by other national programmes.

The research programme is managed by LGA officers with its focus and outputs overseen by the LGA's Children and Young People Board. The work is carried out by researchers, information specialists and statisticians at the NFER.

Whilst the majority of projects are commissioned through the CYP Board, work is also commissioned across more than one LGA board and includes projects such as the Councillor Census and research exploring the

publicly reported one million young people believed to be not in education, employment or training. More recently the LGA has jointly funded work with the Children's Improvement Board (CIB) with projects exploring sector-led improvement.

Current research

Developing indicators for early identification of young people at risk of temporary disconnection from learning

This research will focus on ways to identify and support young people aged 14–19 who are at risk of disconnection from learning. Over recent years, public awareness of the plight of young people described as NEET (not in education, employment or training) has grown as the numbers of young people falling into this 'category' increase, and as youth unemployment figures climb. There is both public and political interest in identifying strategies that can help to tackle this persistent and growing societal problem.
Embargoed until June 2012

Council approaches to children's health and well-being

The purpose of the study is to investigate the ways in which LAs are fulfilling their duty to promote the health and well-being of children in their local area, in partnership with others including schools, health and other key agencies and third sector bodies. The report will provide an overview of partnership approaches including an assessment of the different approaches being undertaken. It will also support a greater insight into what mechanisms are working well and where issues and challenges have emerged and how these are being overcome.
www.nfer.ac.uk/research/projects/council-approaches-to-childrens-health

Hidden talents: a review of 16–24 year olds' skills needs and support

In recent years there has been increased interest in the skills needs of the English economy, and the extent to which young people are equipped to find work and contribute to economic growth. This literature review, supported by quantitative analysis of existing data will investigate current perceptions of the skills required to support the English economy over the next 10 to 15 years, identifying where there are gaps. Drawing on national- and local-level sources, the review will report on skills needs at national and regional levels.
Embargoed until June 2012

Changes to the funding of SEN provision: views of Lead Members

The purpose of the study is to consider the implications of proposed changes to the funding of SEN provision, from the perspective of LA Lead Members. In particular, the project will aim to explore how the proposed changes might work in practice, and the likely impacts of personal budgets. The research will also look at perceptions of challenges, barriers and benefits of personal budgets.
www.nfer.ac.uk/research/projects/changes-to-funding-sen/

The impact of safeguarding children peer reviews

This evaluation will aim to provide evidence of the impact of safeguarding peer reviews for LAs who are in intervention. In particular, the study will: gather reflections on the process and its impact from councils receiving a review, discover what has changed locally as a result of undergoing a review, and highlight the approach required for LAs in intervention. The report will be used to support revisions to the current methodology as delivered by the LGA.
www.nfer.ac.uk/research/projects/safeguarding-peer-reviews/

Hidden talents: a statistical overview of the participation patterns of young people aged 16–24

To determine the extent of young people who are categorised as not being in employment, education or training, use will be made of a number of data sources to try and get underneath the raw numbers recently quoted (1 million young people who are currently NEET). This is a fairly cold statistic and in exploring other data sources the study will look to obtain some deeper understanding of that figure. There are a number of reasons why a young person could be considered NEET, but not all will necessarily have a negative impact.
Embargoed until June 2012

Alternative provision for young people with special educational needs

This study aims to provide evidence of successful approaches to supporting young people with SEN in alternative provision. The study will explore how alternative provision is identified for pupils with SEN and how it is matched to individual pupils' needs. It will also look at the core elements of successful approaches to alternative provision for SEN pupils and if they differ from approaches to supporting pupils without SEN. The study will also aim to identify the lessons learnt in relation to supporting young people with SEN in alternative provision that can be shared across the sector.

www.nfer.ac.uk/research/projects/provision-for-young-people-with-sen

A best-practice review of the role of Schools Forums

The purpose of the study is to carry out a best practice review of the role of Schools Forums. Specifically, the research will provide an overview of the models of Schools Forums currently in existence across local authorities in England, including an assessment of the different approaches to Forums with regard to their nature, structure and decision-making powers. It will also suggest possible ways that Schools Forums might develop in the future including new practices which might improve them.

www.nfer.ac.uk/research/projects/best-practice-school-forums/

Evaluation of the National Youth Agency tailored support offer to local authorities

An evaluation of the NYA programme of tailored support to local authorities is underway and involves three strands: a desk review of the bids received for the tailored support programme and baseline telephone interviews, semi-structured case study interviews with stakeholders involved in the programme, and follow-up interviews with LA representatives to explore impact. The outputs from the research will include an interim report, 11 standalone case-studies and a thematic report, which will draw out the key messages for the LGA, NYA, and local authorities.

www.nfer.ac.uk/research/projects/evaluation-nya-support/

School place mapping study

By collecting and analysing the most recent local authority plans for school places, this study aims to collect local knowledge to produce a picture of where school places will need to be added or removed over the next five years. An interim report has identified many of the key issues based on a sample of local authority plans collected November 2011 to January 2012. A further request for information during February will enable a comprehensive picture to be developed.

www.nfer.ac.uk/research/projects/school-place-mapping

Soulbury Committee Workforce Survey 2010–11

The Soulbury Workforce Survey collects information on the numbers and characteristics of local authority staff in England and Wales whose pay and conditions are determined by the Soulbury Committee. It is conducted in order to inform the Committee's pay negotiations. This is a repeat of the 2007 survey. Local authorities will complete a set of data collection forms which will be hosted on the NFER schools portal and analysis of the collected data will be provided.

www.nfer.ac.uk/research/projects/soulbury-committee-workforce/

Publications available now

Evaluation of the early adopter sector-led improvement programme pilots



new

The CIB commissioned this evaluation of the 'early adopter' programme for sector-led improvement and support. The evaluation focused on examining the development of the programme and how effective the process is in its early stages providing a report to the CIB which helps inform the development and roll out of the programme. Findings indicated LAs are positive about the sector having ownership and responsibility for its own development and the opportunity to share best practice with others.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/SLIP01

Early intervention: informing local practice



new

Within the context of the Graham Allen Reviews and Professor Eileen Munro's Review of Child Protection, which argue the case for early help and early intervention, this report provides further evidence to show that investing in early intervention approaches improves outcomes and brings about cost savings. It offers recommendations for policy makers, local authority officers, front line practitioners and researchers.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LGLC02

Targeting children's centre services on the most needy families



new

While continuing to acknowledge the value of 'universal' services, The Government has asked children's centres and local authorities to target services on the 'most needy' families. This research aimed to provide local authority early years' and children's services leaders and children's centre managers with evidence of how children's centre services are targeting the most disadvantaged families. The research found that it is difficult to achieve a precise definition of families in the greatest need of support.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LGTC01

Developing a business case for early interventions and evaluating their value for money



new

In the context of increased debate about early interventions in the UK, this report provides guidance on what constitutes a good business case for early interventions and how it should be assessed. The guidance will be of use to local authorities and their partners in their decision-making and planning on early interventions. The guidance includes information on how to make or assess a business case for early interventions, how to make an economic case for early interventions and the key considerations in evaluating the value for money of early interventions.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/EITS01

National census of local authority councillors 2010



new

This sixth survey of local authority councillors in England collected data over November 2010 to February 2011 and updates the previous Censuses in 1997, 2001, 2004, 2006 and 2008. The findings are based on responses from 6,082 (33.4 per cent) councillors in office in England. The majority of councillors thought that listening to local views was the most important thing for councillors to do. Over 80 per cent of councillors would recommend taking on the role to others.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LGUX03

Safeguarding: council developments



In the light of the independent reviews of safeguarding and child protection (Laming and Munro), this research captures LA approaches to developing safeguarding practices in a changing policy landscape. The report provides localised accounts of practice implementation and, where possible, evidence of outcomes. The main priority areas for improving safeguarding included: leadership and management; recruiting, maintaining and retaining a highly competent workforce; quality assurance and performance management; referral and assessment processes and procedures; and partnership working. A small number of barriers and challenges to improving safeguarding were identified, these centred on: process and systemic challenges, challenges to partnership working and external local contexts and circumstances.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LSGC01

Evaluation of the NYA Engagement Network

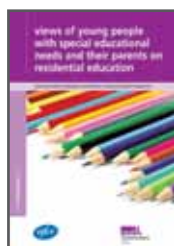


An evaluation of the National Youth Agency's Engagement Network, which aims to support young people who are NEET to have a voice and shape local provision for young people through local projects, explored how LAs had implemented activities and identified impact, outcomes, challenges and effective practice. Overall, the evaluation found that the NYA Engagement Network model, if given adequate levels of resourcing and buy-in from the elected member, provides LAs with a new way of engaging young people who are NEET.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/PEEX01

Publications available now

Views of young people with special educational needs and their parents on residential education



Providing for children and young people with special educational needs or a disability was the subject of the 2011 DfE SEN Green Paper. The Green Paper sought to improve the support provided by the current education, health and social care systems for children and young people with additional needs. This report explores families' experiences of residential education for young people with SEN or a disability, and their views on the placement process. The research was commissioned as one of three projects looking at issues relating to young people with SEN or disabilities.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LGRC01

Local authorities' perceptions of how parents and young people with special educational needs will be affected by the 2011 Green Paper



The 2011 DfE SEN Green Paper set out proposals with a strong emphasis on local decision making and autonomy and reflected the government's localism agenda. In the light of the ongoing developments and their implications for families, schools and LAs this research aimed to capture LA perspectives of how the parents of children and young people with SEN and of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities will be affected by the Green Paper. The report identifies key implications for LAs in the light of the proposed changes.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/SENG01

Young people with special educational needs/learning difficulties and disabilities: research into planning for adult life and services



The process of transition to adulthood for young people with SEN and learners with learning difficulties and disabilities can be difficult and is not always entirely successful. The 2011 DfE SEN Green Paper made wide-ranging proposals to improve services and outcomes. This research aimed to shed light on how young people with SEN or LLDD have been prepared for adult life and adult services, and how planning for this transition might be improved. The research looked at policy and practice in six local authorities, through interviews with professionals, parents and young people.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/SENT01

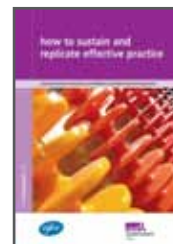
Information sources for the local children and young people's services sector: a mapping study



A mapping study to inform the development of the LGAs online information, advice, guidance and data offer to local authorities. The aims of the study were to identify the information needs of children and young people's services professionals, local government officers and elected members and to map the national data, research, policy and practice sources available to them. The study found the key features of a good information source to be accuracy, timeliness, accessibility, ease of use, ability to meet the needs of different types of users, data that can be manipulated and a one-stop shop.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/TPCS40

How to sustain and replicate effective practice



Innovations in practice in local authority children's services face a number of key questions in the current organisational and economic environment. Among these is whether the longer-term benefits in terms of impact can be proven to outweigh the costs of implementation of a programme or initiative. The challenge, while being mindful of cost-effectiveness, is to evidence how practice can be sustained and replicated. This report examines how identified effective practice examples have been, or could be, replicated and sustained, with a view to informing guidelines for future practice. Guidelines were also produced.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LRSV01

Young people's aspirations in rural areas



The economic downturn and subsequent substantial reduction in public spending has had a negative impact on young people in the labour market. In rural areas, young people face distinct issues that can have a negative impact on their employment. Youth unemployment in rural areas is often believed to be caused by the low aspirations of young people themselves, their families and local communities. These are also linked to low educational achievements and post-16 participation rates in education. The research explored young people's aspirations in three rural LAs: Suffolk, Lincolnshire and Cumbria. The report identifies the key influences and impacts of low aspirations.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LYPA01

Publications available now

Devon multi-agency safeguarding hub: case-study report



The range of agencies involved in safeguarding children in the county of Devon operate across local authority boundaries: the police and probation services' responsibilities cross both Devon and Cornwall. With families moving across LA boundaries and multiple agencies lacking a unified relationship, the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) model was established. This case study covers the rationale of the MASH model, how it works, key challenges and components and how transferrable it is. It also looks at outcomes and impact of the MASH and future developments for the MASH.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LGMX01

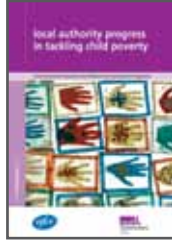
Devon multi-agency safeguarding hub: value for money report



This report examines the value for money of the Devon Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and the metrics that could be used for assessing its impact over the medium and longer term. At the time of reporting the MASH was midway through a phased roll-out and it was too early to make a definitive assessment as to whether it offered good value for money. Whilst some of its costs and benefits are immediate, others will take time to emerge as the system beds in and the intended benefits towards the safeguarding of children are realised. However, it was possible at this stage to provide a framework within which value for money can be monitored and assessed going forwards and to recommend measures to achieve this.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LGMX02

Local authority progress in tackling child poverty



The research assessed local authorities' progress in meeting the duties placed on them by the 2010 Child Poverty Act, specifically the requirement to complete a local needs assessment and a joint local child poverty strategy. The study found that the eradication of child poverty was considered to be a high priority. Concern was however expressed about the lack of statutory and prescriptive guidance from government and about the potential effects of the current public-sector budget reductions. Most partnerships were well developed, and were reported as having the key ingredients for successful collaboration.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LGCP01

Governance models in schools



This study reviewed the current model of accountabilities in school governance and considered alternative models that may be appropriate for the schools of the future. Key principles and components of effective governance are more significant to the governance of schools than the type of model followed. The evidence indicates that an effective governing body can have a valuable impact on school improvement. The majority of governors felt that their governing bodies were effective and coordinators were also positive about the overall effectiveness of governing bodies.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LGMS01

Safeguarding children peer review programme: learning and recommendations



This research aimed to draw out key messages and learning from the safeguarding children peer review programme. The study found that the process can be highly valuable to local authorities, supporting their upwards performance trajectory of safeguarding practice. Benefits of an effective review included increased commitment to improving practice, development of ideas, plans and actions, promotion of learning and reflective practice, revision of policies and processes, improvement of staff morale and enhancement of partnership working. However, there is also some capacity for future development and expansion of the programme as it becomes further embedded and refined.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LSGP01

Hidden talents: exploiting the link between engagement of young people and the economy



This research was undertaken to support local authorities by identifying a range of opportunities for LAs and businesses to work together for mutual benefit. The research also aimed to identify and provide case studies of how LAs have and can create linkages between their work to engage young people, economic development and business support to achieve improved outcomes for young people and employers. A number of themes emerged including the need to simplify opportunities for the business community to work with young people not in education, employment or training.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/HITA01

Back catalogue

The reports listed below are available as free pdf downloads at www.nfer.ac.uk

Safeguarding Children: a literature review

December 2010

Information, advice and guidance for young people

September 2010

Implementing outcomes based accountability in children's services: an overview of the process and impact

July 2010

Local authority approaches to the school admissions process

July 2010

Mapping the terrain: 16–19 funding transfer

July 2010

The impact of the Baby Peter case on applications for care orders

June 2010

Local authorities' experiences of improving parental confidence in the special educational needs process

June 2010

An analysis of youth offending teams' inspection reports

June 2010

Intergenerational practice: outcomes and effectiveness

June 2010

Children and young people's views on web 2.0 technologies

June 2010

Evaluation of the Children in Trouble Programme

March 2010

Scoping review on safeguarding

March 2010

Supporting local authorities to develop their research capacity

March 2010

Teacher resignation and recruitment survey 2008

February 2010

Collaborative good practice between local authorities and the further education sector

September 2009

Narrowing the gap in outcomes: governance

June 2009

Narrowing the gap in outcomes: leadership

June 2009

Using non-formal learning to re-engage young people who are NEET

May 2009

Local authorities and school improvement: the use of statutory powers

April 2009

Mental health services for care leavers

March 2009

Consultation practices used in planning Children's Services

March 2009

National census of local authority councillors in England 2008

January 2009

Narrowing the gap in outcomes: early years (0–5)

November 2008

Consultation practices used in planning children's services

September 2008

Supporting the development of Children and Young People's Plans (CYPPS): the case-study data

May 2008

Evaluating the early impact of integrated children's services: round 1 final report

May 2008

Analysis of Children and Young People's Plans 2007

May 2008

Narrowing the Gap in Outcomes: Further Overview of Data and Evidence on the ECM Outcomes for Vulnerable Groups. Progress Report and Update

March 2008

Teacher resignation and recruitment Survey

March 2008

Intergenerational practice: a review of the literature

March 2008

The role of the lead member for children's services. Final report

March 2008

Narrowing the Gap in outcomes for vulnerable groups: overview and analysis of available datasets on vulnerable groups and the five ECM outcomes

November 2007

Annual survey of trends in education 2007: schools' concerns and their implications for local authorities

November 2007

The impact of school fires: a study of the wider economic and social impacts on schools and the local community

October 2007

Perceptions of the LGE: research summary

May 2007

Guidelines for official publications in local authorities

March 2007

CAMHS funding and priorities

December 2006

Delivering the ten-year childcare strategy: a survey of current plans (research summary)

November 2006

Schools' concerns and their implications for local authorities: annual survey of trends in education 2006

October 2006

Annual survey of trends in education 2006

October 2006

The role of the lead member for children's services: final report

September 2006

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Education and Children's Services
Funded Research Programme

Winter/Spring 2012

Children's Improvement Board Update on Activity – March 2012

Purpose of report

For information and comment.

Summary

This report updates the Children and Young People's Board on recent developments on the activities led by the Children's Improvement Board (CIB) and invites feedback. Colin Hilton who is the new Director for Children's Services Self-Improvement will attend the meeting to discuss priorities for CIB for the year ahead.

Recommendations

That the Board consider and comment on the current and planned activities of the CIB.

Action

Officers from the CIB team and the LGA to take forward the CIB's work programme in the light of the Board's comments.

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Children's Improvement Board Update on Activity – March 2012

Background

1. The Children's Improvement Board (CIB) work programme is a major part of local government's push for greater self-improvement and self regulation. It is delivered through a partnership between the LGA, the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE), supported by funding from the Department for Education (DfE).
2. Because of the significance of the programme to children's services and to local government, an update on the CIB is a standing item on Children and Young People Board agendas. The last report was made to the Children and Young People Board at its meeting on 25 January. This report provides an overview of activity at the end of the CIB's first year.
3. Colin Hilton has recently been appointed as the new Director for Children's Services Self-Improvement. He will attend the meeting to give his sense of progress so far and priorities for the year ahead.

Funding for 2012-13

4. In a strong endorsement of a sector-led approach to improvement, the DfE has granted the CIB a further £9 million for 2012-13. This funding will enable the CIB to maintain and expand its activities, including making an increased sum of around £4 million available to councils through the regions. The confirmation of funding will enable children's services self-improvement to build on the arrangements put in place this year and move into a phase where self-improvement can become an integral part of councils' work on children's services.

Highlights of recent activity

Peer challenge and "early support" for councils

5. All regions have been asked to prioritise peer challenge and "early support" for councils through the funding they receive from the CIB.

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6. Peer challenges are underway in all regions and around 50 per cent of councils will be engaged in some way by the end of March. Regions are developing a number of different approaches to peer challenge. These include pairing individual councils to challenge each other, forming challenge clusters and using a panel of directors of children's services to provide challenge. Peer challenge is wholly owned and led by local councils and is a key part of building an approach to self-improvement which is sustainable in the long term. The CIB will be working with councils to learn from the diversity of approaches and understand which aspects are most significant in helping councils improve the lives of children and young people.
7. Through the regions, councils are being asked to develop their understanding of performance issues in their region, to be more confident that they can identify potential risks and to have a mechanism for facilitating "early support" where this is needed. It is vital that councils themselves get better at understanding what factors might lead a council to get into difficulty and to offer support at an early stage so that formal intervention is reduced. In each region, councils are developing their own approaches to supporting councils and, for the future, it will be crucial that councils can feel more able to acknowledge difficulties to their colleagues and ask for help.

Responding to policy challenges

8. In addition to general support for sector self-improvement, the CIB has a role in helping councils deal with the impact of major policy initiatives. During 2012, it is likely that some councils will want and need support to improve adoption services. While the LGA is firmly opposed to crude judgements about performance, it is important that the sector takes the initiative where there is an important improvement challenge which is crucial to the lives of children and young people. The CIB will work with councils to understand better where there are genuine difficulties, taking into account the needs of the local area and the way that services are delivered and will respond where support is needed.
9. Support to councils which is sector-led needs to draw on councils' views of the problems they face and the support they need. On 9 February, the CIB convened a consultative event to discuss the challenges presented by the Munro Review and social work reform. Over forty participants mainly from local councils attended the event. Feedback from participants confirmed enthusiasm for taking forward the Munro Review and social work reform. However, while implementation is underway in some places and some good practice is emerging, this is a significant challenge for councils and their partners, particularly in terms of understanding what early help means for a local area and making changes that influence the whole system. There is already some activity underway to support councils through regions. So next steps will involve a rapid mapping exercise of this activity, an expectation that all regions will

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make Munro a focus of their support to councils during 2012-13 and further discussion of where and how a national support offer can add value to this regional activity.

Data profiles

10. The CIB is working with councils to develop a common data set for children's services. This draws on data that is already available and does not claim to be comprehensive or to be the only source of information or intelligence about performance. It provides a core of common data for use by the councils and to act as a potential starting point for peer challenge. A prototype data profile is being piloted with ten councils around the country. Pilot authorities are also being asked about the feasibility of collecting the proposed local performance information in the Munro Performance Framework. The pilot authorities who are working through February and March are:

- 10.1. Blackburn with Darwen
- 10.2. Bristol
- 10.3. Camden
- 10.4. Gateshead
- 10.5. Islington
- 10.6. Nottinghamshire
- 10.7. Oxfordshire
- 10.8. Sheffield
- 10.9. Thurrock
- 10.10. Walsall

11. Other authorities who are interested in viewing their prototype data profile are able to do this through the LGA's Knowledge Hub. The intention is to integrate the profiles with other comparative data available to councils through LGInform.

Financial Implications

12. Funding for the programme is provided by DfE. The programme is being hosted by the LGA which claims part of this funding as payment for services provided by the organisation. In addition to this, the LGA provides staff time to contribute to the CIB's work, in support of the LGA's business plan priority to deliver an effective approach to sector-based support in children's services.

Item 5

Hidden Talents: supporting the most disengaged young people

Purpose of report

To update members on the progress of the youth unemployment campaign.

Summary

Members have discussed youth unemployment at recent Board meetings; and Lead Members of the Children and Young People Board and Economy and Transport Board met last year to set the direction of LGA's youth engagement activity.

The LGA has published its interim Hidden Talents report which focuses on the young people who are most disengaged from work and learning. A Youth Summit was held on 14 February to hear young people's views on how the system could be improved and to test some key ideas.

This report asks members to comment on how the campaign should continue over the course of the Spring leading up to the LGA Annual Conference, where a final report with final recommendations for tackling youth disengagement will be presented.

This paper has also been presented to the Economy and Transport Board.

Recommendation

That members discuss the issues explored in this paper, and consider next steps.

Action

To be taken forward by officers as directed by members.

Contact officer: Jessica Thrift
Position: Public affairs and campaigns officer
Phone no: 020 7664 3034
E-mail: Jessica.thrift@local.gov.uk

Hidden Talents: supporting the most disengaged young people

1. Lead Members of the Children and Young People Board and Economy and Transport Board met last year to set out the direction of LGA activity on youth unemployment and re-engagement.
2. This report outlines the LGA's work to date and introduces planned activity for the coming months. In particular, members are asked to comment on the proposals set out in **paragraph 14**.

Background

3. Over the last 18 months the policy and funding architecture for young people has shifted in response to Government strategy, against a background of rising youth unemployment. Although there is a debate about the statistics, over one million young people are not participating in any form of work and learning.
4. Government has announced a range of measures on the education, training and employment of young people. Some reforms give local authorities opportunities to shape the public service offer to young people, for example; councils will have a central role in raising the compulsory participation age from 16 to 18; and the unringfenced Early Intervention Grant will enable councils to plan and deliver targeted services for the most vulnerable young people in a more joined-up way.
5. Despite substantial reform, the policy landscape still feels fragmented, with a host of centrally run initiatives administered in relative isolation to other services. As a result there is debate as to whether councils have the tools they need to realise the aspirations of young people in their area.
6. In particular, there is huge scope to improve the overall offer to the most disengaged young people that have not engaged in work or learning for long-periods. Services currently are not doing enough for this group of most marginalised young people – or those at risk of falling into it – which is growing at a faster rate than any other.

LGA Activity

7. Against this background, two pieces of research have been commissioned to include an:
 - 7.1 assessment of the trends in youth unemployment to get underneath the one million headline figure, to explore the common characteristics, and to look at

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the future opportunities for young people in the economy – focusing on those young people most isolated from work and learning;

- 7.2 analysis of the various number of schemes designed to help young people re-engage in work and learning, the budgets of these schemes, and the role and opportunities for influence of local authorities.
8. To test emerging analysis and ideas, a Youth Summit was held jointly with the British Youth Council, where lead members tested emerging ideas with over 40 young people.
9. The project has consulted with local authorities throughout, including a specific call for evidence.

Update on findings

10. This research has informed the preparation of the interim report (which will be circulated with this agenda). The report, supporting research and related information will be available on the LGA website.
11. The outline of the argument in the interim report is to give councils and local partners the leading role in helping re-engage the most disengaged young people in work and learning through a community budgeting approach. In more detail:
 - 11.1. Beneath the headline statistics are a group of increasingly disengaged young people, which has continued to increase through periods of boom and bust.
 - 11.2. This group are being impacted on particularly hard by recession, as opportunities are squeezed for all groups and all ages.
 - 11.3. They tend to have a more complex set of circumstances that can act as barriers to participating in work and learning.
 - 11.4. National funding schemes and services are not effectively reaching this group, instead being accessed by young people closer to the employment market.
 - 11.5. The education and skills system is not equipping young people with skills for local jobs, and the progression routes for young people not going to university are unclear and insufficient.
 - 11.6. Local authorities - who are responsible for welfare of all children, and particularly the most vulnerable – do not have sufficient levers to bring funding together around the most disengaged.
 - 11.7. Local authorities – who are responsible for helping create quality post-16 options as part of the raising of the compulsory participation age – are not

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enabled to bring together clear progression routes for young people in their area, and to link it with the needs of local economies.

LGA recommendations

12. This analysis has led to the development of a range of recommendations, including a call for:
 - 12.1. a community budgeting approach bringing together a range of funding around the most disengaged young people; and
 - 12.2. a role for local partners in commissioning school, further education, and apprenticeship provision to enable the use of more innovative ways to tackle the issues and deliver better results.
13. And an offer of:
 - 13.1. local early identification of those at risk of becoming long-term disengaged;
 - 13.2. the involvement of young people in the design and delivery of all schemes in their area, including national ones like Job Centre Plus;
 - 13.3. the creation of clear progression routes for young people not going to university, with employers playing a central role;
 - 13.4. the development of new ways of commissioning, which build on the government's public sector reforms; and
 - 13.5. integration with the early intervention approaches enabled by the Early Intervention Grant.

Next steps

14. The following activity is planned to follow report launch:
 - 14.1 an event to bring together leading figures from government and other partners to discuss the LGA proposals and seek a way forward;
 - 14.2 a series of political and official engagement with Government, through letters and followed by meetings;
 - 14.3 further research – the National Foundation of Educational Research (NFER) are undertaking some further work looking at the mismatch between skills provision and employment opportunities nationally, and in a handful of selected local areas;

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- 14.4 a series of press and campaign tools, including focuses on: the most disengaged young people, quangos, skills for jobs, graduate unemployment; and
 - 14.5 leading up to LGA Annual Conference, and presentation of final recommendations.
15. Members are asked to comment on the proposed next steps.

Schools and Children's Services Finance update

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

This report updates members on recent developments in schools funding issues.

Recommendations

That members:

1. Note this report and
2. Agree to receive further reports on any future developments.

Action

Officers to continue to provide updates to your Board.

Contact officer: Mike Heiser
Position: Senior Adviser (Finance)
Phone no: 020 7664 3265
E-mail: mike.heiser@local.gov.uk

Schools and Children's Services Finance update

Schools' Funding

1. The Department for Education (DfE) have still not yet issued their reply to the July 2011 consultation on schools' funding. Detailed proposals for changes to schools funding starting from 2013-14 are expected shortly. These are likely to focus on simplifying local fair funding formulae, on introducing a national formula, and on aspects such as reforming special needs funding. Officers have not yet been briefed on the proposals in detail. Any updates will be reported at the Board meeting.

Capital

2. There has also been no Government response to the consultation on the James Review; this is expected soon. The key issues remain the scope of any single capital pot to distribute funding locally and how new school building is to be procured. There have been discussions about a regional procurement model using existing authority expertise but nothing has yet been announced.
3. Allocations for the Priority Schools Building programme have also not yet been announced; officers understand that it has been heavily oversubscribed.

Academies top slice

4. We are also awaiting a response to the second Government consultation on the academies top-slice; it closed in January 2012. There has been contact at both officer and member level with the DfE, including a meeting between Sir Merrick Cockell, Cllr Simmonds and Lord Hill on 18 January, but still no definitive steer.
5. We are expecting a future consultation to cover arrangements in 2013-14 and following. In its response to the consultation on business rates retention, the Government indicated that they would explore removing the funding for central education functions from formula grant into DfE budgets. This would be likely to mean that authorities and academies would be paid grants direct from DfE.

Financial Implications

6. None specific to this report.

Other business report

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

This section provides reports on other business relevant to the Board.

Recommendation

That the Board note the update.

Action

LGA officers to action as necessary.

Contact officer: Lucy Ellender
Position: Programme Officer
Phone no: 020 7664 3173
E-mail: lucy.ellender@local.gov.uk

Other business report

National Federation for Educational Research (NFER)

1. Reporting activity in the January to March 2012 period has included the publication of reports on The Economic Benefits Of Early Intervention: Informing Local Practice, the Evaluation of the Early Adopter Programme for Sector-led Improvement and Support and an interim report on the Evaluation of the National Youth Agency (NYA) Tailored Support Offer to Local Authorities. In addition, reports submitted for approval and possible publication include Hidden Talents: A Statistical Overview of the Participation Patterns of Young People, The Impact of Safeguarding Peer Reviews and the Soulbury Committee Workforce Survey. Newly commissioned studies include Experiences of the Fostering and Adoption Processes: Views of Children and Young People, Fostering and Adoption Partnerships: A Review of Current Practice, Council Approaches to Children's Health and Wellbeing and Analysis of Academy Schools by Local Authority.
2. The Chief Executive and the Head of the LGA Research Programme at NFER welcomed the opportunity to attend the January Children and Young Board meeting and the Head of the LGA Programme attended the Office Holders meeting in February to share some of the previous year's work with them and discuss possible project commissions for the next financial year. Further information has been provided to the LGA and Councillor Lakin on possible study suggestions arising from: suggestions by the Board members at the January meeting; previous studies findings and recommendations; feedback from officers and members participating in earlier studies or who have attended conferences where the findings have been disseminated, and; suggestions picked up through trade press and journals and via the regular LGA e-bulletins.
3. A winter/spring 2012 brochure has been produced that highlights activity during the 2011/12 period including current projects and published reports. There is also a section providing information on research projects completed since 2006. This can be found in **Appendix A to Item 3**.

National Youth Agency (NYA)

4. Following agreement from the Children and Young Board Office Holders the NYA has agreed its work plan for the next financial year. This will include increasing the offer of tailored support to 40 Councils. Each Council will be able to access up to 10 days of consultancy support tailored to their individual needs. NYA will also be piloting a business brokerage programme with two

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further councils to produce a model of working. Other activities include work into 'troubled families' and specifically the role that youth work plays within that.

5. Working with the Department for Education (DfE) and the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services NYA will be enlarging the audience to the Supporting Services online community to encompass the entire youth sector. The DfE has agreed that it should become the legacy site for Positive for Youth as well as a repository for youth related Children's Workforce Development Council materials.
6. Building on the success of last year's LGA/NYA annual conference a third annual conference for councillors and officers will be held at Local Government House in January 2013. A conference will also be held outside London in September which will provide an opportunity to showcase the LGA/NYA routes to success work.
7. Included in next year's budget will be a small drawdown pot to be used to meet specific requests from LGA throughout the year.
8. The NYA have already completed several of the work programme objectives from 2011-12 including; completing 10 packages of tailored support to councils; working with 4 councils developing and piloting a peer review and development process for young people's services; commissioning support materials with eight of the 10 resources completed and launched in January, and finally publishing, alongside the LGA and DfE, research into innovative ways in which councils are working with the voluntary sector to leverage extra funding from alternative sources.

The LGA consultation response to ending the Annual Children services assessment

9. In response to the LGA previously calling for the ending of the annual rating for children services, the Government are now proposing to repeal this duty. The LGA responded to Ofsted's consultation on ending the Annual Children services assessment re-iterating that we support this repeal to remove top down management and replace it with local government being accountable to their local communities and in charge of their own self-improvement. Our response also detailed that the LGA's approach to self-improvement is more proportionate, increases local transparency and democracy, and frees up resources of both local government and Ofsted to be used for higher priority areas.
10. A copy of our response is available on the Children and Young People section of the LGA website (http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/children-and-young-people/-/journal_content/56/10161/3479104/ARTICLE-TEMPLATE).

Children's Health

11. On 26 January 2012, the Secretary of State for Health, Andrew Lansley, announced a children and young people's health outcomes strategy will be unveiled later this year, with an ambition "to improve outcomes for children and young people's health". To inform the strategy, a Children's and Young People's Forum has been set up to look at four themes (Public Health and Prevention, Acutely Sick Children, Mental Health, Long term Conditions). The forum will be responsible for carrying out a three month engagement process with appropriate stakeholders before reporting their recommendations to Government later in the year.
12. The LGA raised the issue of the lack of local government representation on the children and young people's health outcomes strategy forum with the Department of Health and as a result Councillor David Pugh, Leader of Isle of Wight Council and a member of the Children and Young People Board is now an official member of the forum. Councillor Pugh is the only elected member on the forum which is made up of 52 independent experts from charity groups and the health sector, other local government representatives includes Directors of Children's Services.
13. Our concerns about the strategy's scope include the lack of a clear overall strategy for health improvement. The lack of reference to Prof. Sir Michael Marmot's life course approach which is a key cornerstone of the public health strategy, in addition there does not seem to be any reference to health inequalities. Local government has a key role to play in delivering the public health agenda through health and wellbeing boards and tackling the wider social determinants of health and reducing health inequalities for children and young people through service planning and delivery.
14. The LGA is working with the forum members and the Department of Health to hold an engagement event to ensure local government is fully involved in the development of the children and young people's health outcomes strategy.
15. If you would like further information contact Samantha Ramanah, Adviser, on samantha.ramanah@local.gov.uk.

Special Education Needs and Disability – Next Steps

16. We are still waiting for the Government to announce the next steps for the reform of Special Educational Needs and Disability, following the consultation on the Green paper last year. The announcement has been delayed but it is expected before the Easter recess and the LGA will be doing an 'On the day' briefing on the proposals. Twenty pathfinder projects are underway involving thirty-one local authorities that are testing out the main proposals in the Green

28 March 2012

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Paper which are the biggest reforms in 30 years to help disabled children and those with special educational needs.

Note of decisions taken and actions required

Title: Children and Young People Board
Date and time: 25 January 2012, 11.00am
Venue: Local Government House

Attendance

Position	Councillor	Council
Chairman	David Simmonds	Hillingdon LB
Deputy chair	Liz Green	Kingston upon Thames RB
Members	David Pugh	Isle of Wight Council
	Baroness Shireen Ritchie	Kensington & Chelsea RB
	Derrick Murphy	Norfolk CC
	Robert Light	Kirklees MBC
	Paul Lakin	Rotherham MBC
	Anne Burns	Cumbria CC
	David Bellotti	Bath & NE Somerset Council
Substitutes	Chris Maines	Lewisham LB
	Catherine McDonald	Southwark LB
	Pete Robbins	Lambeth LB
	Roy Perry	Hampshire CC
In attendance	Sue Rossiter	NFER
	Fiona Walker	NFER
	Cllr Toni Coombs	South West regional network Chair
	Cllr Linda Burgess	Yorkshire and the Humber regional network Chair
Apologies	Rita Krishna	Hackney LB
	John Merry CBE	Salford City
	Catharine Grundy	Birmingham City
	Kath Pinnock	Kirklees MBC
	Apu Bagchi	Bedford BC

Officers: Helen Johnston, Ian Keating, Cassandra Harrison, Jasbir Jhas, Caroline Bosdet, David Pye, Lucy Ellender

Item	Decisions and actions	Action by
1	<p>Business Plan Priorities 2012/13</p> <p>Cllr David Simmonds introduced this item for discussion, saying that this was the Board's opportunity to influence the direction of the LGA's work.</p> <p>Members suggested a number of amendments to the business plan.</p> <p>Decision <i>Members agreed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>that the business plan priorities needed to be focussed in order to make the most of the limited resources available;</i> • <i>to submit views on the draft business plan through the group offices.</i> <p>Action Officers to proceed as directed.</p>	<p>Helen Johnston</p>
2	<p>Review of adoption and care systems</p> <p>Cllr Liz Green introduced this item, setting out key issues and outlining the main difficulties councils are facing in this area. Members welcomed the paper and agreed its importance in the current political context.</p> <p>Members discussed the challenges around attracting more foster carers into the care system. This was a particular concern due to the relatively low profile of foster caring and the difficulties posed by a very rigorous selection process. It was noted that some councils were trialling joint-working initiatives in this area. Members also emphasised the importance of special guardianships as sometimes the best option for the child, though this had an impact on the number of adoptions that councils were carrying out.</p> <p>Decision <i>Members agreed that there needed to be greater input from young people that had been through the care system in any future work.</i></p>	

Action

Officers to proceed as directed and ensure LGA input into Tim Loughton MP's adoption group.

Cassi Harrison

3 Local authorities and the future of national careers policy

Cllr Simmonds introduced the paper outlining the significant changes being made to national careers policy. Councils will retain their existing duty to 'encourage, enable and assist the participation of young people in education and training' and the success of the new arrangements will have an important impact on authorities' duty to support the Raising of the Participation Age, which is now one year off.

Members commended the report and agreed the importance of giving young people impartial and expert careers advice in schools. Members raised concerns about the possible effect that budget cuts would have on careers advice in schools. Members also questioned how schools would be engaged in councils' scrutiny processes now fewer schools were under local authority control.

Members felt that the introduction of Raising the Participation Age would mean that it was important to engage with local business communities early on.

Decision

Members noted the report.

Action

Officers to proceed in line with members comments.

Jasbir Jhas

4 National Foundation for Educational Research Work Programme

Cllr Paul Lakin introduced this item giving members an overview of the key programme activities being undertaken by the NFER. He emphasised that the Board owned the research agenda and this was an opportunity to shape the work NFER would be doing in the future.

Decision

Members agreed further meetings should take place with the NFER to discuss their future research areas.

Action

Officers to send members a list of their current research activities.

David Pye

5 Schools funding update

Cllr Simmonds introduced this item updating members on his meeting with the Chairman of the LGA and Lord Hill. It was noted that the Ministerial Advisory Group was continuing to work on a national funding formula on capital. The intention was to make it simpler and more transparent.

Members discussed the role of councils and School Forums on capital.

Decision

Members agreed that while Schools Forum's might be given a consultative role on capital, any final decisions on capital allocations should remain with councils.

Action

Officers to proceed as directed.

Helen Johnston

6/7 Lead Member for Children's Services Regional Network Update and Children's improvement Board update

It was noted that there had been mixed engagement with the regions on the Children's Improvement Board (CIB). Members also raised concerns about a lack of information and communication with the CIB. Members agreed that sector-led improvement will require a culture change in order to foster improvement across the sector.

Decision

Members noted the report.

Action

Officers to proceed in line with members comments.

Alison Miller

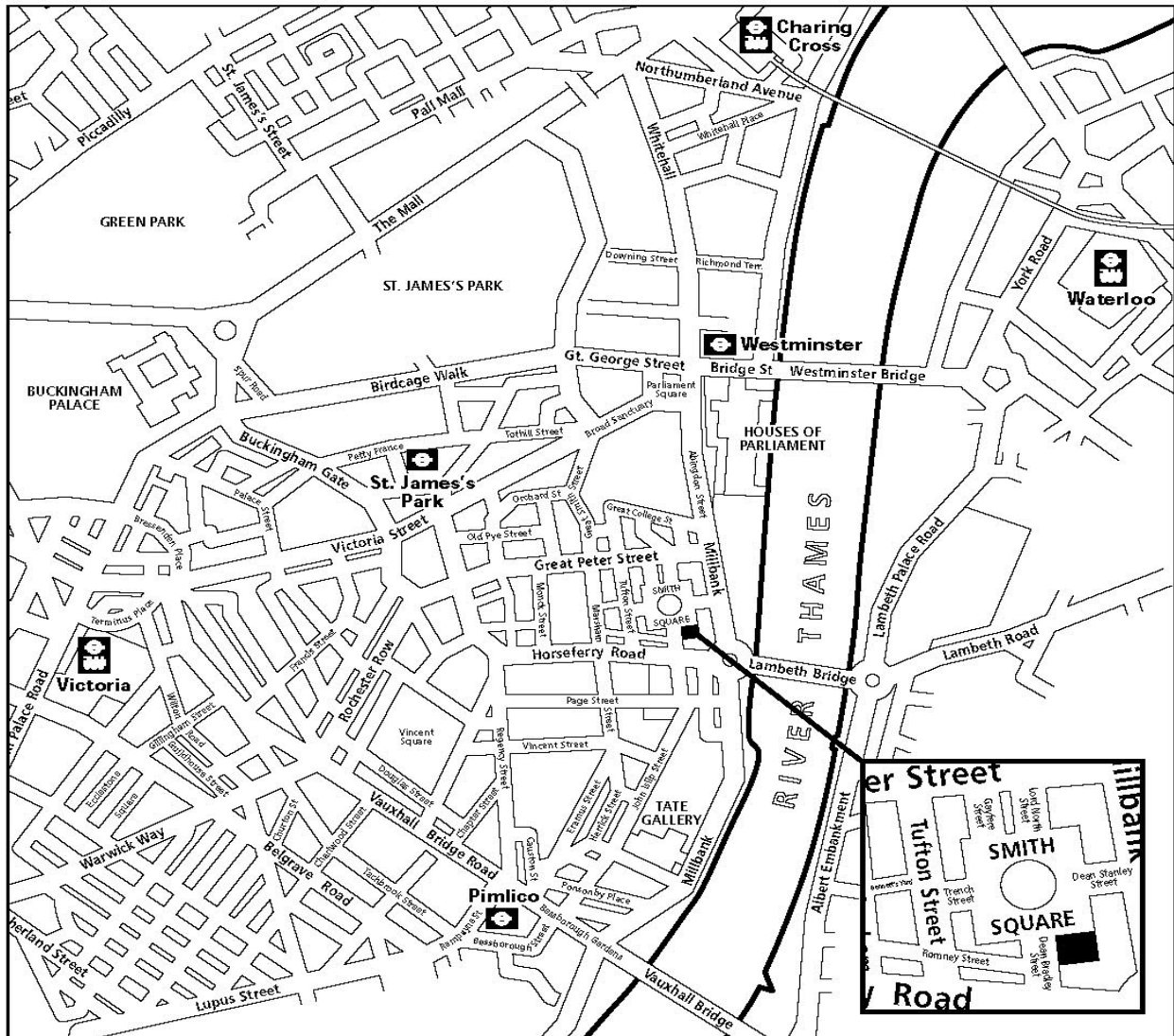
8 Other Business Report

Members highlighted the importance of lead members for Children's Services being involved in the Health and Wellbeing Boards in the transition of public health to local government.

- 9 Note of the last meeting – 20 October 2011**
Members **agreed** the note of the meeting held on 20 October 2011.

- 10 Note of the last meeting – 6 September 2011**
Members **agreed** the note of the meeting held on 6 September 2011.

LGA Location Map



Local Government Association

Local Government House
Smith Square, London SW1P 3HZ
Tel: 020 7664 3131
Fax: 020 7664 3030
Email: info@local.gov.uk
Website: www.local.gov.uk

Public transport

Local Government House is well served by public transport. The nearest mainline stations are;

Victoria

and **Waterloo**; the local underground stations are **St James's Park** (District and Circle Lines); **Westminster** (District, Circle and Jubilee Lines); and **Pimlico** (Victoria Line), all about 10 minutes walk away. Buses **3** and **87** travel along **Millbank**, and the **507** between Victoria and Waterloo goes close by at the end of **Dean Bradley Street**.

Bus routes - Millbank

87 Wandsworth - Aldwych **N87**
3 Crystal Palace - Brixton - Oxford Circus

Bus routes - Horseferry Road

507 Waterloo - Victoria
C10 Elephant and Castle - Pimlico - Victoria
88 Camden Town - Whitehall - Westminster - Pimlico - Clapham Common

Cycling Facilities

Cycle racks are available at Local Government House. Please telephone the LGA on 020 7664 3131.

Central London Congestion Charging Zone

Local Government House is located within the congestion charging zone. For further details, please call 0845 900 1234 or visit the website at www.cclondon.com

Car Parks

Abingdon Street Car Park
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