

Nikki Hindle
Zone 5/ J2
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London. SW1E 5DU

8 January 2008

By email

Dear Ms. Hindle

Consultation: *Local government finance settlement 2008/09*

The Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) is pleased to submit this consultation response. ADCS is the national leadership organisation in England for directors of children's services appointed under the provisions of the *Children Act 2004* and for other children's services professional in leadership roles. The Association provides a national voice as a champion for children, with local and central government, and with the public.

The Association offers this brief contribution to the above consultation in relation to a specific issue - namely the funding of training for Educational Psychologists.

Educational Psychologists are a small yet vital professional group within Children's Services. They carry out some statutory functions in relation to the assessment of children with special educational needs as well as contributing more broadly to the promotion of effective learning; child development; positive mental health; social relationships; behaviour management and parenting. Educational Psychologists have been instrumental in leading some key transformational developments locally and nationally - for example, the establishment of Portage Services to support and empower parents of children with complex learning difficulties and disabilities within the early years; the recognition of the role phonological awareness plays in learning to read; the introduction of programmes to build positive mental health and emotional literacy, such as S.E.A.L.

Historically, training for Educational Psychologists was funded by the DCSF, via GEST and then Standards Fund. Some years ago, in recognition of the need for a national scheme that would ensure a steady flow of psychologists, this was transferred to the Local Government Association (LGA) who administered a top-slice sufficient to fund approximately 140 training places annually. The LGA decided to remove the top-slice and delegate funds to all local authorities and this was implemented two years ago.

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The Association of Directors of Children's Services

Ellen Wilkinson Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL
Tel:0161 275 8810 Fax: 0161 275 8811 Email: info@adcs.org.uk Website: www.adcs.org.uk

All of those involved in this change, including members of the LGA itself, soon recognised that for such a small group this was an impractical step that jeopardised the stability of the profession. In the autumn last year, the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) and LGA, supported by the DCSF, Association of Directors of Children's Services, the British Psychological Society, the Association of Educational Psychologists and Educational Psychology Services across the country, proposed that the top-slice should be reinstated. Although we recognise that the general trend in national and local government is away from top-slicing and towards more general delegation of funds, our experience to date demonstrates the need for some form of national funding mechanism for educational psychologists. I would refer you to the paper prepared by the CWDC and LGA for full detail (attached). Clinical and Health Psychologists, who play a similar critical role within the health settings, are funded by the DOH. In Wales and Northern Ireland, a national funding mechanism for Educational Psychologists has recently been agreed following similar considerations.

We would urge that a national/regional funding solution is identified as quickly as possible and are keen to work with colleagues in the DCSF, DCLG and CWDC to secure this. We cannot emphasise enough the damage that the current uncertainty around funding and training is inflicting on the profession and are concerned that services to some of our more vulnerable and at risk children and young people will suffer directly as a result.

This consultation response has been prepared by Sonia Sharp, Director of Children's Services for Rotherham Council. Any queries regarding the detail of this response should be addressed in the first instance to me at the address below or email sarah.caton@adcs.org.uk

Yours sincerely



Sarah Caton
Assistant Director

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