

REWIRING PUBLIC SERVICES

OUR AMBITION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE





WHAT PEOPLE WANT MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE IS FOR SERVICES TO BE BUILT AND INTEGRATED AROUND THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

FOREWORD

Foreword	1
Our ambition	3
Possible shared outcomes	4
The council role	5
Our ambitions into practice	6
The journey of a child	7

Our ambition for children is they should grow up to look back on their childhood with affection. It should have been a time of healthy and balanced development, family support and love; one which contained rewarding learning and the right balance of safety and risk.

Public services touch on all these elements and are going through a time of constraint and change, so a new way of working is needed which helps communities to realise that ambition.

That is why in July 2013 the Local Government Association (LGA) launched a campaign to rewire public services. It is an ambitious programme that provides much-needed solutions to how we can deliver public services despite the pressures on public spending, which has seen councils facing the biggest cuts in the public sector.

The aim is to influence debate now and the party manifestos being written for the next General Election in 2015.

As part of the campaign, a specific set of proposals for children's services was published¹. The key principle underpinning these proposals was the need for decision-making for public services to be brought together in one place.

We argued that what people want more than anything else is for services to be built and integrated around the needs of children and their families, not around buildings, institutions and wasteful bureaucracy.

We now want to build on these proposals to set out a clear set of shared ambitions for children that we would seek to deliver in the context of 'rewired' public services.

We want to set out how all parts of the public, private and voluntary sector can work together with children and young people, families and the wider community to achieve them.

We would welcome comments on the proposals in this paper from our member councils and from our partners in the voluntary and private sectors. In parallel, we will also seek the views of children and young people, working with the British Youth Council.

The aim is to launch a shared ambition at the LGA Annual Conference in Bournemouth in July.



Councillor David Simmonds
Chairman, LGA Children and Young People Board

Please give us your comments by Friday 11 April 2014: www.local.gov.uk/our-ambition-for-children

¹ See www.local.gov.uk/campaigns

OUR AMBITION

Why are we trying to agree a shared ambition for children and young people?

The advantages of agreeing a shared ambition could include:

- Providing a starting point for each part of the public, private and voluntary sector to consider how it can best contribute to continuously improving outcomes for children and young people at a time of significant financial challenge for all.
- Acting as a template against which councils and their partners can review their current practice and organisational set-up and identify areas for redesign, development and improvement.
- Setting out a vision about what 'good' looks like in terms of outcomes to inform service design, commissioning and inspection.
- Providing an overarching framework for partnership and integration between bodies in a rewired local public sector.
- Clarifying the role of local government as compared to the role of central government and national agencies such as Ofsted.

Questions:

Do you agree it would be useful to get a commonly agreed 'ambition for children' across the public, private and voluntary sectors?

How would it help your organisation and how would it support you in your particular role?

What are the possible pitfalls of such an approach?

POSSIBLE SHARED OUTCOMES

We are not just seeking to set out local government's ambitions, but the ambitions we share with children, young people and their families and with other parts of the public, private and voluntary sector. The intention is not to try to 'codify' an agreed set of outcomes, in the way that 'Every Child Matters' sought to do. But we would welcome views on whether the set of outcomes outlined below, represent a fairly commonly shared set of ambitions:

- that children and young people should feel that they are loved and cared for and that they are safe and secure
- that they are healthy and happy
- that they get a good education that allows them to fulfil their potential, and achieve their ambitions
- that they are well-prepared for adulthood and independent living; have opportunities to be successful in work; be active members of their community; and in their turn make a positive contribution to the life-chances of future generations.

Of course, for most children and young people it will be their family, friends and wider community that contribute towards outcomes such as feeling loved and happy. The role of the public and voluntary sector will be to contribute to outcomes where they can make a difference, such as making sure they are safe, secure and healthy. But for the minority of children that do not have those support networks, we believe that we should aspire to ensure that they also achieve those outcomes through support for adoption, fostering and long term permanence.

Questions:

Do these represent a commonly shared set of ambitions for children and young people?

What are the challenges facing children and young people that we should be seeking to address?

Is there anything missing? Will all partners be able to sign up to them?

How will it help to set out a set of outcomes and ambitions in this way?

Would it be helpful to try to identify some ways of measuring success against these outcomes?

What are the possible pitfalls of such an approach?

➤ COUNCILS HAVE A UNIQUE LEADERSHIP ROLE IN SUPPORTING THIS AMBITION. THEY HAVE A LOCAL DEMOCRATIC MANDATE TO REPRESENT AND PROTECT THE INTERESTS OF ALL THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES IN THEIR AREA

THE COUNCIL ROLE

We are aiming to set out a shared ambition with partners in the public, private and voluntary sector. But councils have a unique leadership role in supporting this ambition. They have a local democratic mandate to represent and protect the interests of all the children, young people and families in their area. Their mandate also covers the place and the wider community in which children and young people live.

This unique overarching interest in the wellbeing and health of local children is reflected in their comprehensive legal responsibilities for promoting the welfare and wellbeing of children and young people from 0-25. Councils have specific legal duties to work with local partners in the public and voluntary sectors to make sure this is achieved. So they are the only part of the public sector charged with making sure that things are joined up locally; and focused on the needs and aspirations of the children and young people that live in their area.

This does not mean that councils will be the main providers of services. They will have an increasingly strategic role as commissioner of high quality local services from the public, private and voluntary sector. They will have a role in influencing and working with health agencies, the police, schools and local voluntary and community sector bodies to join up and integrate local public services. Councils and councillors have a unique mandate as local champions of children, young people and their families.

Questions:

Do you agree that councils have a unique leadership role in supporting these ambitions for children and young people?

Is there anything missing from the council role set out here?

What should be the role of central Government, and national agencies such as Ofsted, in a 'rewired' public sector landscape?

OUR AMBITIONS INTO PRACTICE

The real challenge will be how to achieve our shared ambitions in practice. Views are invited on whether the following principles capture what needs to be done:

We need to incorporate the 'voice' of children and young people in the development of the vision, right from the start. We need to be positive about the contribution that young people can and should make to their local communities and to the wider society in which they live.

We want a shared vision for all children and young people focused on improving their lives and using the services that are available to everyone such as schools and the health service. It should talk about moral purpose and the need for greater local democratic accountability and engagement.

We want to avoid the current 'safety net' approach where councils and other services such as the criminal justice system are for the most vulnerable and for when things go wrong; and providers such as schools and health services are encouraged to focus on 'what they are good at'.

All parts of the public, private and voluntary sectors should be more positive and ambitious about the contribution they can make to improving outcomes for children and young people.

We want to get away from attributing blame as a key aim of inspecting public services. This way of doing things is deterring good people from coming forward and remaining in key frontline roles in social worker and teaching. Inspection should be part of the range of tools available to councils, local parents and young people to hold local services and providers to account.

➤ ALL PARTS OF THE PUBLIC, PRIVATE AND VOLUNTARY SECTORS SHOULD BE MORE POSITIVE AND AMBITIOUS

The aim should be to improve what is on offer locally and make sure that public money is being well spent, not point the finger of blame.

The focus needs to decisively switch to early help and intervention; prevention; and on joining up services around individuals and families because reforming public services can make a big contribution to deficit reduction and growth.

Questions:

Are these the right principles to help us achieve our ambitions in practice?

Is there anything missing?

Do we need to adapt them so they can be applied to other parts of the public, private and voluntary sector – or should we try to get an overarching set of commonly agreed principles?

How can we involve children and young people in a meaningful way?

THE JOURNEY OF A CHILD

One of the underlying themes in our 'rewiring' work is that public services should be joined up around the needs of the user – children and families in this case.

Comments are invited on the proposal that when councils and their partners are looking at how they can contribute to achieving their shared objectives, the focus should be on the journey of a child, growing from birth to adulthood (0-25), rather than on 'service areas' like 'education' and 'health' – for example:

0-5: Universal services: improving the commissioning of health visitors; delivering improved health outcomes for young children; and delivering sufficient high quality childcare and early years provision, including through children's centres. For more vulnerable groups improving adoption, permanence, early help, family intervention and improving early support for children identified as having Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or with long term health conditions.

5-11: Universal services: improving primary schools, ensuring fair access to schools, providing sufficient good quality school places and commissioning for improved health outcomes for children. For more vulnerable groups: improving adoption, permanence, early help and family intervention; improving support to children with SEND; and improving the educational attainment of the most disadvantaged groups.

11-16: Universal services: supporting improvement in secondary schools; commissioning support with particular health and family issues for adolescents; providing youth services and positive activities for young people; and making sure schools provide high quality and independent career advice. Encouraging local businesses to work with schools to raise ambition and aspiration

and prepare young people for the world of work. For the most vulnerable, providing 'permanence' in case of family breakdown; and supporting young people with SEND.

16-25: A focus on jobs for all, economic development and working with business to prepare young people for the world of work – ie the set of youth unemployment and engagement with education and training ('hidden talents') issues. This will include supporting the Raising of the Age of Participation; completing the transfer to councils of funding and commissioning 16-19 education and training; and local support for transitions to adulthood and work, particularly for the most vulnerable young people and those with SEND.

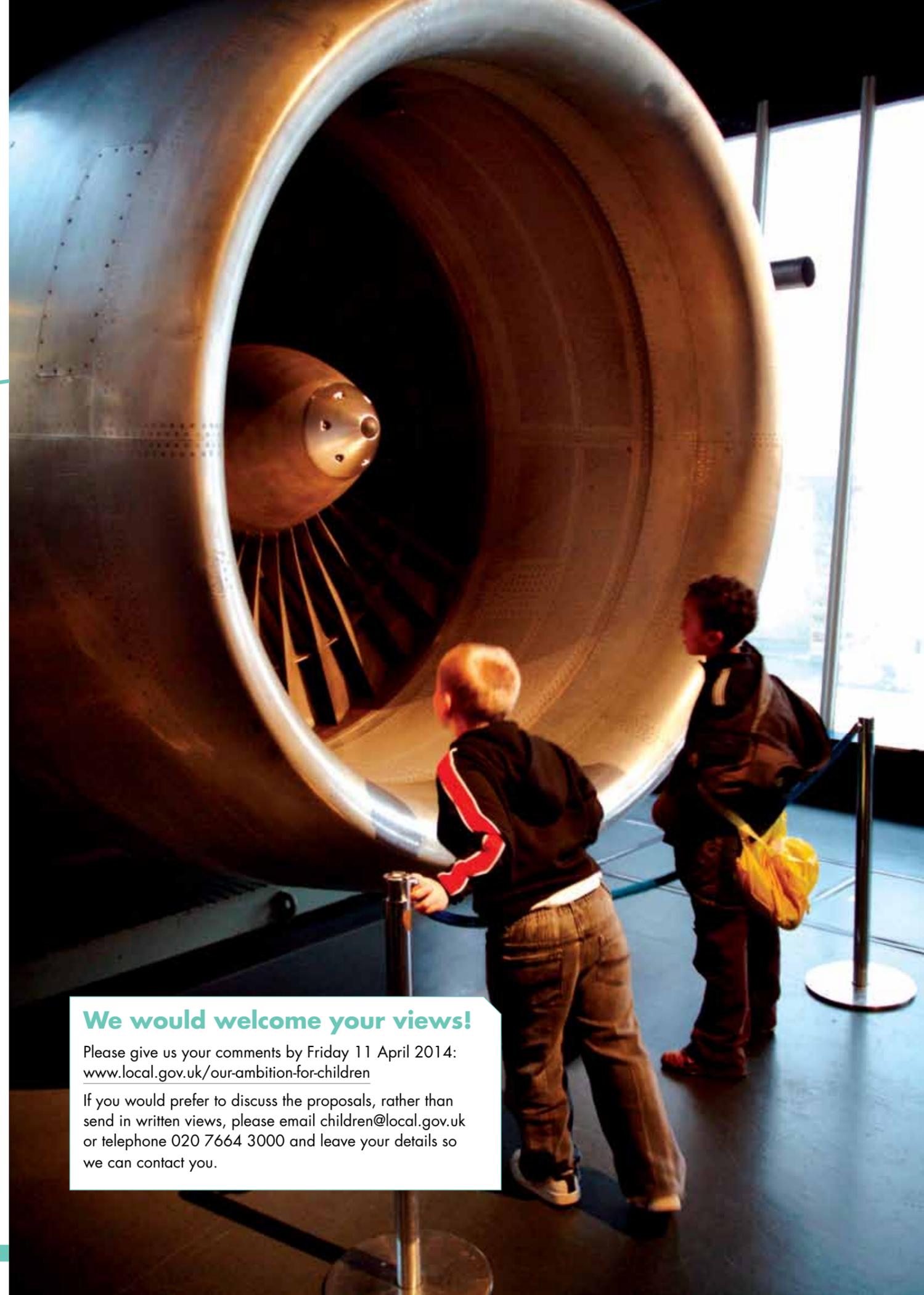
Questions:

Is focusing on the life journey of a child a helpful approach?

How would it help your organisation and how would it support you in your particular role?

What are the possible pitfalls?

What is missing from the list – how do we ensure all partners are recognised and feel included in the vision?



We would welcome your views!

Please give us your comments by Friday 11 April 2014:
www.local.gov.uk/our-ambition-for-children

If you would prefer to discuss the proposals, rather than send in written views, please email children@local.gov.uk or telephone 020 7664 3000 and leave your details so we can contact you.

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