

POLICY INFORM: FAMILIES AND WELLBEING

Policy Inform: April 2016

The Directorate Policy briefings will provide an overview of ongoing and recent national legislation, bills presented to Parliament, emerging policies and upcoming consultations. The Directorate Policy briefing will be produced specifically to inform Portfolio Holders and Elected Members and will be taken to Policy & Performance Committees for discussion.

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Introduction

The policy briefing paper is intended to provide Members of the Policy and Performance Committee with the latest position on emerging policy and legislative developments to support the committees work programme and future scrutiny work.

The following table outlines the timetable for the preparation and reporting of policy briefing papers:

Policy & Performance Committee Briefings	
July 2015	The first policy briefing will focus predominately on the Queen's Speech, which will establish the Government's legislative programme for the parliamentary year ahead.
September 2015	The second policy briefing will be produced in September and will focus on the Chancellor's July 2015 Budget Statement. The policy briefing will provide an update on policy and legislation and will consider relevant implications for Wirral.
January 2016	The third policy briefing will focus on the Autumn Statement and the Spending Review which sets out how Government money will be allocated. The policy briefing will provide an update on policy and legislation and will consider relevant implications for Wirral.
April 2016	The fourth policy briefing will focus upon the 2016 Chancellor of Exchequers Budget. The policy briefing will provide an update on policy and legislation and will consider relevant implications for Wirral.

The April policy briefing outlines the key features of the Chancellor of Exchequers Budget Statement, which was announced on 16th March 2016. The policy briefing also alludes to any potential implications that have been highlighted by relevant Officers for Wirral Council, and elaborates on any legislation or policy updates that have been implemented or developed since the last policy briefing in September.

The Committee may wish to identify specific policy areas to focus upon which are in line with the Committee's work programme. Detailed briefing papers can be prepared for these subject matters at the request of the Committee which would be in addition to the regular policy briefing papers outlined above.

Chancellors Budget – 16th March 2016

This year the deficit will have been cut by almost two thirds from its peak. Commitment to a further £3.5 billion of savings from departmental spending in 2019-20 was announced to help the government achieve a surplus by 2020. The key announcements outlined in the Budget have been divided into themes and are displayed below:

Local Councils and Public Sector

- The Chancellor has not announced any further cuts to local government in this budget.
- However, the government will find a further £3.5 billion of savings from public spending in 2019-20. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury, with the support of the Paymaster General, will lead an efficiency review, which will report in 2018.
- The government will consult on new rules requiring local authorities to be transparent about the cost of the in-house services they provide, and whether there could be savings from using competitive external providers.
- There will be increases to contributions from public sector employers for public service pensions.

Devolution

- Agreements have been reached to create combined authorities headed up by elected mayors for East Anglia, the west of England and Greater Lincolnshire.
- A further devolution deal has been agreed with Greater Manchester, including a commitment to work towards the devolution of criminal justice powers.
- Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region will pilot 100% business rates retention.
- The share of business rates retained in London will be increased and responsibility for funding TfL's capital projects will be transferred.
- The government will explore, with London, options for moving to 100% business rates retention ahead of the full roll-out.
- Previously agreed mayoral devolution deals will each receive un-ringfenced single pots of funding to spend on local priorities, worth £2.86 billion in total.

Housing and Planning

- From April 2017 a new 'life time ISA' will enable under-40s to save up to £4,000 a year with the Government contributing £1 for every £4 saved. Funds can be used to buy a first home, and can be withdrawn from age 60 for use in retirement.
- The government has announced the delivery of 13,000 affordable homes two years early by bringing forward £250 million of capital spending to 2017-18 and 2018-19.
- Launch of the Starter Homes Land Fund prospectus, inviting local authorities to access £1.2 billion of funding to remediate brownfield land to be used for housing, to deliver at least 30,000 Starter Homes
- The date from which new or renewed tenancies in the social sector will be subject to the cap on Housing Benefit will be deferred for supported accommodation from April 2016 to April 2017.

Transport and Infrastructure

- £300m will be provided to fund High Speed 3 between Leeds and Manchester and improve northern transport connectivity.
- £80m will be provided to help fund the development of Crossrail 2.
- £230m for road improvements in the north of England, including upgrading parts of the M62.
- There will be a 0.5% increase in insurance premium tax to fund an extra £700m by 2020-21 to be spent on new flood defences in areas including Leeds, York, Calder Valley, Carlisle and wider Cumbria, and for maintenance of existing defences.
- Fuel duty will be frozen again in 2016-17.

Families and Wellbeing

- £100m will be provided to deliver low-cost 'second stage' accommodation to help rough sleepers and domestic abuse victims and their families move on from emergency hostels and refuges.
- £10m will be available to support schemes to prevent and reduce rough sleeping.
- Funding for the Rough Sleeping Social Impact Bond will be doubled from £5 million to £10 million.
- £1.7m will be provided to charities to reduce violence against women and girls.
- From April 2017, 4,000 Armed Forces veterans will be able to keep payments from their war pensions if they need social care.

Digital Government

- The Government will deliver a 5G strategy in 2017, based on an assessment by the National Infrastructure Commission of how the UK can become a world leader in 5G.
- The Government will establish a new Broadband Investment Fund, in partnership with private sector investors, to support the growth of alternative broadband networks by providing greater access to finance.
- By 2022 local authority business rates systems will be linked to HMRC digital tax accounts.

Businesses

- From April 2017 Small Business Rate Relief (SBRR) will be doubled from 50 per cent to 100 per cent, meaning that small businesses that occupy property with a rateable value of £12,000 or less will pay no business rates. Properties with a rateable value between £12,000 and £15,000 will receive tapered relief.
- The threshold for the standard business rates multiplier will be increased to a rateable value of £51,000 in April 2017.
- From April 2020, the annual indexation of business rates will switch from the Retail Price Index (RPI) to the Consumer Price Index (CPI).
- Corporation tax will be cut to 17% in 2020.
- Relief on interest payments will now be capped at 30% of UK earnings, with exceptions for groups with legitimately high interest payments.
- Over the next 5 years, the government will raise nearly £8 billion from large companies and multinationals through changes to the rules on interest and other measures, including:
 - Introducing rules to prevent multinational companies avoid paying tax in any of the countries they do business in.
 - Taxing outbound royalty payments better.
 - Making sure offshore property developers are taxed on their UK profits.
- Employers will pay National Insurance on pay-offs above £30,000 from April 2018.
- From 17 March 2016 the new rates and tax bands for stamp duty for commercial property will be 0% for the portion of the transaction value up to £150,000; 2% between £150,001 and £250,000, and 5% above £250,000. A new 2% stamp duty will be introduced on leasehold rent transactions with a net value over £5 million.

Schools and Apprenticeships

- All schools are to become academies by 2020, or to have an academy order in place to convert by 2022.
- A new sugar tax will be imposed on sugary drinks from April 2018. This will apply to drinks with total sugar content above 5 grams per 100 millilitres, with a higher rate for more than 8 grams per 100 millilitres.
- £500 million of additional core funding will be awarded to schools over the course of this spending review to speed up the introduction of the national funding formula. It is the government's aim that 90 per cent of schools who are to gain additional funding, to receive the full amount they are due by 2020.
- Up to £285 million a year will be provided to give 25 per cent of secondary schools the opportunity to extend their school day, to offer more extra-curricular activities.
- £10 million of funding a year will be provided to expand breakfast clubs in up to 1,600 schools from September 2017.
- £20 million a year will be invested in a Northern Powerhouse Schools Strategy.
- From April 2017, employers will receive a 10 per cent top-up to their monthly levy contributions in England, to spend on apprenticeship training through their digital account.

Taxation

- The Personal Allowance will be increased to £11,500 in April 2017 and the higher rate threshold will rise to £45,000.
- The higher rate of Capital Gains Tax to be cut from 28% to 20% and the basic rate from 18% to 10% from April 2016. Residential property will still be taxed at current rates
- Class 2 National Insurance contributions for self-employed people will be abolished from April 2018. From April 2018, self-employed people will only need to pay Class 4 National Insurance contributions on their profits.
- From April 2017 there will be two new tax-free £1,000 allowances – one for individuals selling goods or providing services, and one for income from properties owned.
- Tax support worth £1 billion for the oil and gas industry; this includes effectively abolishing Petroleum Revenue Tax from 35% to 0% and reducing the supplementary charge on oil and gas extraction from 20% to 10%.
- Duty rates on beer, whisky, spirits and most ciders will be frozen this year. However duty rates on wine will rise with inflation.

Further Analysis

Public Sector

- Though it is not yet clear where the £3.5bn extra in public sector cuts will fall, it is expected that they will hit local government either directly or through the knock on effect of cuts to welfare benefits.
- The increase in employer contributions for public service pensions is anticipated to reduce expenditure by £2bn.

Devolution

- All councils need greater freedom from central government to take decisions over vital services in their area in order to build desperately-needed homes, create jobs, provide dignified care for our elderly and boost economic growth. Devolution deals agreed in this budget are good news for councils and rightly recognise the economic potential of England's county and rural areas.
- The radical devolution of justice responsibilities will enable Greater Manchester to offer seamless interventions for offenders as they transition between prisons and the community, and to join up public services to tackle the root causes of crime and prevent reoffending.
- The 'single pot' announcement for mayoral devolution deals will allow areas to take more control over strategic investment and bring together previously fragmented funding streams to boost jobs and growth in their area.
- The pilot authorities of 100% business rates retention announced are an important first step and should be used to inform the development of the wider system that will be introduced to all authorities by 2020. However, it will be important to avoid a knock-on financial impact on other councils, and local government will rightly need to play a lead role in making sure any new national system works effectively and fairly.

Businesses

- The reform to the SBRR will mean that 600,000 small businesses will pay no rates. An additional 50,000 businesses will benefit from tapered relief.
- Changes to the threshold for the standard business rates multiplier will take 250,000 smaller properties out of the higher rate.
- The switch from RPI to CPI represents a business rates cut every year from 2020, worth £370m to businesses in one year alone. This will lead to a reduction in income to councils at a time when they will be more dependent than ever on this income.
- The government has provided assurance that local government will be compensated for their reduced income as a result of the changes to business rates and the impact will be considered as part of the government's consultation on the implementation of 100 per cent business rates retention in summer 2016. However, this reduction in the amounts of money available will undoubtedly complicate the policy consequences and transfers of resources to different areas.
- New anti-tax avoidance and evasion measures are expected to raise £12bn by 2020.

Wellbeing

- The announcement that the war disablement pension for veterans will no longer be taken into account when calculating the amount they must pay towards their care costs is a positive one. However, this will create a new burden on councils. The LGA have argued that adult social care budgets are already under enormous strain and should not be expected to absorb further costs resulting from government policy changes.

Schools

- Ofsted has rated 82 per cent of council maintained schools as 'good' or 'outstanding', whilst identifying that the improvement in many secondary school academies has stalled. This defies reason that councils are being portrayed as barriers to improvement.
- The LGA say it is vital that it is the quality of education and a school's ability to deliver the best results for children in each area that is the priority, rather than the legal status of a school.
- Forcing schools to become academies strips parents, teachers and faith groups of any local choice. Giving significant powers relating to education to unelected civil servants means parents and residents will be unable to hold them to account at the ballot box.
- Councils have spent millions of pounds to cover the cost of schools becoming academies in recent years, while the Department for Education spent an additional estimated £1 billion in 2012. With mixed evidence about academisation improving standards, and when public spending is facing significant cuts, the LGA argue that imposing academisation on schools is not an appropriate use of public money.
- The new sugar tax is expected to raise £520m in the first year. Revenues raised will help fund more sport in primary schools.
- Introducing a new national funding formula will inevitably create losers so it is essential that it is introduced in a phased way to protect those schools facing a relative reduction in budgets.

Housing

- The £100 million invested in low-cost 'second stage' accommodation will provide 2,000 places to enable independent living for vulnerable households and individuals, whilst freeing up hostels and refuges for those in most acute need.
- It is crucial that councils, as local planning authorities, are able to determine the mix of housing tenure on sites in order to respond to local community need and that this authority is not undermined by national determinations to build starter homes at the expense of other tenures.

Flooding

- The additional funding for flood defences will enable local authorities and their communities to recover from recent extreme weather. The LGA has recommended that this funding should be devolved to local areas so that council can work with communities and businesses to ensure money is directed towards projects that best reflect local needs.
- The LGA has also said that councils will almost certainly need more financial help from the government as the full cost of the winter's horrendous flooding damage emerges.

Queen's Speech 2015- Designation to Policy and Performance Committees

On Wednesday 27th May 2015, the Queen unveiled the Government's legislative plans for the year ahead. Below is a list of each individual Bill which will have implications for local government that were announced during the speech. The list identifies the Policy and Performance committee with whose remit the legislation most closely aligns:

Legislative Plans	Policy and Performance Committee
National Insurance Contributions Bill/ Finance Bill	Transformation and Resources
Welfare Reform and Work Bill	All Policy and Performance Committees
Trade Union Bill	Transformation and Resources
Housing and Planning Bill	Regeneration and Environment
Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill	Regeneration and Environment
Buses Bill	Regeneration and Environment
High Speed Rail Bill	Regeneration and Environment
Childcare Bill	Families and Wellbeing
Energy Bill	Regeneration and Environment
Education and Adoption Bill	Families and Wellbeing
Enterprise Bill	Regeneration and Environment
Policing and Crime Bill	Families and Wellbeing Transformation and Resources
Draft Public Service Ombudsman Bill	Transformation and Resources
Psychoactive Substances Bill	Families and Wellbeing
Investigatory Powers Bill	Transformation and Resources

Additional bills that have been announced are outlined below. These will be monitored in relation to any emerging implications for Local Government and reported to the relevant Policy and Performance Committee as appropriate.

Additional Legislative Plans
EU Referendum Bill
Scotland Bill
Immigration Bill
Extremism Bill
Charities Bill
Armed Forces Bill
Bank of England Bill
Northern Ireland (Stormont House Agreement) Bill

Wales Bill
Votes for Life Bill

The bills relevant to the Families and Wellbeing Committee are discussed in further detail in this paper. The information provided has been sourced predominately from the LGiU, as well as SOLACE and the LGC and therefore solely represents a fact-based introduction to the bills.

Queen's Speech 2015- Developments and Implications

Childcare Act 2016

Synopsis and Key Points:

Synopsis:

- The purpose of the Childcare Act is to help support working people from the start of their family life and help hard-working families with the costs of childcare and support parents in work. The changes aim to help 600,000 children a year from 2017.

Key Points:

- Deliver on the Government's election manifesto commitment of giving families where all parents are working an entitlement to 30 hours a week of free childcare for their three and four-year olds for 38 weeks of the year (equivalent of the school year).
- Require local authorities to publish information about the provision of childcare in the local authority area, and other services or facilities which might be of benefit to parents or prospective parents, or children, or young persons in their area.

Further Developments:

- Consideration of a Commons amendment to the bill took place in the House of Lords on 2 February 2016. Following agreement by both Houses the Childcare Bill received Royal Assent on 16 March 2016. The Bill is now an Act of Parliament.
- The Childcare Bill Policy Statement was updated on 4 December 2015 to reflect recent announcements on early years in the Autumn Statement and further policy developments.
- The findings of the Review of the Cost of Providing Childcare formed the evidence base for decisions made in the Autumn 2015 Spending Review.
- The Chancellor announced that the government will invest an extra £1 billion per year by 2019-20 in the early education entitlements. This includes nearly £300 million per year from 2017-18 for a significant uplift to the national average rate paid for childcare entitlement. For two year olds the national average rate will increase from £5.09 to £5.39. For three and four year olds it will increase from £4.56 to £4.88, including the Early Years Pupil Premium.
- To make this affordable an income cap has been introduced; where at least one parent in a household has an income of £100,000 or more, that family will not be eligible to take up the additional free hours.
- Following the Spending Review £50 million of the Department's allocation is being allocated to support the creation of early years places.

Further Developments Continued:

- From September 2016 parents in schools will have a right to request wraparound childcare - before and after school, and during the school holidays.
- On 2 February 2016 Childcare Minister Sam Gyimah announced £13 million, which will allow some councils across the country to deliver 30 hours of free childcare for hard working parents of 3- and 4-year-olds - a year ahead of schedule. The full rollout will be in September 2017.

Wirral Implications:

- Capacity to respond to additional child care places (from 15 to 30 hours a week) based on the current profile of parents of 3 and 4 year olds. The current take-up of 3 and 4 year old places is 100%. At present there appears to be sufficient estimated growth for those 3 and 4 year old places for working parents to extend from 15 to 30 hours. Within the maintained and non-maintained childcare sector (over 450 new places have been registered in the last 12 months).
- However, the precise impact of the measures in the Act and the additional capacity required to respond to all eligible three year olds, is currently unclear. This is due to further clarity being required on the implications of the proposed changes to the welfare reform and child care capacity, required to meet the demand from parents whose youngest child is three years old or older and who need to make themselves available for work. It is currently unclear if the conditions of grant (from 15 to 30 hours entitlement a week) extends to parents in training and/or education or if parents in training and/or education are exempt from making themselves available for work and if so for how long. There is currently very limited information with regard to implementation of the increased offer which will be piloted in 2016 with roll out planned for 2017.
- Capacity to provide places within schools – the impact on schools is even more unclear, and this has and will continue to be discussed with Head Teachers. Currently schools are being actively encouraged to extend provision to develop provision for disadvantaged 2 year olds. This has been supported by recent changes in legislation; in that schools providing or seeking to provide this facility, where they already provide 3 year old provision (F1), no longer require a separate Ofsted registration. This focus on the 2 year old offer could potentially limit capacity to deliver the extended offer for three and four year olds (from 15 to 30 hours a week), within the school environment. The offer is not a universal offer and is dependent on parents being in employment which is likely to make the administration of the offer of 30 hours for some children and schools more complex.
- Wirral has nearly 75% of its 2 year olds eligible to take up the offer for disadvantaged two year olds (not evenly spread across the Borough). The additional funding (available when a child is 3) may be seen as an incentive for those parents currently eligible for the free 2 year old entitlement, encouraging and enabling them to seek work or to extend hours of paid employment to take the family income above the benefits thresholds. We will work with partners such as Job Centre Plus and employment agencies to support an increase in the take up of the offer and actively seek to support parents to move to a work ready position.

Wirral Implications Continued:

- Identifying families - working together with Job Centre Plus we need to ascertain the current level of worklessness amongst parents with young children across Wirral in order to assess the potential need for additional capacity as parents move into employment. In addition, the wider impact of the Welfare Reforms needs to be better understood for this group of parents.
- Impact on child poverty - for parents who move into work or extend their hours of employment this policy is seen as positively contributing to the targets to reduce child poverty within the Child Poverty Act, 2010. Many parents who intend to go back to work or enter employment do find the costs of childcare unaffordable. Whilst the additional childcare entitlement may make this more affordable, the wider implications of universal credits remain unknown.
- Identifying eligibility for take up – in Wirral, the current 3 and 4 year old funding is managed through the Early Years Business Support Team and the Finance Department. The current process to manage payments is labour intensive and will be made more complex to match eligibility for this new policy requirement.
- There are implications about how we make information available about this change in eligibility for families, through the family information service and other communication mechanisms, to ensure maximum take up. This is being considered as part of the early years and children's centre remodelling.
- Wirral's childcare providers meet as part of local networks, and discussions to understand the impact of the Bill will be planned through children's centre leads.

Education and Adoption Act 2016

Synopsis and Key Points:

Synopsis:

- The purpose of the Education and Adoption Act is to strengthen the government's intervention powers in failing maintained schools. Separately the Bill introduces powers to deliver regional adoption agencies.

Key Points:

- The Act will give Regional Schools Commissioners powers to bring in leadership support from other excellent schools and heads, and would speed up the process of turning schools into academies.
- An inadequate Ofsted judgment would usually lead to a school being converted into an academy, and barriers would be removed to ensure swift progress towards conversion.
- It would make schools that meet a new coasting definition, having shown a prolonged period of mediocre performance and insufficient pupil progress, eligible for academisation.
- A coasting definition will be set out in due course according to a number of factors.

Further Developments:

- Following agreement by both Houses on the Education and Adoption Bill received Royal Assent on 16 March. The bill is now an Act of Parliament
- On 14 January 2016 Education Secretary Nicky Morgan confirmed that a fundamental change to the law will make prioritising lifelong stability for vulnerable children with a loving family a legal requirement.
- The government has issued important guidance to make clear that where adoption is in the best interests of the child, they must be placed with their new family as soon as possible.
- The government has confirmed that it will seek to change legislation as soon as possible to make crystal clear that councils and courts must place children with the person best able to care for them right up until their 18th birthday - rather than with carers who can't provide the support they need over the long term.
- The move is part of delivering on government's commitment to extend opportunity to everyone - and make sure every single child gets the best start in life.
- Increased government funding totalling £200 million will also be made available – redoubling efforts to break down bureaucratic barriers in the adoption system. This money will:
 - See the speeding up of adoptions of harder-to-place children.
 - Support the creation of new regional adoption agencies to improve the recruitment of adopters and the matching with children.
 - Strengthen voluntary adoption agencies.
 - Ensure social workers have the right knowledge and skills to make robust decisions about the best placements for children.

Further Developments Continued:

Education Secretary Nicky Morgan delivered a speech on 4 February 2016, outlining the importance of collaboration and partnerships between schools:

- “If academies are driving excellence in our schools then partnerships are the way to make sure it spreads.”
- The best way to improve the education system is through school-to-school support through multi-academy trusts.
- The benefits of MATs include sharing best teaching practice, the economies of scale, and staffing arrangements which can be more flexible, allowing MATs to develop and retain the best teachers.
- Various incentives are being offered to join MATs including the primary academy chain grants and the sponsor capacity fund which gave out over £11 million to 155 sponsors in the last year.
- The government are investing in the Future Leaders MAT CEO Course; in governors for schools; and Inspiring the future - an active programme to recruit more governors.
- “The Education and Adoption Bill removes the requirement for consultation on whether a school should become an academy.
- “We have sought, however, to place a duty on sponsors to communicate with parents about their plans to improve the school, ensuring that - in all cases - parents are given the opportunity to understand just how a sponsor plans to transform their child’s school.”

Wirral Implications:

- Wirral has a strong commitment to improving standards in schools, and whilst this Act is intended to strengthen the governments powers to intervene in “coasting schools”; the Council is continuously developing its approach, using all powers currently enshrined in regulation and guidance, to support and where necessary intervene to raise standards in schools. For example, from September 2015, Wirral has implemented a new approach to providing "school to school support". This is strengthening the approach of schools supporting each other to raise standards. Support is now being delivered through three clusters, each with a teaching school and a school improvement officer. An overarching Board involving head teachers from the clusters, chaired by the School Commissioning Manager, is providing the framework to drive this approach and monitor its effectiveness.
- In terms of the Adoption aspect of the Act; discussions have taken place across the Liverpool City Region and a proposal has been submitted by the Government to develop some aspects of adoption practice on a regional footprint. Plans are being developed, supported by a government grant and a nationally selected partner organisation. Firm proposal will be submitted by March 2016 to progress this.

Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016

Synopsis and Key Points:

Synopsis:

- The overriding aim of the Act is to reduce expenditure and “help to achieve a more sustainable welfare system.” A related aim is to support efforts to increase employment and “support the policy of rewarding hard work while increasing fairness with working households.”

Key Points:

- It is essentially an Act of three parts. First, it will introduce a duty to report to Parliament on:
 - Progress towards achieving full employment.
 - Progress towards achieving 3 million apprenticeships in England.
 - Progress with the Troubled Families programme (England).
- Second, it will repeal almost all of the Child Poverty Act 2010 and introduce a new duty for the Secretary of State to report annually on “life chances”: children living in workless households and educational attainment at age 16, in England.
- Finally, the Act allows for the introduction of extensive changes to welfare benefits, tax credits and social housing rent levels. These will account for around 70% of the £12-13 billion in welfare savings identified in the Summer Budget 2015. The welfare/housing measures include:
 - Lowering the benefit cap threshold by removing the link between the level of the cap and average earnings.
 - Legislative changes to Housing Benefit following the Budget Announcement.
 - A four year freeze in the uprating of most working age benefits.
 - Limiting support through Child Tax Credits/Universal Credit.
 - The abolition of Employment and Support Allowance Work-Related Activity Component.
 - Changes to conditionality for responsible carers under Universal Credit
 - Replacing Support for Mortgage Interest with Loans for Mortgage Interest.
 - Reducing social housing rent levels by 1% in each year for four years from 2016-17.

Further Developments:

- Outstanding issues on the bill were resolved on 7 March 2016. Following agreement by both Houses the Bill received Royal Assent on 16 March. The bill is now an Act of Parliament.

Wirral Implications:

- Freeze Working Age Benefits**- This will impact on household disposable income, not previously frozen albeit uprating has been nominal 2013/14. This will

Wirral Implications Continued:

potentially increase the strain on Wirral's Council Tax Support, Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP), Local Welfare Assistance (LWA) schemes, as more people apply; more people become entitled to support. With consequential harder to collect charges, key revenue streams such as Council Tax, charges in respect of adult social care, Benefits overpayments will be detrimentally affected. Rent arrears locally are expected to increase as with all cuts and will continue at least whilst (social) landlords maintain rent levels and annual increases in lieu on the 12% target reduction by 2020-21. This will increase pressure on LA Housing Benefit services from Social Landlords which is evident already via the rent shortfall in Bedroom Tax and insufficient DHP.

- **Local Housing Allowance Rate Frozen**- Effective from April 2016, the private sector may see a freezing of Local Housing Allowance rates which will give private sector landlords further issue with taking on tenants who rely on HB. This is likely to have a consequential impact on the levels of people being threatened with homelessness in the Borough.
- **Cutting Household Benefit Cap**- This will certainly impact locally, regrettably we cannot yet identify precisely how many within present caseload will be affected, nor by how much in monetary terms on a weekly basis, as DWP consider circumstances of household benefits in payment that LA are unable to identify from records held. However the cut is expected to result in many more people being affected. The Percentage reduction to the total maximum in Benefits that can be paid are relatively high, with the maximum for couples and those with children, reducing from £26k per annum to £20k and for a single claimants reducing from £18,200 p.a to £13,400. The LA's HB service administers the Cap not the DWP who advise us of each situation. There are currently 52 cases live with the number affected since the original DWP scan of 131 generally reducing. The change, bringing more people into the threshold of being affected by the Cap will have a direct impact on operational resource both at customer contact point and the operational service delivery teams. Through joint working currently ongoing between the Benefits service and DWP/JC+ colleagues it is increasingly evident that the impact on resource will be significant. Those affected would have an increased reliance on other means of support, financial, Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP – annual cash limited budget) or the Local Welfare Assistance potentially (LW – finite residual budget as scheme no longer nationally funded). Likely impact will see increased problems for those in temporary accommodation with large families and again, the homeless or those at risk etc. will become reliant on the limited discretionary schemes (DHP).
- **General Issues for Wirral/Benefits Service** - As a consequence of these changes, as impacts emerge, which will be ongoing, there will be a need to make provision for the continued review of local schemes and policies with an increased reliance on any discretion the authority can, within its local policies and resources, exercise (again for example its LWA/DHP fund). The definition of 'vulnerable' may need review given the ratio of those reasonably deemed to be vulnerable which are those financially at risk, including dispossession. This will impact on key grant limited local schemes such as Council Tax Support Scheme which currently awards £27m pa in respect of 35,230 recipients. This will provide a significant challenge for officers reviewing the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2016/17 onwards and will see collection issues increase as more people face difficulty paying, coupled with more strain on the scheme impacting on its capacity and ultimately having

Wirral Implications Continued:

their national benefits reduced at source to pay Council Tax. Many people will be affected by more than one of the reforms outlined, which will present complexities, uncertainty and increased need for advocacy and advice, particularly if we are to ensure that their income, often translating to the Wirral Pound, is to be maximised. Broadly we can expect from these changes increased contact to service, both front facing public contact and back of house processing (including the Welfare Right Unit) and decision making services with an increased need and reliance on knowledgeable, experienced, skilled resources, ensuring accessibility, thereby support where at all possible anti-poverty measures.

- **Remove Housing Benefit from Young People-** From April 2017 it is planned to remove Housing Benefit from 18-21 year olds. This will see more young people remain at home where it may not be appropriate to do so which will see issues for the house owner receiving Housing Benefits as non dependant charges are applied and rent increases (as adults are meant to contribute as resident). These cases which will increase provide issues for the LA with collection of information and provision of evidence of household occupants. There is also a risk of young people going missing from benefit records, with difficulties operationally in determining their primary place of residence which will be key given the increasing drive of the DWP to reduce level of error and fraud within Welfare Benefits.

- **Reduce Social Rents-** The Government have legislated for a 1% reduction for social tenants per annum, effectively from April 2016, for the next four years. Supported Housing will be exempt for one year. Although this will reduce housing costs for those tenants, its main impact will be upon the ability of Registered Providers (RPs) to finance new-build housing along with other work such as ongoing improvements to housing stock. RPs with stock in Wirral are currently revisiting their growth plans and it is likely their new-build commitments, especially for affordable rented housing, will be scaled-back and refocused to align with the Government's shift towards home ownership and increasing the private rented sector.

Policing and Crime Bill

Synopsis and Key Points:

Synopsis:

- This legislation is intended to continue the reform of policing with the aim of enhancing protections for vulnerable people

Key Points:

- The Bill would ensure 17 years olds who are detained in police custody are treated as children for all purposes under PACE.
- In particular, the amendments to the provisions of PACE concerning 17 year olds include:
 - Ensuring an appropriate adult is present for drug sample taking;
 - Ensuring appropriate consent is granted by both the 17 year old and parent/legal guardian for a range of interventions, including intimate searches; and
 - The ability to impose conditional bail to ensure the welfare and interests of the 17 year old.
- Reforming legislation in relation to the detention of people under sections 135 and 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983 to ensure better outcomes for those experiencing a mental health crisis.
 - Prohibiting the use of police cells as places of safety for those under 18 years of age and further reducing their use in the case of adults;
 - Reducing the current 72 hour maximum period of detention; and
 - Extending the power to detain under section 136 to any place other than a private residence.

Further Developments:

- The Policing and Crime Bill completed its Committee stages on 12 April 2016. The bill will next be considered at Report Stage, Legislative Grand Committee and Third Reading over two days, beginning on Tuesday 26 April.

Home Secretary Theresa May said:

- “Our Police reforms are working and crime has fallen. The independent Crime Survey for England and Wales shows that crime has fallen by more than a quarter since June 2010, with some 2.9 million fewer crimes a year.
- “We are seeing the benefits of HMIC’s scrutiny in more accurate crime recording, particularly of violence.
- “More victims of sexual offences and domestic abuse offences are coming forward. Public confidence in the police remains high and more people believe the criminal justice system is effective.”
- As part of the Policing and Crime Bill it will be made possible for police volunteers to be given powers without becoming a Special Constable.
- The changes will enable volunteers and staff to work more closely with officers, helping them to police communities and keep them safe. Additionally, they will

Further Developments Continued:

create a more flexible workforce and help to bring new skills and expertise to policing, freeing up police officers to concentrate on core policing tasks.

- National Police Chiefs' Council Lead for Citizens in Policing, Chief Constable Dave Jones said: "The onus on chief constables is to use the powers wisely, ensure they fit the needs of local policing and provide appropriate training so that they help us keep our communities safe".
- Changes to the Mental Health Act will be made under the forthcoming Policing and Crime Bill; banning police cells as a "place of safety" for under-18s and creating regulations to limit the circumstances in which police cells can be used a place of safety for adults.
- Karen Bradley, Minister for Preventing Abuse, Exploitation and Crime, said: "The best place for people experiencing a mental health crisis is a healthcare setting, those experiencing mental health problems should receive specialist care and support from healthcare professionals, rather than police officers".
- While there has been an almost 50% reduction in the number of times police cells were used as a place of safety in England and Wales between 2011/12 and 2014/15, this is highly variable across the country.
- This change in legislation will abolish the use of police cells simply because there is no suitable alternative available and ensure that all suffers of mental health are cared for in the proper environment.

Wirral Implications:

- Appropriate Adult Provision- The Youth Offending service (YOS) is in support of this change and we have been anticipating it for over a year. This change supports and recognises 17 year olds as still being youths and not adults during PACE interviews, processing and charging stages of detention.
- Our Appropriate Adult (AA) services are already in place and will accommodate this wider age group. YOS provides this service by day and Emergency Duty teams (EDT) by night. This may involve an increase in workload, however some 17 year olds who are detained in custody can be deemed to be vulnerable adults and the existing AA service covers youths and vulnerable adults anyway. The increased workload therefore may not be large.
- Identification of Accommodation for those young people detained- The Merseyside Criminal Justice Board Youth Detention Protocol may also need to include 17 year olds and this may have an impact on the requirements for Local Authorities to find accommodation for 17 year olds who have been refused Police Bail and the LA has a duty to accommodate them. The existing Policy may change to include 17 years olds, this would then have an impact on CYPs Specialist Services and demands to accommodate 17 year olds at short notice who have been refused bail.

Psychoactive Substances Act 2016

Synopsis and Key Points:

Synopsis:

- The Psychoactive Substances Act is intended to protect people from the risks posed by untested, unknown and potential harmful drugs. The Act will create a blanket ban which is seeking to prohibit and disrupt the production, distribution, sale and supply of new psychoactive substances (NPS) in the UK.
- For the purpose of the Act, a psychoactive substance is a substance which is capable of producing a psychoactive effect in a person who consumes it and is not an exempted substance.

Key Points:

The Act will:

- Make it an offence to produce, supply, offer to supply, possess with intent to supply, import or export psychoactive substances; that is, any substance intended for human consumption that is capable of producing a psychoactive effect. The maximum sentence will be 7 years' imprisonment
- Exclude legitimate substances, such as food, alcohol, tobacco, nicotine, caffeine and medical products, from the scope of the offence, as well as controlled drugs, which will continue to be regulated by the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971
- Exempt specific persons from certain offences under the bill, such as healthcare professionals, who may have a legitimate need to use NPS in their work
- Include provision for civil sanctions – prohibition notices, premises notices, prohibition orders and premises orders (breach of the two orders will be a criminal offence) – to enable the police and local authorities to adopt a graded response to the supply of NPS in appropriate cases
- Provide powers to stop and search persons, vehicles and vessels, enter and search premises in accordance with a warrant, and to seize and destroy psychoactive substances

Further Developments:

- Following agreement by both Houses on the text of the bill it received Royal Assent on 28 January 2016. The bill is now an Act of Parliament
- Minister for Preventing Abuse and Exploitation Karen Bradley said: "This landmark Psychoactive Substances Act will fundamentally change the way we tackle these drugs and put an end to unscrupulous suppliers profiting from their trade.
- "But we know that legislation is not the silver bullet, and we continue to take action across education, prevention, treatment and recovery in order to reduce harmful drug use."
- The National Crime Agency will continue working with the online industry and international partners to close websites selling controlled psychoactive substances in the UK and tackle the associated organised crime.

Wirral Implications:

- At this time there are not any apparent major implications for Wirral Local Authority however the following issues will need to be considered;
- The local prevalence of the use of NPS is not known with any confidence so it would be valuable to carry out some sort of study to gain better knowledge of the nature and extent of the use of these substances by the Wirral population.
- There is some consideration for Trading Standards in terms of investigating the so called “Head Shops” and assessing their compliance with the content of the new bill. The bill is setting out to close down the sources of supply and these retail outlets are targets, so Trading Standards, and the Police, will need to consider looking at what their approach is going to be to these retailers, including possible prosecution of those found to be in contravention with the bill.
- The Trading standards and the Police will also need to consider their approach to pubs and clubs where it is found that NPS are being used on their premises.
- A general review of the harm reduction education information offered locally to those groups in the population likely to be possible consumers of NPS.

Useful Sources

Chancellors Budget Statement

[Budget 2016: George Osborne's speech, Government website, 16th March 2016](#) – *Full speech*

[Budget 2016: some of the things we've announced, Government website, 16th March 2016](#) – *A summary of the key announcements*

[Briefing: Budget 2016, LGiU, 16th March 2016](#) – *Key announcements emerging from the Budget*

[Budget 2016: On the Day Briefing, LGA, 16th March 2016](#) – *Outlines the impacts of the key announcements of the Budget*

[LGA responds to Budget 2016, Lord Porter, Chairman of the Local Government Association, 16th March 2016](#) – *LGA response to the Budget Announcement*

[Andrew Jones, Budget 2016: Analysis, LGiU, 22nd March 2016](#) – *Analysis of some of the key announcements*

Childcare Bill

[Childcare Bill, Government website](#) – *Brief outline and key points of the Childcare Bill*

[Childcare Bill 2015-16, Parliamentary website](#) – *Previous debates on all stages of the Childcare Bill and any latest updates*

[John Fowler, Childcare Bill, LGiU, 4th June 2015](#) – *Brief analysis of the Childcare Bill*

[Childcare Bill: Policy Statement, Government publication, December 2016](#) – *Updated policy statement*

[Government Speech: Sam Gyimah: Support for families is at the heart of our agenda, 4th December 2015](#) – *Details the future of childcare in England*

[Government Press Release: Thousands of parents benefit from 30 hours' free childcare early, 2nd February 2016](#) – *Details of funding for a pilot of the new childcare allowance in September 2016*

Education and Adoption Bill

[Education and Adoption Bill, Government website](#) – *Brief outline and key points of the Education and Adoption Bill*

[Education and Adoption Bill, Parliamentary website](#) - *Previous debates on all stages of the Education and Adoption Bill and any latest updates*

[Government Press Release: Hundreds of 'coasting' schools to be transformed, 30th June 2015](#) – *Outlines draft regulations to be implemented by 2016 and defines the term 'coasting schools'*

[Government Speech: Nicky Morgan: The importance of partnerships for a world-class education system, 4th February 2016](#) – *Outlines the collaboration and partnership between schools*

[Government Press Release: Education Secretary unveils plans to change adoption law, 14th January 2016](#) – *Details proposed changes to adoption legislation*

Welfare Reform and Work Bill

[Welfare Reform and Work Bill, Parliamentary website](#) - *Previous debates on all stages of the Childcare Bill and any latest updates*

[House of Commons, Briefing Paper- Welfare Reform and Work Bill, 16th July 2015](#) – *Brief analysis of the Welfare Reform and Work Bill*

[Andrew Jones, Welfare Reform Update: January 2016, 27th January 2016](#) – *Overview of the latest updates related to the Welfare Reform*

Policing and Crime Bill

[Policing and Criminal Justice Bill, Government website](#) - *Brief outline and key points of the Policing and Crime Bill*

[Government News Story: Government introduces Policing and Crime Bill, 11th February 2016](#) – *Overview of the Policing and Crime Bill and its aims*

[Government News Story: Police volunteers to be given powers without taking on role of special constable, 20th January 2016](#) – *Details new powers for police volunteers*

[Government News Story: Restricting the use of police cells for those experiencing a mental health crisis, 8th February 2016](#) – *Details changes to the Mental Health Act that will be made under the Policing and Crime Bill*

[Tom Simon, Update on the Police and Crime Bill 2016, 5th April 2016](#) – *Key proposals of the bill and their possible impacts*

Psychoactive Substances Bill

[Psychoactive Substances Bill, Government website](#) – *Brief outline and key points of the Psychoactive Substances Bill*

[Psychoactive Substances Bill, Parliamentary website](#)- *Previous debates on all stages of the Psychoactive Substances Bill*

[Government News Story: Landmark law to tackle psychoactive substances passed, 28th January 2016](#)
– *Details of the bill as it receives Royal Assent*

Policy Developments

[Briefing: Children's services: update on DfE Improvement Notices and Directions](#)

This briefing updates the October 2014 CSN Briefing 'Children's services: DfE Improvement Notices and Directions'. Improvement Notices and Directions now arise mostly from the findings of Single Inspection Framework (SIF) inspections.

It also reports on the summary of 'common weaknesses in local authorities judged inadequate under the single inspection framework' published by Ofsted in November 2015.

Ofsted has now published 74 SIF reports. Of these, judgements for overall effectiveness are 17 'good', 38 'requires improvement' and 19 'inadequate'; none have yet been judged outstanding.

The briefing also provides a useful overview of the background to the Prime Minister's announcement, on 14th December, of further measures to be taken over 'poorly performing children's services'.

Source: [Martin Rogers, Briefing: Children's services: update on DfE Improvement Notices and Directions, LGiU, 14th December 2015](#)

[Briefing: Ofsted Annual Report 2015](#)

This briefing outlines the Ofsted Annual Report, 'The Annual Report of the HMCI of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2014-15', published on 1st December 2015.

The Annual Report is based on the findings of over 5,000 inspections of school, colleges and providers of further education and skills, representing what are described as a unique evidence base for conclusions that are drawn from the report.

The Chief Inspector reported that inspection evidence over the last year 'demonstrates that improvement is partial with primary schools continuing to improve but secondary schools remaining a problem in parts of the country'.

The theme of the report is consequently of 'educational division' which begins 'after the age of 11, with secondary schools performing well overall in the South but struggling to improve in the North and Midlands'. The report stresses that the key to raising standards in these areas is 'collective action and political will'.

Other weaknesses identified in the report include the lack of capacity in leadership, teaching and governance, and insufficient focus on the disadvantaged. Apprenticeships are another major concern with almost half of the programmes inspected this year judged less than good.

Source: [Kathy Baker, Briefing: Ofsted Annual Report 2015, LGiU, 14th December 2015](#)

Briefing: Moving the Goal Posts: poverty and access to sport for young people

Of the 9.1 million young people aged 14 to 24 living in the UK, approximately 2.7 million (30 per cent) are living in poverty. Area-based deprivation has a knock-on effect on the local environment and is correlated to higher crime, poorer educational outcomes, health problems, higher levels of disability and poorer social conditions. Sports participation rates are significantly lower among young people living in poorer areas.

The sports charity Street Games commissioned the London School of Economic (LSE) to undertake an in-depth study on the impact on poverty and access to sport. The LSE research team spoke to approximately 135 young people between the ages of 14 and 25 to understand their experiences of accessing sport in their area and to identify the barriers to involvement.

The research found that young people living in areas of deprivation enjoy sport and would like more opportunities to take part in informal sports. The biggest barrier for young people, above school age, was cost. Parents were worried about the conditions of the area and the level of supervision.

The report makes recommendations for more organised, informal sporting activities and calls for more targeted and government backed area-based improvement programmes focussed on a wider set of social outcomes.

Source: [Chris Hayes, Briefing: Moving the Goal Posts: poverty and access to sport for young people, LGiU, 15th December 2015](#)

Briefing: School Accountability and the Effectiveness of OFSTED – Education Datalab

Education Datalab uses data from the national pupil database to produce cutting-edge research that can be used to inform education policy and to help schools improve their practice.

Their latest report 'Floors, Tables and Coasters: Shifting the Education Furniture in England's Secondary Schools', published in November 2015, focuses on three key issues:

1. Whether performance table measures could provide a better measure of school accountability by taking account of the length of time pupils spend in a school.

2. The way in which school curriculum has adapted to government policy changes.
3. How consistent and effective Ofsted judgements are compared to published performance data.

The briefing outlines these key issues and suggests that while the call for accountability systems that serve the interests of children first and foremost is probably the strongest and most important point raised in this paper, it seems to be receiving less attention than calls for greater transparency and accountability on the part of Ofsted.

Source: [Andrew Crompton, Briefing: School Accountability and the Effectiveness of OFSTED – Education Datalab, LGiU, 15th December 2015](#)

Briefing: Urban School Reform: International Comparisons – five cities

The CfBT Education Trust published ‘Interesting cities: five approaches to urban school reform’ in November 2015.

The CfBT Education Trust is a charitable trust dedicated to advancing education for the public benefit in the UK and internationally. The paper considers how schools and school systems are being reformed in London, New York, Rio de Janeiro, Dubai and Ho Chi Minh City.

There are wide differences in culture and economic context, yet the paper draws out significant similarities in approaches and solutions. Whilst the report does not attempt to come up with a universal blueprint for school reform it does identify seven themes that were cross cutting in that they were often present within different and varied contexts. The seven themes identified are as follows:

1. Effective leadership at all levels
2. Data driven reform
3. Building coalitions for change
4. Making teaching a career choice for talented young people
5. Combining high accountability with high levels of professional support
6. New forms of government school provision
7. An emphasis on school to school collaboration

Source: [Andrew Crompton, Briefing: Urban School Reform: International Comparisons – five cities, LGiU, 17th December 2015](#)

Briefing: Employment support for a high-wage economy

‘Employment support for a high-wage economy’, published in November 2015 by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) considers a re-designed role for employment support to increase earnings and reduce poverty in the UK.

Some 6.6 million people in working families are in relative income poverty. Currently, the Employment Service is focused on moving people off benefits rather than supporting people in sustained and well-paid employment. Movements off benefits into work tend to be to jobs which would not support claimants moving out of poverty.

The report argues that the current employment support system is not designed, or prepared for, supporting people to progress to better paid employment and hence move out of poverty.

A series of recommendations are put forward for reforms to the employment support system that would render it fit for a wider purpose of moving people out of poverty through work.

Where appetite exists in local areas, it is recommended that a more local approach to commissioning and running employment programmes should be encouraged and facilitated; encouraging city regions and combined authorities to bid directly for contracts are among the options to be considered

Source: [Andrew Jones, Briefing: Employment support for a high-wage economy, LGiU, 22nd December 2015](#)

Briefing: Educational outcomes of children in care – recent research

The Rees Centre at the University of Oxford and the University of Bristol have collaborated in research on the factors affecting the educational outcomes of children in care. The research is based on a full retrospective cohort of every child in England eligible to take GCSEs in 2013.

It was found that the longer children had been in care, the better the outcomes – that is, the care system seems to provide an environment in which education outcome are improved, with shorter periods of care being associated with less good outcomes.

Furthermore, it was found that the population of children in need but not in care – that is, children supported by social care but remaining with their parents – on average achieved poorer educational outcomes than children in care.

Source: [John Freeman, 'Briefing: Educational outcomes of children in care – recent research', LGiU, 7th January 2016](#)

Briefing: Marmot Indicators 2015 by local authority area

On 27 November 2015 the Institute of Healthy Equity (IHE) published the latest performance by local authority area in England against the 2015 version of the Marmot Indicators for Health Inequalities.

The Marmot Indicators measure inequalities in health and life expectancy in every local authority in England. They also track the 'social determinants of health', which influence how healthy we are and how long we are likely to live.

The briefing summarises the specific Marmot Indicators used to assess inequalities and explores briefly the local authority areas with the largest increases and decreases in deprivation and what this means.

Source: [Andrew Ross, Briefing: Marmot Indicators 2015 by local authority area, LGiU, 13th January 2016](#)

Briefing: The future of apprenticeships in England: what is known so far

In the July 2015 Budget the Government announced that it would create a new business tax for large employers, the Apprenticeship Levy, to fund its target of 3 million new apprenticeships by 2020.

To help reach the overall target, public sector bodies will be required to employ apprentices and will be set targets to increase them, the provisions for which are expected to be in force by autumn 2016.

Following the initial announcement in the July 2015 Budget, a consultation document was issued in August 2015. Responses were compiled and issued in the Government's Response, published in November 2015 alongside the Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015 which gave some more details of how the levy will work. More information was made available in the document: 'English Apprenticeships: Our 2020 Vision', which was published by the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills on 7 December 2015.

This briefing summarises what is known so far about both the Apprenticeship Levy and the new public sector duty.

Source: [Andrew Jones, Briefing: The future of apprenticeships in England: what is known so far, LGiU, 14th January 2016](#)

Briefing: Schools Adjudicator – 2015 annual report

The Office of the Schools Adjudicator Annual Report: September 2014 to August-2015 was published on 17 December 2015.

The report gives an account of the casework activities of the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA); reports progress on its 'main findings' from the previous year and analyses the 152 statutory reports on local authorities' work during the same period.

Briefing: The district council contribution to public health at a time of challenge and opportunity

The report by the Kings Fund, commissioned by the District Councils' Network (DCN), seeks to explore the role of district councils in improving health and wellbeing, and demonstrate how the business case for greater involvement can be made.

The briefing outlines the following topics covered in the report:

- key functions that contribute to public health – housing, green space and leisure, and environmental health
- summary of high level public health economics
- enabling roles which have benefits for health – economic development, planning, and engaging with communities
- innovation in service delivery
- recommendations for national and local organisations.

It is concluded that it is vital that the important role of district councils in public health is recognised and supported. If we do not address this quickly, many opportunities will be lost.

The importance of district councils working in partnership with others including, Public Health England, the local NHS, the voluntary and business sectors, and communities is also indicated.

Source: [Christine Heron, Briefing: The district council contribution to public health at a time of challenge and opportunity, LGiU, 20th January 2016](#)

Briefing: Children's social care reform – Government plans

The Government has announced (or confirmed) its ambition “radically to reform the children’s social care system” over the course of this Parliament, with a focus on three areas:

- people and leadership;
- practice and systems;
- and governance and accountability.

The three headings set out the vision and principles which underpin a comprehensive reform programme which the cross-government taskforce on child protection has been working on for the past six months.

The announcement, which follows other related announcements, provides an indication of the changes that will follow; a full children’s care strategy will be published ‘in the coming months’. The briefing draws together and summarises the announcements.

Source: [Martin Rogers, Briefing: Children’s social care reform – Government plans, LGiU, 20th January 2016](#)

Briefing: Teacher supply – update

This briefing is an update on the current debate concerning teacher supply and the degree to which there is a developing crisis in relation to recruiting and retaining sufficient teachers across the system.

The briefing draws on a number of evidence documents:

- Annual Report of HMCI 2014-15 (December 2015)
- NCTL research report, Newly Qualified Teachers: Annual Survey 2015 (October 2015)
- NAHT Recruitment survey 2015 (December 2015)
- NFER report, Should I stay or should I go? (November 2015)
- Written and oral evidence to Education Select Committee Inquiry on teacher supply (November/December 2015)

There are striking differences in the perceptions of the Government and those involved in schools and education at a local/regional level about the extent of the current challenges and potential areas of crisis in the supply of teachers.

The Education Select Committee has launched an inquiry into teacher supply issues; its report is expected in early 2016 and it is hoped that it will contain practical recommendations for further development.

Source: [Kathy Baker, Briefing: Teacher supply – update, LGiU, 21st January 2016](#)

Briefing: Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation

The Government launched a new sports strategy in December 2015, ‘Sporting Future: A new Strategy for an Active Nation’, to engage more people in sport and physical activity, harness sport for ‘social good’, and make sports funding work harder.

The strategy seeks to redefine what success looks like in sport by concentrating on five key outcomes, against which sports funding will be more closely tied: physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development and economic development.

The strategy also extends the remit of Sport England to invest in sport and physical activity for children and young people from the age of five through to pensioner age. The sports agency will be required to distribute funding to focus on those people who tend not to take part in sport.

This briefing summaries the main sections of the strategy relating to community sport; identifies three case studies in which local authorities are responding to the strategy's call for better and more joined-up co-ordination of community sport; and comments on the response from the sector.

Source: [Chris Hayes, Briefing: Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation, LGiU, 26th January 2016](#)

Briefing: Regional Schools Commissioners – Commons Education Committee

This briefing is on the House of Commons Education Committee report: 'The role of Regional Schools Commissioners' which was published on 20 January 2016.

The Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) are civil servants appointed to undertake the Secretary of State's functions with respect to Academies and maintained schools. Concerns about the role of the RSCs have been considered previously by the Education Committee's predecessor committee and recommendations made. More recent concerns have been focused on the RSC performance measures.

Neil Carmichael, chair of the Education Committee commented: 'RSCs are a product of the Department's 'acting first, thinking later' approach when it comes to big changes in the schools landscape. The DfE needs to... design a more coherent system for the future which ensures proper accountability for schools'.

Source: [Kathy Baker, Briefing: Regional Schools Commissioners – Commons Education Committee, LGiU, 27th January 2016](#)

Briefing: Children in need: Joint Targeted Area Inspections framework

Ofsted, with the Care Quality Commissions (CQC), HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and HM Inspectorate of Probation, has published the framework and guidance for the new Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI) of arrangements and services for children in need of help and protection in local authority areas in England, which will start in February 2016.

Up to six inspections, including one pilot inspection already carried out, are planned by September 2016. Each JTAI will include a 'deep dive' theme, the first of which, between February and August 2016, will be child sexual exploitation and children missing from home, care or education.

In addition, there will a number of Ofsted Targeted Local Authority Inspections, which will use a version of the same framework and will also include a 'deep dive' theme, the first of which, as for JTAIs, is CSE and children missing.

Five documents have been published ahead of the inspections starting in February 2016:

- the consultation outcome, learning from the pilot inspection and next steps
- the JTAI inspection framework and guidance
- guidance for the JTAI deep dive theme
- the Ofsted targeted LA inspections framework and guidance
- guidance for the Ofsted targeted LA inspections deep dive theme

This briefing outlines the JTAI documents and draws attention to the main points of difference in the two corresponding documents relating to Ofsted-only LA inspections.

Source: [Martin Rogers, Briefing: Children in need: Joint Targeted Area Inspections framework, LGiU, 28th January 2016](#)

Briefing: Youth service: the Delivering Differently for Young People (DDYP) programme

The Delivering Differently for Young People (DDYP) programme was launched in 2014 in response to the increasing appetite from local councils to find new ways of meeting their statutory duty to provide sufficient services and activities for 13 to 19-year-olds (and young people up to 24 with learning difficulties) in the context of diminishing resources.

This policy briefing:

- outlines the current policy landscape affecting youth work in the UK;
- summarises the details of the DDYP programme;
- reviews the approaches to youth work being considered by DDYP funded councils in both the 2014/15 and 2015/16 cohorts; and
- identifies what can be learnt from the DDYP programme for other councils considering re-shaping their youth services.

Source: [Chris Hayes, Briefing: Youth service: the Delivering Differently for Young People \(DDYP\) programme, LGiU, 10th February 2016](#)

Briefing: Returning children from Care: Improving Practice – DfE research

The DfE published ‘Children who return home from care: improving practice’ in December 2015. It follows the principles of promoting evidenced informed practice, providing a research report focusing on the effectiveness of local authority practice in this area produced by the National Children’s Bureau and the Centre for Child and Family Research at Loughborough University, together with a Toolkit of notes, materials and an evaluation report from an Action Learning Set programme produced by the National Children’s Bureau.

This briefing reviews the research report, which suggests practice is inconsistent in this area, and signposts the toolkit as something that may be useful for local authorities managers and practitioners wishing to review their practice.

Source: [Andrew Crompton, Briefing: Returning children from Care: Improving Practice – DfE research, LGiU, 11th February 2016](#)

Briefing: Health inequalities and Marmot cities

The Institute of Health Equity (IHE) at University College London has developed an updated set of Marmot indicators 2015. The set of indicators of the social determinants of health, health outcomes and social inequality, updates a series begun in 2011. The updated indicators broadly correspond to the six policy recommendations proposed in 'Fair Society, Healthy Lives'; the report on health inequalities by Professor Sir Michael Marmot published in 2010.

This briefing gives a brief overview with references to data on the state of health inequalities across the country. It describes the 'Marmot Council' programme and provides a case study of Coventry City Council's work on the programme. References and a brief summary of sources of information and advice on tackling health inequalities are also provided.

Source: [Fiona Campbell, Briefing: Health inequalities and Marmot cities, LGiU, 11th February 2016](#)

Briefing: Off-site alternative provision – Ofsted survey

Many schools use alternative provision to provide education for pupils wholly or partly off site. The Ofsted report 'Alternative school provision: findings of a three year survey' looks at how provision is commissioned and evaluated, and its quality and outcomes.

Ofsted reported concerns in a 2011 report and the government commissioned an 'Improving alternative provision' report. The outcomes of this report were largely structural changes to enable alternative provision academies and free schools to be created. This report brings us back to the detail of how individual needs can best be met and safeguarded.

Alternative provision can be defined as something in which a young person participates as part of their regular timetable, away from the site of the school and not led by school staff. Schools can use such provision to try to prevent exclusions, or to re-engage pupils in their education.

Source: [Andrew Crompton, Briefing: Off-site alternative provision – Ofsted survey, LGiU, 16th February 2016](#)

Briefing: Consultation on apprenticeship targets for public sector bodies

In the July 2015 Budget the Government announced that it would create a new business tax for large employers, the Apprenticeship Levy, to fund its target of 3 million new apprenticeships by 2020; the levy will apply to the public sector, including local government. To help reach the overall target, public sector bodies will also be required to employ apprentices and will be set targets to increase them.

This briefing deals with the consultation document issued on 25 January on the public sector apprenticeship target duty. The document sets out details of which organisations will be in scope of the duty, which will include nearly all local authorities in England; as well as reporting requirements.

The proposed target is 2.3 per cent of each body's headcount; within the public sector, local government is expected to make the largest contribution of apprenticeship starts to 2020 (35,000) followed by the NHS (28,000). The consultation closes on 4 March 2016.

Source: [Andrew Jones, Briefing: Consultation on apprenticeship targets for public sector bodies, LGiU, 16th February 2016](#)

Briefing: Ofsted re-inspection of inadequate local authorities: consultation

Ofsted is consulting, until 8 March, on proposals for a more proportionate approach to the re-inspection of local authorities judged to be inadequate by an inspection of children's services under the single inspection framework (SIF).

Under the SIF, a local authority judged to be inadequate is subject to re-inspection by Ofsted within 18 to 24 months – meaning two full inspections within less than three years. Ofsted recognises that this 'may not always be the most proportionate response, particularly for those local authorities that have been judged inadequate in some aspects of their services but not others.' Of the 91 inspections so far, 22 have resulted in a judgement of 'inadequate' for overall effectiveness.

This briefing sets out the context for the consultation and outlines the proposals.

Source: [Martin Rogers, Briefing: Ofsted re-inspection of inadequate local authorities: consultation, LGiU, 18th February 2016](#)

Briefing: Loneliness and social isolation in older people

Feelings of loneliness and social isolation can affect people at any stage in their life, but are particularly acute for older people. Loneliness can increase the risk of premature death by 30 per cent; the rising phenomenon of loneliness among older people must be addressed urgently to avoid the huge impact on NHS budgets of caring for isolated elderly patients in hospital.

Councils are at the centre of a 'whole system' approach, alongside partners in the health and voluntary sectors.

Despite extensive research into the nature and scale of loneliness, there is a lack of high quality evidence to demonstrate the impact of different interventions to combat its effects. There are also differences of opinion about the relative impact of interventions that work at either an individual or community level.

Since it is predicted that between 2008 and 2033 there will be large increases in the number of older people living alone, particularly in the 85+ age range, the issue of loneliness and social isolation is likely to remain high on the policy agenda.

The issues highlighted in this briefing have a global reach.

Source: [Carol Grant, Briefing: Loneliness and social isolation in older people, LGiU, 22nd February 2016](#)

Briefing: Ofsted inspection of school improvement work – local authorities and Multi-academy Trusts

In June 2013 Ofsted announced the re-introduction of inspection of local authority arrangements for supporting school improvement. These risk-based inspections, under a new framework, were introduced in response to the wide variation in children and young people's access to a good school place.

This briefing reviews what has happened since the inspections were re-introduced, including the inspection of multi-academy trusts, and considers the possible implications.

Source: [Martin Rogers, Briefing: Ofsted inspection of school improvement work – local authorities and Multi-academy Trusts, LGiU, 22nd February 2016](#)

Briefing: The Five Year Forward View for Mental Health

As part of the NHS Five Year Forward View, NHS England has commissioned an independent taskforce to produce a ten-year strategy for improving mental health outcomes. The taskforce put an emphasis on co-production with people with mental health problems and carers, over twenty thousand of whom responded to the consultation and helped shape the report.

The report identifies that significant progress has been made in areas such as public attitudes, improved outcomes, and developing services like psychological therapies. However there are also huge challenges; an increase in people using services, insufficient funding, lack of parity between

physical and mental health care, differences in funding between CCGs, and variations in outcomes in local areas mean that more needs to be done.

The report calls for a 'fresh mindset' with leaders taking 'decisive steps' to make improvements in the three main areas of: prevention, seven-day services and integrated physical and mental healthcare.

The report sets out a series of recommendations for which £1 billion additional investment will be required. NHS England has accepted these recommendations.

Source: [Christine Heron, Briefing: The Five Year Forward View for Mental Health, LGiU, 23rd February 2016](#)

Briefing: Education in England: progress and goals -CentreForum report

This briefing is on the CentreForum report 'Education in England: progress and goals', published on 18 January 2016. CentreForum is an independent think tank that develops evidence-based research to influence both national debate and policy making.

David Laws, CentreForum Executive Chairman expresses the rationale and aims of the report: 'Much time is spent debating educational outcomes and policies in England, but too little time is spent considering what we are trying to achieve and how far away we are from achieving success against our aspirations'.

The publication describes how CentreForum intends to measure performance of the education system for children and young people from early years up to GCSE.

The briefing outlines the CentreForum report and also makes reference to the keynote speech, 'Ambitions for education', by the HMCI, Sir Michael Wilshaw at the CentreForum conference launching its report.

Source: [Kathy Baker, Briefing: Education in England: progress and goals -CentreForum report, LGiU, 23rd February 2016](#)

Briefing: Low Performing Students: PISA International Comparisons Report

The OECD published 'Low-Performing Students: Why They Fall Behind and How to Help Them Succeed' in February 2016. It is based on a statistical analysis of low achievement in mathematics, reading and science at the age of 15 across OECD participating countries set against differences in school systems and various factors of advantage or disadvantage.

The data for this study was collected in 2012. It considers the effectiveness of policy responses which can help to reduce or alleviate attainment gaps.

This briefing outlines the key points from the report and puts them into the context of UK school policy during the last 15 years, drawing out some of the key questions and issues for schools and policy makers.

Source: [Andrew Crompton, Briefing: Low Performing Students: PISA International Comparisons Report, LGiU, 24th February 2016](#)

Briefing: Creating an anti-poverty childcare system – JRF report

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) has published ‘Creating an anti-poverty childcare system’.

The childcare ‘offer’ is largely what the report calls ‘demand side’ support which has led to the unplanned expansion of voluntary and private day care and pre-school, and nursery classes in primary schools which has led to fragmentation and a split between the maintained and private sectors.

The paper suggests sweeping away the complex funding structures currently in place, and the childcare sufficiency duty placed on local authorities, in favour of a childcare entitlement and supply funded model which would enable greater influence to be exerted over quality.

The report refers to good practice internationally; particularly New Zealand, Australia and Scandinavia where early years support is planned with ‘supply side’ payments to providers who provide required places.

Part of the JRF report’s implementation proposals includes greater devolution to devolved governments within the UK. This would enable the pursuit of programmes more tailored to local circumstances.

Source: [Andrew Crompton, Briefing: Creating an anti-poverty childcare system – JRF report, LGiU, 2nd March 2016](#)

Briefing: Childcare Survey 2016 – Family and Childcare Trust

This briefing outlines the ‘Family and Childcare Trust 2016 Childcare Survey’ published on 24 February 2016 and authored by Jill Rutter, Head of Research at the Trust. The Family and Childcare Trust has undertaken an annual survey since 2002, measuring the price and availability of childcare.

This year’s survey coincides with significant changes in childcare policy and funding but also reveals some serious flaws in the childcare system as the introduction to the survey report highlights:

'High costs remain a barrier to parental employment. Parents often struggle to find the flexible childcare that enables them to work. We do not have enough childcare for disabled children and those in rural areas. The workforce is poorly paid, yet many childcare providers struggle to make ends meet. With additional pressure on the system, these cracks may well widen'.

The report also reveals shortfalls in the capacity of some LAs to deliver the existing free education expansion in provision.

Source: [Kathy Baker, Briefing: Childcare Survey 2016 – Family and Childcare Trust, 10th March 2016](#)

Briefing: The 2016 IFS Green Budget

The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) has produced a 'Green Budget' for the past 34 years, usually published about a month before the Chancellor's Budget Statement (scheduled this year for 16 March). It is meant to provide a detailed and independent analysis of the public finances and Budget policy options.

The 2016 Green Budget has a wide scope; coverage in this briefing is necessarily selective, and focuses on the key issues of public finances and taxation. In anticipation of the Budget, there is a summary of the analysis conducted by the IFS of the effects of the Chancellor's fiscal targets and of the risks associated with meeting them. Also dealt with is an analysis of recent changes to Universal Credit. Shorter treatment is given to prospects for infrastructure spending, excise duties, tax evasion, and a new system of accounting called the Whole of Government Accounts (WGA).

Source: [Andrew Jones, Briefing: The 2016 IFS Green Budget, 12th March 2016](#)

Briefing: Prime Minister's challenge on dementia 2020 – implementation plan

The Prime Minister's challenge on dementia contains over 50 commitments intended to make England the best country in the world for dementia prevention, care and support. The challenge implementation plan sets out how the commitments will be delivered over the next five years. Some can be achieved relatively quickly while others will need time to develop. The plan is divided into two phases:

- 2016 to 2018 – detailed actions to take place over the next 12 to 18 months.
- 2018 to 2020 – longer term actions, the details of which may change over time.

The plan has been agreed by all the delivery partners and signed off by the Dementia Programme Board and government ministers. The document indicates that the plan was influenced by service users and carers through engagement with Dementia UK, the Alzheimer's Society and others.

The plan describes actions across four themes:

- risk reduction
- health and care delivery, including workforce training and development
- dementia awareness and social action
- research (and global leadership).

Source: [Christine Heron, Briefing: Prime Minister's challenge on dementia 2020 – implementation plan, 15th March 2016](#)

Briefing: Apprenticeships – Update

This briefing provides a broad overview of the government apprenticeship reforms to date, providing key information and analysis of the changes.

The reforms, begun under the Coalition government, have gathered pace and complexity under the majority Conservative administration. A pledge to deliver three million new starts by 2020 has been accompanied by a raft of new standards and assessment procedures, tailored to each sector and occupation, and a levy on business to spread the costs of apprenticeship provision.

However, concerns exist that improvements in quality are failing to keep pace with the quantity of new apprenticeships. This briefing outlines how the government's latest proposals address these criticisms, and what challenges continue to lie ahead.

Source: [Toby Hill, Briefing: Apprenticeships – Update, 15th March 2016](#)

Briefing: DfE Consultation – Schools national funding formula

On 7 March 2016 the DfE launched its latest plans on introducing a National Funding Formula for schools to redistribute £31 bn of school funding. Consultation on 17 April 2016.

There are two consultations being undertaken, one on a national formula for funding schools; the subject of this briefing, and a second one on the funding arrangements for High Needs; mainly special educational needs.

This is a "Stage 1" consultation on the principles to form the basis of the revised funding arrangements. The "Stage 2" consultation will look at the details of the reforms and in particular will provide figures from which the implications for the individual funding of schools and the funding of LA responsibilities for Special Educational Needs will be identified. There is as yet no timetable for the Stage 2 consultation.

Related consultations on Early Years funding arrangements and for school improvement are expected later in the year.

Source: [Alan Docksey, Briefing: DfE Consultation – Schools national funding formula, LGiU, 18th March 2016](#)

Briefing: DfE White Paper: Educational Excellence Everywhere

The DfE has published a White Paper, 'Educational Excellence Everywhere', outlining the Government's plans 'to transform England's schools and build on progress that has already been made'. It sets out seven elements to underpin its aims:

- Great teachers – everywhere they're needed
- Great leaders running our schools and at the heart of our system
- A school-led system with every school an academy
- Preventing underperformance and helping schools go from good to great
- High expectations and a world-leading curriculum for all
- Fair, stretching accountability, ambitious for every child
- The right resources in the right hands

The White Paper comprises eight chapters, which are summarised in this briefing. The first is an overview of the Government's vision, followed by seven chapters covering the key elements which underpin the vision and aims.

The paper is accompanied by a document describing the DfE strategy 2015-2020, an impact assessment, and a paper describing the methodology for defining 'achieving excellence areas'.

Source: [Martin Rogers, Briefing: DfE White Paper: Educational Excellence Everywhere, LGiU, 18th March 2016](#)

Briefing: DfE consultation – High needs funding formula and other reforms

On 7 March 2016 the DfE launched its latest plans on introducing a National Funding Formula for schools. Consultation on 17 April 2016.

There are two consultations being undertaken, one on a schools funding national formula and a second one on the High Needs Funding formula and other reforms, which is the subject of this policy briefing.

This is a "Stage 1" consultation on the principles to form the basis of the revised funding arrangements. A "Stage 2" consultation will look at the details of the reforms and, as far as this Policy Briefing is concerned, should provide indicative figures for funding Local Authorities' (LAs)

responsibilities for Special Educational Needs. There is as yet no timetable for the Stage 2 consultation. There will also be a related consultation on Early Years funding arrangements.

Source: [Alan Docksey, Briefing: DfE consultation – High needs funding formula and other reforms, 31st March 2016](#)
