

Seminar on School Place Planning for Local Authorities

Local Government House - 1 May 2012

Seminar Report

Speakers

John Freeman CBE, Seminar Chair and Report Author

Geoff Gee, National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)
Graham Olway, Education Building Development Officers Group (EBDOG)
Yvette Stanley, Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS)
Ian Keating, Local Government Association (LGA)
Alan Parker, independent consultant
Donald Rae, Local Government Association

Rapporteur: Rachel Cunningham, National Foundation for Educational Research

Administrator: Katarina Charalambous, Local Government Association

The seminar was attended by representatives of 87 local authorities. The seminar was sponsored and organised by the Local Government Association (LGA) and supported by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER).

The aims of the seminar were to stimulate discussion about the issues raised by the NFER research, to inform local authorities about the legislative framework, and to consider future action needed by individual local authorities, by the LGA in its work with central government, or by the NFER in terms of further research.

This report is, so far as possible, an accurate record of what was said during the seminar. The seminar considered the report of recent research carried out by the NFER in the context of the changing legislative framework. The seminar was held under the Chatham House Rule, so (with the exception of keynote speakers) contributions have not been attributed. The Report is in the form of an overview summary of what was said; however, in order to ensure that all contributions have been reported, the annex includes a collated analysis of all issues raised during the workshop sessions.

Contents

Executive Summary and Recommendations	3
Key issues addressed during discussions	7
Report of the seminar	
Introduction - John Freeman	11
The National Position – Geoff Gee	12
The Statutory Position – John Freeman	14
Plenary Discussions	
- Graham Olway, EBDOG	16
- Yvette Stanley, ADCS	16
- Ian Keating, LGA	17
- Alan Parker	18
- Donald Rae, LGA	21
Concluding Remarks – Alan Parker	23
Attendance	25
Annex – Issues raised during workshop sessions	27
Acronyms	33

Executive Summary and Issues to Consider

Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient schools to meet the needs of an area. These may be schools maintained by the local authority, academies, or other non-maintained schools. In order to carry out this statutory duty, local authorities need to carry out school place planning and forecasting, but this planning is not concerned with the type of school.

1. *Planning for changes in demand for school places is an important function which can only be fulfilled locally but at a level above the individual school. The statutory framework for schools and academies has changed, with increased school autonomy. But while schools and academies can expand through increased admissions, and can seek also capital funding directly from the DFE, a planning mechanism with strong local knowledge is needed to ensure that public funding to secure sufficient school places is allocated efficiently. School place planning is a complex process, fraught with uncertainty, more so now than ever before, as previous planning assumptions about mobility, housing yield, and demographic change have very largely been invalidated by rapid shifts in economic conditions and patterns of migration.*
2. *While there are similar factors affecting a number of local authorities, each local authority has its own unique set of local factors to take into account. Best practice would seem to be a local 'bespoke' analysis based on locally-determined planning areas, with a common approach to key factors such as birth rate, migration, and housing developments. Local authorities should generally seek 'local solutions with local partners', working explicitly with other local agencies, including the health service, economic development services, housing services, benefits agencies, and schools, including academies and free schools, in order to ensure that school place planning is based on the best possible information.*
3. *Local authorities should use up-to-date objective evidence and consistent methodologies to develop a detailed analysis of demand for school places. Previously-accepted planning assumptions have become increasingly unreliable, so the 'accepted wisdoms' for school place planning need to be re-assessed and updated. Guidance from the DFE and EFA should be updated to ensure that local authority forecasts are based on the same definitions.*
4. *Future demand for school places needs to be assessed as early as possible so that adequate provision can be commissioned in a timely way in order to meet local need. Once an increase in future demand has been evidenced, local authorities have a new set of statutory procedures to follow to meet this demand, including inviting proposals for new academies or free schools, where necessary instigating competitions for new schools and academies. Since these procedures involve third parties, and may be lengthy, it is vital that future demand for school places is determined as early and as accurately as possible. In addition, it is only when the demand has been evidenced that a local authority can make a case to the EFA for capital funding, whether that be delivered through an academy route or a maintained school route. At a national level, the LGA will be able to aggregate overall increased demand for school places into submissions to the DFE and the Treasury for Spending Reviews.*

5. *In order to make best use of limited public funds, it is important that local authorities maintain both the expertise and the capacity to carry out school place planning effectively, and to carry through the necessary programme of commissioning new schools and closing schools for which there is insufficient demand.* The school place planning function of local authorities needs to be integrated with other local authority planning functions, including those for housing, economic development, and capital developments. However, the commissioning and de-commissioning of school places to take account of demand changes is a specialist function.
6. *The national position varies greatly, both in the timing and the extent of changes in demand for school places.* At present there are many areas with an acute shortage of primary places. There will be an inevitable follow-through into pressure on secondary places; this is equally urgent, as secondary places have a longer commissioning lead time. At the same time there are also areas still suffering falling rolls or experiencing a slower growth in demand.

In general, the NFER research has been confirmed by and reflected in local experience. Continued support from LGA and NFER will be welcomed on standardising approaches to the analysis of common factors, and in continuing to respond with consistent approaches and improved methodologies as the external environment changes.

Issues to consider

(These issues subsume the recommendations from the NFER research report, which are reproduced below for reference.)

Local authorities:

1. Local authorities should ensure that they have sufficient capacity to forecast demand for school places efficiently.
2. Local authorities should operate forecasting on a corporate basis, ensuring that data from all areas of activity are integrated properly to synthesise secure demand forecasts.
3. Local authorities should ensure that birth-rate data from the NHS, job seekers and benefits data from the DWP, military deployment data from the MOD, the DCLG Housing Survey, and related information from the ONS should be fully integrated with other local authority data, including bordering local authorities, in order to ensure that forecasts are as comprehensive as possible.
4. Local authorities should develop common forecasting standards and methodologies, including common nomenclature and definitions, with the EFA, supported by the LGA and the NFER.
5. Local authorities should work with all schools in their area, including academies and free schools, to build positive relationships so that they can properly carry out their school place planning function.

6. Local authorities should publish their detailed forecasts together with commentaries on specific local factors.
7. Local authorities should develop, publish and keep under review their planning areas, where these are smaller than the whole local authority.
8. Local authorities should update their forecasts as often as needed, and specifically after new data become available; for example, actual school entries in September, and school applications in January.

The LGA and the NFER:

9. The LGA should commission the NFER to research the impact of changes to the external environment on the methodologies used for school place forecasting, including:
 - the impact of the current housing market, including changes to patterns of owner occupation and tenancy;
 - the changing child yield from new housing;
 - demography, population movement and family patterns; and
 - transport issues, including the willingness of parents to access more distant school places, and the associated affordability, in the light of the 'free school transport' entitlement.

The LGA and the EFA

10. The LGA and the EFA should work together to ensure that the methodology and the data for school place forecasts are as accurate as possible, and are, so far as possible, agreed between the organisations.

The EFA

11. The EFA should reconsider and republish the definition of 'basic need' and guidance on 'surplus places' so that local authorities analyses are more consistent.
12. The EFA should work with local authorities, the LGA and the NFER, to develop common forecasting standards and methodologies, including common nomenclature and definitions.
13. The EFA should publish a detailed national forecast at local authority planning area level.

The NHS

14. The NHS should work with ONS to provide effective and timely local authority access to local birth-rate data.

The ONS

15. The ONS should work with the EFA and local authorities, with the LGA and the NFER, to analyse available demographic information in a way that supports local authorities with their school place planning function.

Recommendations from NFER research report

1. While forecasting pupil numbers has to be done at a local level, it would provide useful benchmarking data for national and regional trends to be made available in a common agreed format.
2. Local authorities are now able to make comparisons of the January 2012 primary school applications data with previous forecasts for September 2012. This data should be collated to give insight into the accuracy of recent forecasting.
3. The model for driving a national forecast for places (proposed in Section 4 of the research report) should be subject to review by local authority specialists to draw on their expertise directly, in order to refine a national forecast from local data.
4. The data underlying the 2012 DCLG Housing Survey should be examined for trends relevant to households with children, and advice should be taken from experts in housing about its relevance and impact on likely future trends.

John Freeman CBE
Seminar Chair and Report Author

Key issues addressed during discussions

Why is school place planning an important issue for local authorities?

Despite any mixed message regarding the role of local authorities in recent documentation and the legislative changes emphasising school autonomy, school place planning remains part of their core statutory duties. If planning is inadequate or inaccurate, it is the local authority which will be held accountable. And this is not a function that relates only to education and children's services – the whole of the local authority, and public services in the area more generally, are affected by the effectiveness of school place planning.

Despite much recent change in the system, schools and parents will continue to turn to local authorities for help, advice and guidance – and to hold them to account where there are problems.

What are the main factors affecting demand?

The main factors affecting demand for school places are birth rates, in- and out-migration from the area, including immigration into the UK, cross-border movement of children into schools in other local authorities, changes in the housing market and housing developments, armed forces deployment, parental preference, changes in private provision, rural sustainability, and the impact of welfare reforms. Many of these are subject to quite short-term uncertainty. So, for example, the housing market and associated family mobility may react quite quickly to any improvement or deterioration in the underlying economy. And the impact of the welfare reforms is only starting to be felt.

What are the main factors affecting supply?

The main factors affecting the supply of school places are the availability of capital funding, land and premises. Changes in governance arrangements with increased school autonomy build in both uncertainty and delay. So popular schools can increase their intake without consultation, up to the physical capacity. Competitions for new schools will inevitably be a more extended process than simply establishing a new maintained school.

What are the main issues affecting local authorities' ability to plan?

The main issues affecting local authorities' ability to plan are:

- Many local authorities have reduced resources and staffing for school place planning and school organisation;
- Late applications, in-year admissions, casual applications, and 'no-shows' all complicate planning both at school/academy and at local authority level.
- Previously well-understood trends are changing and are proving difficult to predict, including short-term tenants, mobile populations, and other changes in the housing market.
- The housing benefit cap is starting to have an impact.

- Parental preference is having an increased effect, with some parents seeming to be more mobile, in terms of willingness to transport their children to relatively distant schools.
- There seems to be a continuing increase in children with complex needs and additional needs more generally.

As demand for primary school places increases, there are new challenges:

- Due to increase in demand, some local authorities are running on a much lower surplus than is recommended (5-10%). Maintaining a surplus is important to allow for parental preference.
- At secondary level, existing surplus places need to be protected so that they will be available when they are needed, as primary growth feeds through.
- There are difficulties when the surplus places are in the wrong area.

The education reform programme, based on increased school autonomy, is raising important questions about responsibility for school place planning, and the delivery of adequate school places:

- There is some uncertainty about academies and free schools: For example, what happens to the land if an academy closes? How are the capital requirements relating to additional needs to be met, and allocated to schools and academies?
- There is a lack of understanding, for example, among parents, of how the new system should function.
- Many free schools due to open in 2012 and 2013 do not have premises yet – this makes planning and securing sufficient provision very difficult.
- Local authorities are reluctant to spend scarce capital funding on schools that may move outside local authority control.
- 'Marketisation' of schools can lead to unrealistic expectations on the part of parents and those setting up new school.

There is a general lack of information and communication:

- There is no onus on free schools to communicate with local authorities.
- There is lack of information on who is applying to set up free schools.

Note: Many delegates felt that their forecasts for 2013 need to be revised since the January applications. However, there was no consistency in the direction of error. There was evidence both of overestimation and underestimation, sometimes even within different geographical parts of the same local authority.

Technical issues

- While there is most immediacy with primary school places, the lead time for increasing secondary provision is greater, and many local authorities are already running out of time to address this issue— it takes time to put new secondary schools in place. The rise in participation age will also affect demand between ages 16 and 19.
- There are key issues about selecting, acquiring, evaluating and using the data to be used in school place planning. Securing cooperation with local health trusts is critical with respect to birth rate data, and cooperation with planning and economic development is equally important when predicting housing developments.
- Almost all local authorities use a geographical planning area approach which is customised to the local geography.
- There is much variation in the way in which local authorities assess the pupil yield from housing developments. The issue is not just to estimate the number of children, but also their areas, so as to enable an assessment of the need for school places. This is a particular area where national research would be helpful.
- There is some concern that some of the solutions for providing additional places may be ‘signs of desperation’ rather than long-term solutions, for example, very large primaries, non-traditional school buildings and multi-site schools
- With growth, local authorities are asking schools to take back into use accommodation that has been re-commissioned for other purposes, including community use and additional needs provision.
- Compulsory Purchase Orders are often necessary, but can be difficult for local authorities when they cannot demonstrate that funding is available.
- Forthcoming changes to the system for allocating funding for ‘high needs’ pupils may make planning even more challenging than at present.

What could help local authorities in their school place planning role?

Local authorities need to take both a wide approach and a long-term view. They cannot simply focus narrowly on school places, but need to be aware of what is happening generally across and beyond in their area. For example, one local authority is using a ‘whole council’ approach using ‘strategic area reviews’ to take account of all infrastructure needs.

Strategic planning is difficult but important. Looking at what has already happened and ‘steering by the wake’ is not enough; there are so many changes in the external environment that looking forward is essential.

High-quality information is critical. Local authorities need to consider how they acquire, evaluate, analyse and collate information, and how they communicate, negotiate and share information with other partners, including bordering local authorities. Local authorities also need to work with the LGA and NFER to support the development of effective practice and to share and disseminate this best practice.

There is some evidence that local authorities are using different interpretations of 'basic need', with some making allowance for a 'contingency' over and above firm forecasts, and others not doing so. It would be helpful if the Department for Education and Education Funding Agency were to reconsider and republish the definition of basic need and guidance on surplus places.

It would be helpful if the DFE continued to reduce bureaucracy on the closing and opening schools, with transparency and timeliness in the decision-making on potential new schools.

It would be helpful if the Department for Health required local health commissioners to provide accurate and timely birth rate data to local authorities. It would also be helpful if the Office for National Statistics were to analyse and publish data in a way that supports school place planning function.

Local authorities need to build positive relationships with all schools, including academies and free schools, as well as other local partners, in order to carry out their school place planning functions. Where relationships are not good, for whatever reason, local authorities need to work to develop them. Dialogue with *all* school types is essential. Negotiation has been, and must continue to be, an element of best practice.

Reflecting on previous forecasts is an important feature of developing effective practice. For many local authorities it is already too late to use the success or otherwise of the 2012 forecasts to maximise the accuracy of 2013. Any work carried out now is more likely to affect 2014 and beyond. Any work that can be done should start now.

There should be further research including a national study on pupil yields from new housing, and research to establish a common nomenclature in this area.

Detailed notes from each session

Session 1: Chair's Introduction
John Freeman CBE

This is an important event as the future role for local authorities in education is worked through nationally and locally. The event is intended to be an opportunity for delegates to contribute to the debate, so it will be as much a seminar as a conference. The report will be published, and sent to the LGA Children and Young People Board and to Ministers..

The entire event will be noted, and we will follow the Chatham House Rule, so the report will identify issues in discussion, but not who raised them, in order to promote free and open discussion.

There is much structural change occurring across the school system – more than for many years. New academies, academy conversions, free schools, university technical colleges are, or will become, major players, alongside local authority maintained schools – noting that local authorities do not control schools.

There is a great variation in the circumstances of individual local authorities. There are still local authorities with no academies, while some local authorities have only academies at secondary level.

The role of the local authority is changing but not diminishing. Local authorities increasingly have a championing and commissioning role, maintaining a local overview, and securing fairness in admissions, for example. Admissions arrangements have changed with the new Admissions Code, but local authorities have a different and indeed enhanced role. Such changes are bound to lead to some friction, difficulty and uncertainty as the new arrangements bed in. But a starting point is that new relationships and ways of working are required.

The key issues about school place planning to be considered today are:

What are the facts both locally and nationally, how are they established, and how certain are we of our predictions?

We need to be able to say how we know that projections are accurate, both locally and nationally. We need to get it right locally, so that every child has a school place and there are not too many surplus places, and nationally, so that the Treasury can allocate sufficient capital funding to secure a school place for every child.

Finally, in the new framework, the question we need to address is how can local authorities can best work to promote the interests of their communities.

The data for the report was derived from DFE statistics and obtained from local authorities directly using the EBD OG proforma. There is some concern that not all local authorities have responded, despite repeated prompting.

The immediate focus is largely on primary school places, although the impact on secondary will be felt in a few years' time, with some exceptions where this is already an issue. It is clear from returns that local authorities have not lost sight of secondary school places, even though the scale and urgency of primary places has priority just now.

Almost all local authorities use locally-decided planning areas.

The key issues for the demand for school places are:

- **birth rate:** ONS highlighted some issues such as increasing birth rate among older mothers and mothers not born in England. There have been some comments recently regarding problems getting birth rate data at a local level from national health colleagues.
- **military deployments:** due to defence cutbacks, there has been some consolidation of deployments, with more yet to come as the presence in Germany is reduced.
- **rural schools:** there is a problem of small schools with surplus places. However, a recent Westminster Hall debate reaffirmed policy against the closure of rural schools.
- **private provision:** a 2011 ISC survey suggested that fewer UK families are sending their children to private schools, but the numbers are being maintained by overseas families. However, there is a more recent ISC survey (from last week), with some evidence of private schools closing.
- **welfare changes and the housing benefits cap:** at present the effects are not well documented. Delegates' input on the effects of this will be welcomed.
- **population movement:** population movement between local authorities, and net immigration to England, have a profound effect on local demand for school places.

The key issues for the supply of school places are:

- **physical constraints:** There is increased demand in already built-up areas where schools are on restricted sites and cannot easily be expanded.
- **housing:** pupil number projections are not enough; there is a need to understand housing in the local authority and the effects of the housing market. The English Housing Survey gives some indication of the national picture, confirming that since

the financial crisis, fewer new households have been formed. And from 2008/09 onwards, the proportion of house-moves by owner-occupiers against house-moves by tenants fell substantially. This data shows what has already happened, but what about what is going to happen? New housing developments and child yields are another area of uncertainty. In the local authority returns, there was a lot of variation in how new housing developments were assessed. Some local authorities made two sets of plans – one for if the developments go ahead and one for if they do not. Establishing child yields is increasingly problematic especially where no recent local data is available. Some local authorities are employing commercial consultants to assess child yields, but even they may not have all the answers if the data is limited. If figures regarding population density and child yields come from before 2007, they could very well be misleading due to subsequent substantial changes in the housing market.

It was clear from the local authority returns that major issues are most helpfully considered at planning area level. So, for example, a number of local authorities reported surplus places in rural areas which could not practicably be used to meet increased demand in towns.

Questions for discussion are:

- What constitutes good practice and how can we make this well understood?
- How can key issues (including technical issues such as child yields) be properly addressed?
- Local authorities were not asked how well-placed they are to address place planning but it became clear that some authorities are finding the issues challenging. There is a need for collective action to prevent all local authorities being judged by those that facing challenges. What can be done to support them?

These issues are not just concerned with pupil projections but also how the local authority develops and maintains an overview understanding what is going on in the area.

Local authorities must not rely on the DFE to tell them what to do; the DFE now issue much less guidance and instruction than hitherto.

School place planning is both an intensely political issue, and expensive in terms of both time and effort, and capital funding. Decisions must be based on objective evidence of need, and not on hearsay, anecdote or 'accepted wisdom'. Political priorities will inform decisions but must not dictate them.

The common view expressed in the media is that there is a national problem with primary places, and with a particular focus in London. Causes identified include the baby boom and immigration. Solutions mentioned are non-traditional school buildings, abolishing the limit of 30 pupils, free schools, and enlarging primary schools to more than 1,000 pupils

Recent DFE policy documentation presents mixed messages regarding the role of local authorities in education. The Schools White Paper says that "**local authorities will have a strong strategic role as 'champions', including ensuring school places, a good supply of strong schools (encouraging academies and free schools)**", and that "**local authorities will move over time to a strategic commissioning role**". The example given is that Enfield Council commissioned an all-through academy to provide primary places earlier than planned. The 2012 Admissions Code gives local authorities a strong, and even enhanced role for local authorities, working with academies, for example.

That all seems very positive. But on the other hand, the 2012 Statutory Guidance for Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members for Children's Services does not mention commissioning. The SOLACE 'Call to action' focuses entirely on 'championing' (especially vulnerable families and educational excellence) and explicitly excludes discussion on commissioning and school place planning.

Of course championing excellence is important but the more traditional – and continuing statutory – roles of local authorities are important too.

So what does the law say?

The **Education Act 1996** places a duty on local authorities to secure sufficient school places – this has not been changed by any subsequent legislation. (However, the Education and Inspections Act (as amended by the Education Act 2011) changes the process of establishing new schools, including giving precedence to academies.)

The **Academies Act 2010** enables government to fund education through councils and through academies. So in practice, in order to carry out the 'sufficiency' duty – councils need to forecast demanded school places and inform government of what is needed so that funding can be made available.

There are of course serious practical problems. The first is reacting sufficiently quickly to rapidly changing circumstances: knowing the birth rate today is one thing, but modelling forward to four or five years is a different thing entirely. And opening and closing schools and enlarging them can be very contentious at local level, as well as being time, resource

and energy consuming. But local authorities have the great advantage of knowing their local area, both in a historical and a geographical context. Whatever the challenges, they are far better placed to assess future demand for school places than the DFE or individual schools.

Another practical problem is to maintain a financially and educationally efficient education system while new schools and academies are driven by the 'market'. In the old system, local authorities maintained surplus places at a small but significant level both to allow parental preference and to provide a buffer. But too many surplus places leads to instability and inefficient use of resources.

So, in these new circumstances, how can we accurately predict the need for school places? Recession, social welfare policy, employment patterns, owner-occupiers versus tenants: the external environment is changing rapidly and patterns of future demand are changing also. Families are having children both later and younger. It falls to local authorities both for practical reasons and as a statutory duty to collect the data and to forecast demand for school places as accurately as possible.

Initial comments

Graham Olway, EBD OG

Today is a useful reminder that we need to work together to provide sector-led information. The outcome for today should provide some solutions. It is a great opportunity to see the links between school place planning and capital funding.

Why has it taken so long for DFE to accept the need for increased short-term basic need funding? At EBD OG Liverpool 2009, EBD OG lobbied DFE that problems were coming and that time was of the essence.

But are they listening now? Yes! A working group has been set up to look at basic need to allocate recently-confirmed £600 million. However, there is a time lag between allocation at a national level and local decisions – and time is short.

Local authorities and their roles are changing – in some cases this may require radical change. And some local authorities have spent the last decade or longer removing temporary school accommodation and closing schools which they are now reinstating.

I know of one local authority that was able to pinpoint within nine places the number of primary places needed. But is this possible year on year? And will the funding always be available? Are we wasting public funding on un-needed free schools?

Solutions offered to the present crisis have been: temporary buildings, making design less of a priority (that is, more utilitarian buildings), very large primaries (but is this right?). Are these measures signs of desperation rather than real planning for the future?

In one county (at least) there has been a conversation with the local diocese about co-providing places in the voluntary aided sector.

Funding for basic need must be prioritised but local authorities have to prove it is needed. The issue is more than just London – there *is* a major issue in London but the problem is national, and we need to lobby on that basis. London local authorities have been good at lobbying (which is not a problem!), but all local authorities now need to be saying that there is an issue and money should go where the need is proven.

Finally, we all know that one year capital allocations do not work. Local authorities just cannot plan strategically on one year of capital allocations. But, as a local authority sector, we need to provide powerful evidence of need, and today is part of this.

Yvette Stanley, ADCS

The provision of sufficient school places is a major issue in London but also more widely. But London does face a major challenge. For example, Merton is a 'hotspot' with a 39% increase in live births.

Directors of Children's Services are advocates for all children including, and most particularly, the vulnerable, working with our partners to secure children's health, wellbeing, care, education.

ADCS cannot agree with a SOLACE position that would mean isolating school place planning from the wider agenda. Delivering better outcomes for children is like a three-legged stool: health and wellbeing, safeguarding and care, and education all need to work together; lose one element and the 'stool' falls over.

There has also been an increase in the number of children with complex needs – both mainstream and special schools are part of the map of provision for these children. This makes planning for complex needs more complicated. Working *with* schools is a key part of working with diversity. Mainstream places cater for most children with additional needs and the continuum of provision has been carefully planned to support inclusion. This needs to be maintained.

We also need to maintain the connection between school place planning and the broader corporate local authority role of 'place shaping' and developing community cohesion; schools should be planned alongside other key services and infrastructure. We need to work with colleagues to understand other developments that are happening that impact on school place planning – "We thought there would be a classful but turned to schoolful". Families may be unable to move out, so increasing pressures through staying and increasing families.

Local authorities are best placed to deliver this 'joined up' approach, brokering partnerships, persuading good schools (of whatever governance category) to expand. We also need to be conscious that much of the capital resource is coming from councils, whether it is contributing sites, money from disposals or S106 funding.

Ian Keating, LGA

The LGA has been working on developing and articulating the council role in education, and has set out the need to maintain a strong strategic role, which influenced the White Paper. Since then, The LGA has been working to flesh out what this means in practice. School place planning is central to the strategic council role, ensuring that every child has a place in a good school. School place planning is part of the wider strategic debate that includes fair access, protecting vulnerable children.

There will be a new system for capital funding of schools, and a new system for providing revenue. The LGA will seek to influence these two debates, but neither of these will affect the duty on local authorities to make sufficient school places available.

Where new schools are required, the 'academies presumption' requires councils to seek proposals and make recommendations to Secretary of State – but the decision rests with him. There is a real concern that taking every decision to Whitehall may delay decisions, so proposals will need to be made as early as possible.

On expansion, academies are free to reject proposals. The Secretary of State expects them to want to expand – they are often 'good' schools, but sometimes they consider their size to be the reason for this.

The Ministerial Advisory Group commissioned action research on school place planning and fair access in nine council areas, jointly funded between the LGA and the DFE. There is a specific section on school place planning. The key message is that things haven't changed much in terms of school place planning but there needs to be more negotiation between councils and schools. Schools with more freedoms may refuse or ask for incentives.

With regard to potential oversupply, the issue is how can local authorities protect against the undermining of a good school? Who will be responsible for closure of schools and how will this be achieved? The second phase of the action research will be to look at the range of local providers including the local authority, free schools, academy chains and individual academies, and negotiation with all these stakeholders for new provision.

With respect to this event, school place planning is a key part of the council role in education. There is now a spotlight on this area, rather than, say, school improvement. The NFER report and this event are the first stages of working with councils to improve the evidence base and to feed into the Comprehensive Spending Review.

The key policy document from the LGA is 'Local freedom or central control - II'

Alan Parker

School place planning is an issue that has been discussed over many years – with different imperatives at different times. This issue is like the LSE final examination – the question papers are always the same but the answers are always different!

Questions/comments from the floor (and responses from the panel)

1. Negotiation, incentives and partnerships have always been the best way to achieve change and local authorities have used Schools Forums to negotiate and grow classes slowly. But does the panel have a view on how school funding reform might affect the ability to do that, with fewer incentives to offer schools?

Alan: Schools Forums have been a useful organisation for building relationships, sharing understanding, and negotiation. This is now more difficult, complex and uncertain. The changes to the school funding formula are being pushed back but there is still uncertainty, and there is less money around. Local authorities need to try to assemble the resources to do what is needed. The responsibility is still there but power of decision rests with the Secretary of State.

Ian: The action research shows negotiation as standard practice. Councils don't usually intervene formally. There will be more research on Schools Forums from the NFER. On capital – the majority comes from councils anyway, which puts them in quite a strong position. Schools Forum should have consultative role but decisions about schools' capital should stay with the council; the LGA is lobbying for this. On the schools funding formula: the LGA is going through the process of asking councils to run the proposed system (reduction of factors in formula) through the financial 'sausage machine' and provide examples of how it will affect different types of school.

2. Difficulties with secondary places: vulnerable secondary schools, together with schools funding formula and effect on per pupil funding – how do you keep schools with surplus places viable when they will be needed in future?

Yvette: We need to expand secondary provision by 25%. How are we to do this when we can't find sites for primaries? This emphasises the importance of partnerships with stakeholders including academies and being part of a borough-wide solution. There can be an effective veto by the schools sector. Secondary schools are mostly not interested in primary problems just now. The school funding formula change is a very 'simple' solution to a complex problem.

Graham: With primary places you get very short notice, but there is no real excuse for not getting it right for secondary, despite perhaps a lack of easy solutions or available money. From the capital point of view you need time to get provision in place; even 'modular' buildings take time to order. I'm worried about local authorities being rushed into inappropriate solutions. The James Review of capital has been long awaited. EBD OG have been lobbying to keep the authority to allocate money with local authorities. Some aspects of the James Review are hard to argue against but there are other points on which local authorities should make their voices heard, in order to secure a fair allocation of resources. Local authorities may have particular views about academies and free schools but they need to take the long view and not be concerned overly about governance.

John: I have read in the press that most free schools due to open do not even have suitable premises yet; they are not immune from planning issues.

Geoff: The NFER report focuses much more on the pressure of time and space in primary places because that is the current focus for local authorities. However, one recommendation related specifically to secondary places, advising local authorities not to lose sight of this issue. Local authority documents showed that many local authorities are well aware of this already. For most, there are a couple of years before the wave arrives. Is the way forward just setting out this information to academies and chains? How can we together handle this? This is our role.

John: Local authorities have a statutory role in placement and admissions, not just in maintained schools but also academies. It is a different role than before but local authorities need to build relationships that work. There may (will!) be difficulties or friction as the new equilibrium develops, but local authorities will have to work to ensure that, whatever the history, good relationships are built.

3. Counties in the south east share a lot in common with London and other cities but also have rural areas. At secondary level: some have no places, and are looking towards green belt. There is a technical difficulty in exercising CPO powers, as they cannot demonstrate they have funding, and are running out of time to get new secondary schools in place.
4. Are we seeing a difference in the definition of Basic Need from DFE? A lot of academies are simply popular schools that are oversubscribed. We need challenging discussions with academies, who should be supporting us in Basic Need applications to the DFE. Is this a change in view from DFE?

Alan: I don't know but the DFE should be asked. Pre-1997 the system was pretty clear, with local authority reference to the national level. Post-1997 there was devolution, again with a pretty clear framework. Now there is a hybrid situation, complicated by the existence of both maintained schools and academies. The academy expansion started off small but

has now expanded hugely, with the pinch point that the Secretary of State's decision is needed on everything. How long can this be sustained?

5. Some secondary academies are located on large sites which are substantial public assets. And in making new provision, councils may need to purchase sites which may then move to academies sector.
6. What is the LGA position on ring-fencing of capital resources for education and child services.

Yvette: Councils are putting in a lot of their own resources to invest in education. There are key issues around the land that academies occupy. We need to expand oversubscribed schools. We cannot afford to be precious about governance. There are issues when land occupied is 'green field'. Land acquisition processes can take considerable time, and affording CPO is a further issue.

Ian: The LGA is categorically against ring-fencing, as we do not want to pass power to central government, and believe that decisions should be made locally. On the CPO point – this is on the LGA radar, and we are pushing hard for announcements about funding. The Secretary of State has powers to stop transfer of school land. Secondary academies with land assets need to have a 'grown up' conversation with local authorities. Local authorities and academies cannot act in isolation from each other. Over time, hopefully, productive relationships will be formed. This is the only way forward.

Graham: We are running out of time for new secondary places. It takes time to put provision in the pipeline, about three to four years. You cannot suddenly set up a school. It is not just the building, but also the organisation of the school. Who has responsibility for making all this happen? There needs to be an adult conversation between the various partners. Good local authorities are already doing this. For example, not saying they are not going to talk to converter academies. The DFE may want central control over certain issues but will this last long? There are many issues which can only be resolved locally. The DFE has not yet fully worked through the implications of the new diversity of providers for either planning or capital. On using money wisely, if local authorities have a single capital pot, some money will inevitably get diverted to other issues.

John: There need to be local solutions with local partners. Local authorities (and schools and academies) cannot rely on DFE, there are too many issues and they don't (and can't) know the local picture.

7. An observation – a few years ago we closed a secondary school as its places were no longer needed. It is now re-opening as a free school. We have 16% surplus secondary places when it closed so this figure will increase again, leading to instability. There is a perception that a free school or academy will inevitably raise standards.
8. We have to think of primary and secondary places as linked. By 2015 we will need eight further forms of secondary entry and by 2020, a further 16 forms of entry. Only funding primary places is short-term fire-fighting, and all lobbying needs to reflect this. And in 2015, the rise in participation age will increase secondary demand.

John: Colleges will also need to deal with the raised participation age but they deal with a different Secretary of State.

Geoff: There is a problem of terminology: 'surplus capacity' implies the capacity is not needed but this is not the case, as it will be needed in future. Perhaps we should refer to 'unused capacity'?

Alan: It is clear that there are different things going on at government policy level, with a desire to have an experiment in having school places managed by the market, where anyone can open a school, and the weakest schools will close. This is similar to Kenneth Clark's position in the 1990s. But the system is still bound by old rules and regulations, which are being observed on the ground. This is the problem in a nutshell.

John: Local authorities need to continue to champion the interest of their populations and educational excellence. They must not give up on the basis that 'it's all too difficult'.

Session 5: Meeting Special Educational Needs
Donald Rae, LGA

At the end of March, the government published documentation on school funding. A year ago, they said they would radically change national funding formula. This document says they will not do so until after the next election, that is, the national formula stays the same. But changes are asked of local funding formulae. The document contains a chapter on SEN which will impact on provision and on planning. (Note: there is as much of an impact on colleges post-16.)

What are the government doing? They have introduced a new phrase 'high needs pupils/learners' (originally 'high cost'). A rough rule of thumb is that these are learners who need specialist provision of some sort from age 3 to 25 years. The DFE is trying to create a funding model which will be the same in each institution – mainstream school or academy, special school or academy, college, or private provider. Local authorities will no longer be making choices on where children and young people should be placed based on price. For special schools, the last remaining element of local authority provision which is funded and planned on a 'place' basis, will shift to being pupil-led. And local authorities will have to maintain sustainability in special schools, which is still a role for place planning.

Mainstream schools and FE colleges will get receive funding plus budget to pay for pupils who cost up to £6,000 extra. A separate high needs budget will be held by local authorities and will come into the Dedicated Schools Grant as an un-ring-fenced high needs block. Local authorities will be free to move this funding within the DSG with agreement of schools. So a secondary school with a special needs unit will get elements one and two – from the local authority or the Education Funding Agency (EFA) – and also element three – top up funding from the local authority the child lives in. High cost (cost above around £10,000) will come from local authority.

Local authorities will no longer have to recoup funding from each other. Special schools will have relationships with more than one local authority, as they will receive £10,000 per pupil from their local authority or the EFA, and also, on an individual basis, and only if necessary, a high-cost top-up from the local authority in which the pupil resides.

The planning implication is that because the EFA will be funding the £10,000 places, they will be planning how many places they will want to fund in independent special schools. Local authorities will have to plan where high cost learners will be, both in their own local authority and outside it.

Currently the LGA and DFE are in discussion about how this will work in practice. At an local authority level, conversations are needed between SEN staff and finance staff about these changes, which apply from ages 3 to 25, and not just SEN, also Pupil Referral Units and alternative provision (AP). Local authorities will have to be planning AP places too; they will not get funded at the same level, but the same system will apply.

Questions from the floor

Is this revenue money? A: Yes, it starts from next April.

Have we got clarity on where the obligation is to provide additional capital to allow, for example, specialist SEN work to be carried out in academies? At the moment, a significant number of academies require capital works – it is unclear who should be funding this. Will this be clarified soon?

There is nothing from the general discussion that would contradict the findings of the NFER research, which validates the work done in advance.

The key messages for local authorities:

- The task is the same but the context is different; it is more difficult to achieve desired outcomes.
- Local authorities will have to work smarter and draw in support from elsewhere to get the results needed.
- Local authorities are under pressure now, as their role is changing (but how? No one is really sure), but everyone knows there is less money.
- School place planning is something that might get lost in the mix when local authorities are worrying about other things. But this would be a big mistake. When it is done well it is 'invisible', but if it goes wrong, a range of people in that area will suffer.
- School place planning remains a legal duty for local authorities.
- Despite changes, schools and parents still expect local authorities to get things right for them locally; local authorities embracing this give a positive message about localism. (But if it all goes wrong, local authorities will carry the blame ...)
- It is no longer feasible for school place planning to be done in isolation. Resource limitations and the reality of linking with other areas means it needs to be more integrated to overall strategic planning in the local authority, for example with economic development and planning. Of course, lack of duplication of work saves time, effort and money.

The technicalities of data and planning

Cooperation is needed, internally in local authorities as it is inefficient if different planners are operating on different assumptions. Also, cooperation is needed across local authority borders.

We need to work with the DFE to agree consistent nomenclature so everyone can understand the language. It is important to create a consistent message, for example when communicating with parents and other local stakeholders, to make sure they understand.

Local authorities need to avoid 'steering by the wake'. Don't just look at live births, consider the age of mothers, how many other children they are likely to have and family structures. The data may be there somewhere but local authorities do not have it (and how

much would it cost to access it?). How does the ONS work? Is there data they have that local authorities could use? Also, what about data from health authorities?

Inevitably the present focus is on primary school places, but don't forget that children in primary schools inevitably move into secondary schools, so there will soon be significant problems in providing secondary school places! And don't forget children with special needs!

Key messages for others

The DFE:

- There needs to be transparency regarding money - capital and revenue, academy stream and maintained stream, mainstream versus high needs pupils – which sector are they in, where do they live? Ideally, Basic Need would be determined from the bottom up. But while the DFE decide the overall 'cake', the formula for how it is divided needs to be transparent. It can be problematic to assess Basic Need at local authority level, but developing a new area-based system may throw up different problems.
- Cost-effectiveness of choices need to be considered: academies, free schools, maintained schools. The National Audit Office might be looking into this but their work will only be as good as their data.
- There needs to be transparency regarding decision-making. Where is the revised guidance on local authority decision-making responsibilities? Many of these decisions now rest with the Secretary of State, but it should be made explicit that he will make these decisions following the same statutory guidance as he provides for local authorities.
- There needs to be clarity on the definition of Basic Need and more generally on common language.

We must do our best to avoid the urgent supplanting the important ('raise our heads above the parapet') Looking well ahead is the only way these problems are going to be addressed.

School place planning is complicated but it is important that we get it right. The relationship with schools and academies is critical – and we have to do all we can to make sure it develops positively.

Finally, to NFER, LGA, EBD OG and ADCS - thank you and can we have more events like this!?

Attendance

Helen Hoynes	Bath and North East Somerset Council
Susan McKeating	Bedford Council
Andrew Tompkinson	Bedford Council
Sally Lissenden	Bournemouth Borough Council
David Watkins	Bracknell Forest Council
Tony Sinkinson	Bradford Council
Gillian Churchill	Brighton and Hove Council
Ian Bell	Bristol City Council
Stephen Chainani	Buckinghamshire County Council
Ian Trafford	Cambridgeshire County Council
Rob Parsons	Central Bedfordshire Council
Carolyn Davis	Cheshire West and Chester Council
Judith Applegarth	Coventry City Council
Dee Hill	Derbyshire County Council
Simon Niles	Devon County Council
Rick Perry	Dorset County Council
Steven Attwood	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Gary Langford	East Sussex County Council
Pooneeta Mahadeo	Essex County Council
Moira Pratt	Gloucestershire County Council
Chris Holt	Hampshire County Council
Pauline Davis	Hertfordshire County Council
Bryan Fitzgerald	Kent County Council
Jo-Anne Sanders	Kirklees Council
Lynn MacDonald	Lancashire Council
Janet Caliste	London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
Elaine Tuck	London Borough of Barnet
Kevin Taylor	London Borough of Bexley
Judith Joseph	London Borough of Brent
Mark Kempe	London Borough of Camden
June Maw	London Borough of Croydon
Kim Price	London Borough of Ealing
Bob Ayton	London Borough of Enfield
Patrick Elliott	London Borough of Greenwich
Johanna Morgan	London Borough of Harrow
Philip Preston	London Borough of Havering
Ian Downer	London Borough of Hillingdon
Venitia Rogers	London Borough of Hillingdon
Maggie Harriott	London Borough of Lambeth
Margaret Brightman	London Borough of Lewisham
Tom Procter	London Borough of Merton
Shane Billingham	London Borough of Newham
Manjit Bains	London Borough of Redbridge
Matt Clayton	Lincolnshire County Council
Ivan Guy	Sefton Council
Pat Watson	London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Deborah Smith	Luton Borough Council
Chris Mckenzie	Medway Council
Gary Maddison	Middlesbrough Council
Marie Denny	Milton Keynes Council

Chris Hey
Duncan Mills
Christine Steer
Sandra Burniston
Suzanne Firth
Sarah Cook
Nicholas Lee
Angela Pae
Ian Webster
Barbara Chillman
Alison Chambers
Dan Mckintosh
Chris Williams
Myles Milner
Sarah Bysouth
Sue Wilkinson
Joel Hardwick
Tony Maddon
Jo Rees
Alastair Robertson
Amanda Smith
Stephen Bell
Paul Gerrard
Joy Stodart
Val Thompson
Gareth Cheal
Kathy Swallow
Asa Melander
Alan Wharton
Eamonn Gilbert
Ben Wright
Hersha Mistry
Rachel Laybourne
David Whitehouse
Michael Hiscox
Caroline Corcoran
Vanessa Cummins
Chris Parry
Nick Glass
Karen Newey

Norfolk County Council
Northamptonshire Council
North East Lincolnshire Council
North Lincolnshire Council
North Yorkshire County Council
Northamptonshire County Council
Nottingham City Council
Nottingham City Council
Nottinghamshire County Council
Oxfordshire County Council
Peterborough Council
Plymouth Council
Portsmouth Council
Reading Council
Rutland County Council
Salford Council
Sheffield Council
Slough Borough Council
South Gloucestershire Council
Southend Council
Staffordshire County Council
Stockport Council
Stoke on Trent Council
Suffolk County Council
Sunderland Council
Swindon Council
Telford and Wrekin Council
The Learning Trust, London Borough of Hackney
The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Trafford Council
Wakefield Council
Walsall Council
Walsall Council
West Berkshire Council
West Sussex County Council
Wigan Council
Wiltshire Council
Wolverhampton City Council

Annex – Notes from Workshops and Plenaries

These notes have been summarised and included in the main report except where there was disagreement about particular issues.

Plenary questions and responses

While projections were accurate, trends were always changing so impossible to predict 100%.

Strategic planning: need to work more with corporate – introduction of Community Infrastructure Levy.

Child yield varies significantly, not just the rates but also when they are yielded.

Secondary planning – more cross-border movement than primary – need inter-local authority working.

Use of resources from the local authority point of view: trying to build in extra school capacity, certainly there is an expectation among parents and others – need to retain surplus to allow for parental preference. Get a lot of hassle from parents when they don't get what they want. The 'Oliver' scenario.

Across the workshop group, Local authorities are using different ways of planning provision, some use districts, some use secondary schools plus feeders, other use local community area. No one size fits all.

Some discrepancy between what school place planning might suggest and what district council and local authority economic plans say.

Pupil yield – further study? Going forward from housing is there a way for collating that? There are different arrangements in place currently. Raw data? The evidence is clear that pupil yield varies very much in different places. What matters is what works locally – national template will not work.

Impact of free schools on provision – some local authorities are being proactive, working with groups to bring free schools into areas where they are needed as opposed to arriving unnecessarily or where schools closed. Lesson is the importance of local authority being proactive in engaging with the free school agenda. But difficulty arises if free schools don't think they have to engage.

Even in this environment, where a lot have changed to academies, schools still look to the local authority for support, help and advice, as do parents. Part of the reason is that people do not understand the way the new environment is supposed to work. Is there scope for educating people about this?

There is a limited capacity for local authorities to deliver solutions to all this, with pressures on staffing and resources.

Free schools – apart from use of public purse, transparency of decision making is a concern. Some decisions are difficult to understand.

Basic need funding – methodology is based on authorities, some small, some large. One delegate has heard that they will be broken down into planning areas. But need guidance and criteria for what planning areas will be – otherwise more inconsistency.

Pupil yield: Lack of commonality. Also not just pupil and birth data, need demographers and population experts.

One problem is that those local authorities without capacity are not in attendance. Today's event aims to re-emphasise the importance of this work and that local authorities need to be staffed appropriately.

It is difficult to look away from immediate admission round. It is hard to look strategically, but all local authorities need some form of medium to long-term plan. The LGA and NFER supporting this helps to deal with the immediate and also focus on the strategic.

Unlocking space that is already there e.g. extended school space.

Guide and support local authorities as they enter the world of commissioning e.g. do you have an open market or give preference to those you have relationships with?

There is an issue of people moving due to housing benefits cap showing up at short notice so forecasts are out because of last minute movements.

Where are we now with numbers for September 2012 and September 2013?

As a result of looking at January applications compared to September forecasts, how many are looking at forecasts for next year thinking they need reworking? Over half. Mixed under and over estimation both within and between local authorities.

Some delegates feel it is too early to tell. It depends on what happens between now and September 2012 – a review cannot happen until 'they all show up on the day'.

Late applications need to be figured in to forecasts because they are in school by January. (Some dissent on this.)

What is the timetable for another round of work over the next four or five months to maximise accuracy of 2013 forecasts, including reviewing how 2012 was? It is too late for this – it is an 18 month cycle. This work needs to be started now

What constitutes a planning area is not consistent from one local authority to another, but most use one that makes sense to the local authority and for the geography of the area. Local authority-wide figures can flatten out differences.

Planning areas that used to make sense do not anymore. Parents seem to be more mobile, in terms of travelling to school, not moving house. One of the downsides of marketising of schools is unrealistic expectations.

Is uncertainty greater than before? Yes. Example from the floor: not knowing which children want places in faith schools.

How can we make 2013 forecasts the best they can be? How can we help? (that is our objective). It is already too late for 2013, admissions booklets are already out. Work needs

to look to 2013, 2014 and beyond. Work in the next 3 months, before the school holidays, would be great.

There is an issue with asking schools to make large expansions on a 'wing and a prayer' – can't guarantee funding (need three year funding?).

NHS data on births – we need to make sure all local authorities get this data (do something nationally!).

Schools want to know much earlier if they need more forms of entry (they are asking whether they need to continue doing this). They want to know now, so they can recruit teachers.

Workshop Notes

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is forcing local authorities to work more corporately. Data needs to be able to stand up to scrutiny to include into CIL.

50% produce plans – sometimes reluctant to publish too much data.

Local authorities often do not use corporately-produced projections for children's services-based functions (apart from Greater London Authority (GLA)).

The GLA forecasts are hugely underestimated due to immigration.

Some local authorities are running on a low surplus (not the 5 to 10% recommended)

There are issues with getting reliable data (due to resources) (housing data, births).

Migration trends are difficult to monitor.

Growth appears concentrated in urban areas (where jobs are?).

There is a need for bulge classes – but some local authorities are running out of options.

Short-term projections are reasonably accurate but the trends are changing.

Information on birth rates from health authorities is very helpful in projecting peaks in demand.

Level of social housing having a big impact on yields. There are issues about when pupils will be yielded.

Since S106 agreements negotiated, need more contributions – some local authorities are asking developers to renegotiate.

Independent surveys carried out can help defend local authority analysis at inquiry.

Local authorities are only starting to look at secondary planning – not a priority at the moment. Longer term, secondary will be an issue

Some local authorities have embraced the market-driven approach including free schools.

There is a need for regional and inter-local authority planning where there is cross-border movement.

Some academies are reducing PANs and introducing fair banding – this is changing demand pattern – local authorities have no control.

PAN only applies at normal point of entry

Core strategies suggest no need as population falling!

There have already been large numbers of unplanned-for movements into [an outer London borough] as a consequence of the housing benefits cap. But it's difficult to monitor where and why families move.

There are issues with late applications, with university students and families, and increasingly with over-crowding and multiple occupancy.

What level of surplus should local authorities be planning for? It is difficult to plan for surpluses in correct areas. Surpluses in areas of low demand do not fill; surpluses in 'right' areas fill straight away.

In-year admissions / casual applications increasing.

It is difficult to plan for short-term tenants and mobile populations.

Planning on known births is short-term; how do we forecast births beyond known births? How does the ONS do it?

Planning data from housing and health often not as robust as birth rate data and housing completion data. Housing data / planning development sites is subject to change as not certain when developments come on stream.

Local authorities do not know beforehand who is wishing to open free school, thus avoiding duplication of provision and wasting public funds. Similarly with academies which can make changes e.g. close SEN unit without informing the local authority.

Local authorities / academies / free schools / maintained schools need to work together!

There is uncertainty for academies themselves, some have approached 'their' local authority for capital funding e.g. CIL, expansion.

Split-site schools are becoming the 'norm' to avoid competition and to speed up expansion of provision.

Academies (if outstanding) can expand via EFA business case.

Grammar school expansion on split sites – and 'satellite schools'

Can you extend schools over the local authority border?

Work with neighbouring boroughs to look at pupil import / export to identify who it would benefit.

The DFE is not aware of where demand is, when setting up free schools

Some discrepancy between school place planning and the local authority's own economic/demographic projections!

Some local authorities use districts as planning areas while others use secondary school areas/local community areas.

Councils are limiting the amount of borrowing, therefore government grants essential.

Local authorities are reluctant to use their own funds in case schools convert to academies

The James Review suggests a new version of School Organisation Committees!
Representatives from all sectors need to agree the way ahead. Local group meetings can allow conversation with all. But there can be too much low level discussion and more strategic discussion is needed.

Someone needs to collate all the data on schools to ensure resources are directed appropriately.

Could NFER undertake research on 'pupil yield' from housing as a national study?

The DFE removal of the net capacity figures is unhelpful.

There is an absence of 'cost-effective' consideration with free schools.

There is a lack of clarity on law / guidance.

Making the case for a compulsory purchase order (CPO) is challenging – as firm funding is needed.

There is a significant lead time on new schools – the larger, the longer.

'Expansion' = annex/separate site.

What is the reality of 'choice'?

Need to 'educate' staff and councillors (as well as schools) on the new environment.

Schools (including many academies) still look to local authorities for support, as do parents.

Three roles of local authorities:

- traded services
- support
- challenge

The housing benefit cap is starting to impact.

Funding for 'late arrivals' in Reception is an issue for schools.
There should be a duty on the NHS to supply birth data.

Pupil yield – lack of commonality an issue varying from 5.8% to 0.3% primary places.

There needs to be transparency regarding decision making on free schools.

No revised guidance on opening new schools – should be clear set of rules/regulations for both local authorities and the Department [*since published by the DFE*]

ONS data: is the present position part of a long term trend? We don't know what is going to happen!

Basic need funding (methodology/transparency?) – based on authorities but these vary greatly in size. Will these be broken down into planning areas? Problem: free for all regarding identification? Guidance?

Transport implications and costs need to be considered.

Traffic congestion needs to be considered.
Expanding unpopular schools or schools that contracted previously in order to meet demand is unlikely to be popular.

There are distinctly different issues for urban and rural areas.

Urban populations are very mobile and transitory.

There is an issue with localism and the Localism Bill and strategic planning for school places.

Difficult for revenue funding of schools – infant class legislation implications.

PLASC (Pupil Level Annual School Census) moving to October.

Some parents from other cultures do not think to apply for school place at age 4 as it seems too young.

Military super-garrisons will be a challenge. There will be demand in younger age groups, not so much at secondary when soldiers leave the army.

Acronyms

ADCS	Association of Directors of Children's Services
DFE	Department for Education
DWP	Department of Work and Pensions
EBD OG	Educational Building Development Officers' Group
EFA	Education Funding Agency
LGA	Local Government Association
MOD	Ministry of Defence
NFER	National Foundation for Educational Research
NHS	National Health Service
ONS	Office of National Statistics
PAN	Planned Admissions Number
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SOLACE	Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers