



POLICY BRIEFING NOTE: 19

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THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION CALLS FOR ACTIONS BY A NEW GOVERNMENT AFTER THE MAY 2015 GENERAL ELECTION: IT CALLS FOR.....

1. Academies and Free schools in Trusts accountable to Councils

2. A new youth transition service

3. And **independent locally commissioned careers advice.**

1. The LGA has just published what is essentially its manifesto **INVESTING IN OUR NATION'S FUTURE** detailing what it would like to see happen in the first hundred days of the next government – *'to secure a bright future for the people of this country'*.
2. It's hardly a state secret but local authorities feel disempowered. They want more power and resources devolved to the local level. In short, *'More devolution of power to elected councillors to enable them to rewire public services.'*
3. On education, predictably, the LGA says that although Councils are responsible for a majority of schools many are held directly accountable to Whitehall, so we have a two tiered system which just isn't working and academies and free schools should be in Trusts accountable to Councils.
4. The LGA wants to:
 - Build half a million more homes so people can find a place they can afford.
 - Offer every child a place at a good school close to home, to give them the best possible start in life.

- Halve the number of unemployed young people, giving them the best chance to succeed.
- Reduce long-term unemployment by a third by localising all back to work schemes, bringing together services around those who are out of work.
- Inject £1 billion a year into a much needed programme to address the pothole backlog by investing 2p a litre from the existing fuel duty to fix our roads.
- Support people to live independently at home, reducing total hospital admissions and eliminating unnecessary hospital stays, to help save £3.9 billion a year from health and social care budgets.
- Help the three and a half million overweight or obese children by reinvesting a fifth of existing VAT on soft drinks, fast food and confectionery in activity programmes. The NHS currently spends £1 million an hour on diabetes, equivalent to 10 per cent of its annual budget.
- Ensure more people live healthier lives and tackle the harm caused by smoking and excessive drinking by reinvesting a fifth of existing tobacco and alcohol duty in preventative measures. Reducing smoking rates by five per cent would save 4,000 of the lives lost every year to smoking. It says, for example, that reducing by a tenth the working days lost to alcohol misuse alone would save £770 million.

5. The report states '*We need to **engage early to give children the best possible start in life, intervening in their early years** to avoid conditions such as obesity and diabetes. We must also make sure young people fulfil their educational potential by providing them with skills to prepare them for the world of work*'
6. **And***'As schools are given more freedom, it becomes more critical that they are effectively held to account and swift action is taken when standards slip. The current two-tier system of school accountability, with councils responsible for the majority of schools, but more than 3,500 academies and free schools accountable to Whitehall, is not working.*
7. *Once young people leave school, unemployment and low pay are still daily realities for many. Unless something changes, a third of all young people will still be out of work or underemployed by 2018.*
8. *Employers say that young people lack the skills they need and there is a risk of an increasing mismatch between training and the needs of local employers. The*

recession has pushed some vulnerable young people so far from the labour market that their employment or earning prospects are unlikely to ever fully recover.

9. *Whilst unemployment continues to fall, the overall number of those who have been unemployed for over a year has proven harder to tackle. Alongside youth unemployment it remains a major challenge. '*

10. The LGA wants a **Public Services Bill** that:

- *'Delivers a joined up employment and skills service which focuses on individuals'*
- *Extends 'councils' powers to challenge underperforming academies and free schools so that they can act as the champions for parents and children to drive up standards and ensure all local schools are rated 'good' or better by Ofsted.*
- *Improves school performance by setting up local 'Education Trusts' for all schools including academies and free schools, which bring together head teachers and governors, supported and held to account by Councils to share expertise and support self-improvement.*

11. Also the LGA wants the Chancellor to:

*'Give every 16 to 24-year-old **the advice, skills and experience** to contribute to the local economy and halve youth unemployment by consolidating and devolving the range of funding to councils through **a locally led youth transition service.**'*

12. And....In the first 100 days it wants the new government to:

- Refocus employment skills and back to work support by strengthening the central role of councils and bringing together key provisions including back to work support, Universal Credit and Troubled Families.
- Enable a local service to smooth young people's transition to work by:
 - Revitalising employment help through a new locally-led Youth Jobcentre, to bring together services around the needs of individuals.
 - Match training with local jobs by completing the transfer of further education funding to councils and local partners and investing in **independent locally commissioned careers advice.**
 - Boost teenage participation in education and training to an all-time high by devolving under-performing national youth engagement schemes to councils.

13. You can access the full report via the web-link here:

<http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/6341755/LGA+Campaign+2014+-+100+Days/8255560f-7c96-432f-bbfe-514d3734a204>

- 13. Concluding Comment: This powerful document asks for much and a key question is has it been properly costed? It certainly represents a fight-back by local authorities and provides a valuable contribution to the debates about the future of public services including education and careers services - in particular for young people.**

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