

**Item 4**

**Note of decisions taken and actions required**

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**Title:** Children and Young People  
**Date:** Wednesday 27 March 2013  
**Venue:** Westminster Room, Local Government House, Smith Square, London SW1P 3HZ

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**Attendance**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Council / Representing</b>
Chairman	David Simmonds	Hillingdon LB
Vice-Chairman	John Merry CBE	Salford City
Deputy-Chairman	Liz Green	Kingston upon Thames RB
Deputy-Chairman	Apu Bagchi	Bedford BC

**Members**

Paul Carter	Kent CC
Susie Charles	Lancashire CC
Patricia Bradwell	Lincolnshire CC
Anne Burns	Cumbria CC
Paul Lakin	Rotherham MBC
Rita Krishna	Hackney LB
David Bellotti	Bath & NE Somerset Council
Liz Hackett Pain	Monmouthshire CC
Nick Forbes	Newcastle City

**Substitutes**

Roy Perry	Hampshire CC
Peter Evans	West Sussex CC
Dominic Gillham	Hillingdon LB
Richard Watts	Islington LB
Peter Downes OBE	Cambridgeshire CC

**Apologies**

John Osman	Somerset CC
David Pugh	Isle of Wight Council
Jude Robinson	Cornwall CC
Robert Light	Kirklees MBC
Kath Pinnock	Kirklees MBC

**Officers:** Sally Burlington, Mike Heiser, Justine Wharton, Verity Sinclair

Item	Decisions and actions	Action by
	<p>The Chairman welcomed all those present and opened the meeting with introductions.</p> <p><b>1. LGA work on a new model for local government – Children and Adult Social Care proposals</b></p> <p>Cllr David Simmonds introduced the report and asked members for their comments on the draft children’s safeguarding and social care paper.</p> <p>Members discussed the importance of developing a grown up relationship between local and central government and emphasised that the paper should speak about national government empowering local government. Members felt that a more integrated system is needed with councils having greater influence over partners.</p> <p>In discussion members made a number of other points including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Keeping children safe should be included in the list of key requirements in the paper.</li><li>• Differing council standards making devolution more complicated as government tends to legislate for the lowest common denominator. The importance of sector-led improvement was highlighted.</li><li>• The reduction in central grants and the prevention of local government raising its own funds lead to a mismatch between government expectation and funding.</li><li>• The extent to which Health and Wellbeing Boards have children’s health on their agenda.</li><li>• The importance of focusing on vital preventative and early intervention in order to improve outcomes and reduce future demand on services. The impact of reduction in the Early Intervention Grant was noted and community budget approaches were discussed as a way of improving services at a time of less resources</li><li>• The need to demonstrate the value of local delivery of services and recognise that there will be different solutions in different areas.</li></ul> <p><b>Decision</b></p> <p>Members noted the report.</p> <p><b>Action</b></p> <p>Officers to incorporate comments from members into the next draft of the Children’s safeguarding and social care paper.</p>	<p>Sally Burlington/Liz Hobson/ Cassandra Harrison</p>

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**2. Early Years and childcare: a changing landscape**

Cllr David Simmonds introduced the report explaining there were many challenges to childcare and the LGA is looking for members' views on a number of points. These included, how councils could encourage schools to provide wrap around care, the challenges faced by councils in providing childcare to children with Special Educational Needs and disabilities, how to make childcare more affordable, whether councils had experienced issues getting the funding from the dedicated schools grant and what the effects of removing councils market enabling role would be on quality and sufficiency.

Members discussed a number of issues including:

- The importance of making a business case to school governors of the potential increased revenue from opening up their provision for wrap around childcare. It was felt the LGA could best add value in helping share good practice where schools are providing wrap around childcare with National Governor's Association.
- A number of members were concerned that Ofsted's proposed new role in the improvement of schools alongside inspection would mean they could no longer be seen as independent arbitrators.
- The market role in childcare was discussed; with many members feeling local government need to continue to provide a market enabling role to ensure sufficiency and quality especially in rural areas.
- Government funding for childcare was considered, with members debating whether more funding was needed or local government should be spending the current amounts of funding differently.
- Affordability of childcare was mentioned, with some members commenting the current system felt as if it was inversely means tested as the more you spent the more money off you received. It was also raised that the LGA need to make sure the details of the childcare offer for those on Universal Credit is fit for purpose.
- There was a discussion on children's centres with varying perspectives on whether they are most effective in supporting the most vulnerable as a universal offer or targeting on the most needy. Good practice approaches from various councils were highlighted and will feed into the LGA's good practice publication on children's centres.
- The merits of the Scandinavian system of childcare were discussed with particular focus on children's learning. It was suggested that this may be an interesting model for potential research.

**Decision**

Members noted the report.

**Action**

Officers to action as directed.

Justine  
Wharton

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**3. Children and Young People Research and Commissioning**

Cllr David Simmonds explained that in light of the new agreement by the LGA Leadership Board to replace grants funded by the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) topslice, to the National Youth Agency (NYA) and the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER) with a fully commissioned model, the board was being asked to put forward possible ideas for priority areas for funding.

Members suggested a number of potential research areas including:

- The longer term impact of fostering and adoption.
- The Swedish Childcare model.
- How to provide careers advice to improve upon the shortage of skills.
- The social inclusion of looked after children, looking at national best practice.
- The impact of being born in the summer months on children.
- Troubled families and early intervention.

There were a number of discussions held about the best way to spend the commissioning money. Concerns were raised that all the money would be spent on research alone and it was suggested that grassroots work done directly with councils, such as that done by the NYA is also of significant value. Another view put forward was that the LGA's lobbying and policy work would benefit from stronger research, perhaps focusing on a small number of issues in depth.

Some members raised the risk of duplicating studies already being done in the voluntary sector and suggested the LGA worked closely with charities and universities when commissioning this work.

It was noted that the research and support commissioning budget may be subject to change in light of wider LGA budgetary considerations.

Cllr David Simmonds proposed that rather than coming up with too many ideas it might be best to only commission in 3 or 4 broad areas which would be based on the priorities of the board. Which projects to commission would be discussed at the office holders meeting and 3 or 4 ideas would be brought back to the board for approval.

**Decision**

Members agreed to refer the decision on research commissioning topics to the office holders meeting.

**Action**

Officers to action as directed.

Ian Keating

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**4. Education and Children's Services Funding**

The LGA's response to the Review of 2013-14 school funding arrangements was circulated at the meeting.

Members voiced their agreement with the submission with many noting that the main problem was the government restricting local government freedom and the cuts to funding.

There were also concerns raised that despite the rhetoric that there was no financial advantage to being an academy, academies were getting more funding per pupil. Academies running at less than full capacity was also mentioned, along with reductions in the top slice funding for local authorities.

Delays to the PFI programme were discussed with a number of members stating their dissatisfaction with the slowness of the government's school building and repair programme.

**Decision**

Members noted the report

**Action**

Officers to take forward this work in light of Members' comments.

Mike Heiser

**5. Other Business Report**

Members discussed the leadership academy and were encouraged to go if they had not yet attended.

Members also discussed the NYA report and there was further discussion on how to spend the research money.

**Decision**

Members noted the report

**Action**

Officers to take forward this work in light of Members' comments.

LGA officers

**6. Notes of the last meeting and actions arising**

The Board **agreed** the note of the last meeting

