

LGA topslice funded Children & Young People research programme 2012/13

Purpose of report

For discussion.

Summary

This paper provides an overview of the requests for research work received by the LGA and the Board are asked to consider which ones they wish to commission.

Recommendation

Members are asked to consider which research projects that would like to commission.

Action

LGA Officers to proceed as directed.

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Background

1. For the 2013/14 financial year, the Children and Young People Board agreed that up to £500,000 of topslice funds be made available for research commissions to be completed by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER).
2. At the March 2012 Board it was agreed that officers would canvass lead members and others (through the lead member regional member networks) for potential research project areas and report back to the Children and Young People Board. In addition to the views of the lead members, LGA has also received requests from senior officers within local authorities for potential research work. This short paper provides an overview of those requests and the Board are asked to consider which ones they wish to commission.

Potential research projects for 2012/13

3. Areas suggested for potential research projects are:
 - 3.1. Research on the development of partnerships with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) and adoption agencies to investigate how councils are working with local providers to shape and develop the market;
 - 3.2. Work around the issue of sexual exploitation of children and specifically children in care;
 - 3.3. Exploration of the impact on schools of the revised OFSTED inspection regime categories;
 - 3.4. Review of the extent to which levels of parental drug and alcohol misuse impact on the number of looked after children. In addition, the issue of whether those local authorities with excellent drug and alcohol misuse support programmes are attracting a proportionately higher number of misusers and their children with the knock-on effect of a higher demand on looked after children (LAC) services in the area, should be investigated;
 - 3.5. Best-practice case studies of home to school travel;
 - 3.6. Review of the unintended consequences of government policy on children and young people;
 - 3.7. A study investigating the perceptions of social workers to the current fostering and adoption processes;
 - 3.8. The impact of the service premium in terms of improving outcomes for children who are part of service families;

Projects in commission

4. Since the previous Children and Young People Board (May, 2012) a number of commissions have been suggested by LGA officers to support the sector and to address emerging issues. Members are asked to agree that work on these projects can continue as planned. The projects are:
 - 4.1. A study of local Authority Adoption performance;
 - 4.2. An evaluation of the Children Improvement Board (CIB) peer challenge programme (jointly funded by LGA topslice and CIB);
 - 4.3. An evaluation of the safeguarding peer review programme (jointly funded by LGA topslice and CIB);
 - 4.4. An investigation into work on careers, education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) provided by local authorities to children and young people in school.

Financial Implications

5. Fully costed proposals will be available for each of these projects and can be circulated to the Board.