

# **Lyons Inquiry Seminar Series**

## **Local government's role in children's services**

**Sir Michael Lyons**

09 November 2006

# The Inquiry's remit

- Original remit: funding
- New remit: role and function (and funding)
  - Consider changing **strategic role** of local government in the context of national and local priorities for local services; and implications for accountability;
  - Review how **devolution and decentralisation**, together with changes in decision making and funding, could improve local services, their responsiveness to users, and efficiency;
  - Consider changes which help to **manage pressures** on local services;
  - Reporting to Ministers in December 2006

# Vision and objectives:

## The world we want to live in

- We want a **sustainable** and **fair system** of central and local government for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which helps achieve:
  - A more **prosperous society**
  - A more **cohesive** and **engaged society**
  - Better **outcomes from public services**

# May report

- *'National Prosperity, Local Choice and Civic Engagement – a new partnership between central and local government for the 21st century'*
- Greater local choice is needed to better meet local needs and improve value for money
- Local government can contribute to national prosperity through effective place-shaping
- But - LG must rise to the challenge, particularly by better use of engagement with local people

# Analysis and engagement

- Case Studies
  - nine areas, six services
  - interviews with officials, councillors and partner organisations
  - public engagement events
- Quantitative survey and qualitative research with the public
- In-house modelling and analysis of funding options
- Events with business & councillors
- Seminar series – focusing on service areas
- Economic development conference
- Open consultation (over 2,500 responses)

# Provisional conclusions: function

- Britain has to confront some hard choices – some of which are best made at the local level
- There is a need for central government and local government to work more closely together
- Central govt needs to make space for place-shaping by reducing the weight of performance management
- Local government should play a stronger place-shaping and convening role
- Flexibility more important than new powers

# Provisional conclusions: funding

- Not about raising more money, but better stewardship of public resources, managing pressures better and local choices, but possible case for allowing communities to choose to spend more
- Public understanding of the case for local taxation is frail
- Central govt needs to improve the incentives for local govt
- CTB take-up / reform may be the key to fairness
- Some reform options would require lengthy and careful implementation

# What are the implications for children's services?

- Which services should be nationally determined? How much room is there for local variation?
- What lessons can we learn about effective partnership working across local services? How can it work better?
  - Are Children's Trusts the way forward?
  - Do LAAs have more to offer?
- Is it right that local government should have a convening role? How can their role be made most effective?
- What should I focus on in my final report?

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**9<sup>th</sup> November 2006**

# **Delivering Children's Services**

## **“The Context - Current Pressures”**

**Paul Fallon**  
**Head of Children's Services and**  
**Director of Social Services**

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## There are no votes in vulnerable kids!

- ✓ “The service tends to have a low profile among local people, but quickly gains a high profile if failures occur”
- ✓ These are “High cost/high harm” children living in “High cost/high harm” families
- ✓ Except – Disabled Children
- ✓ The “deserving poor”

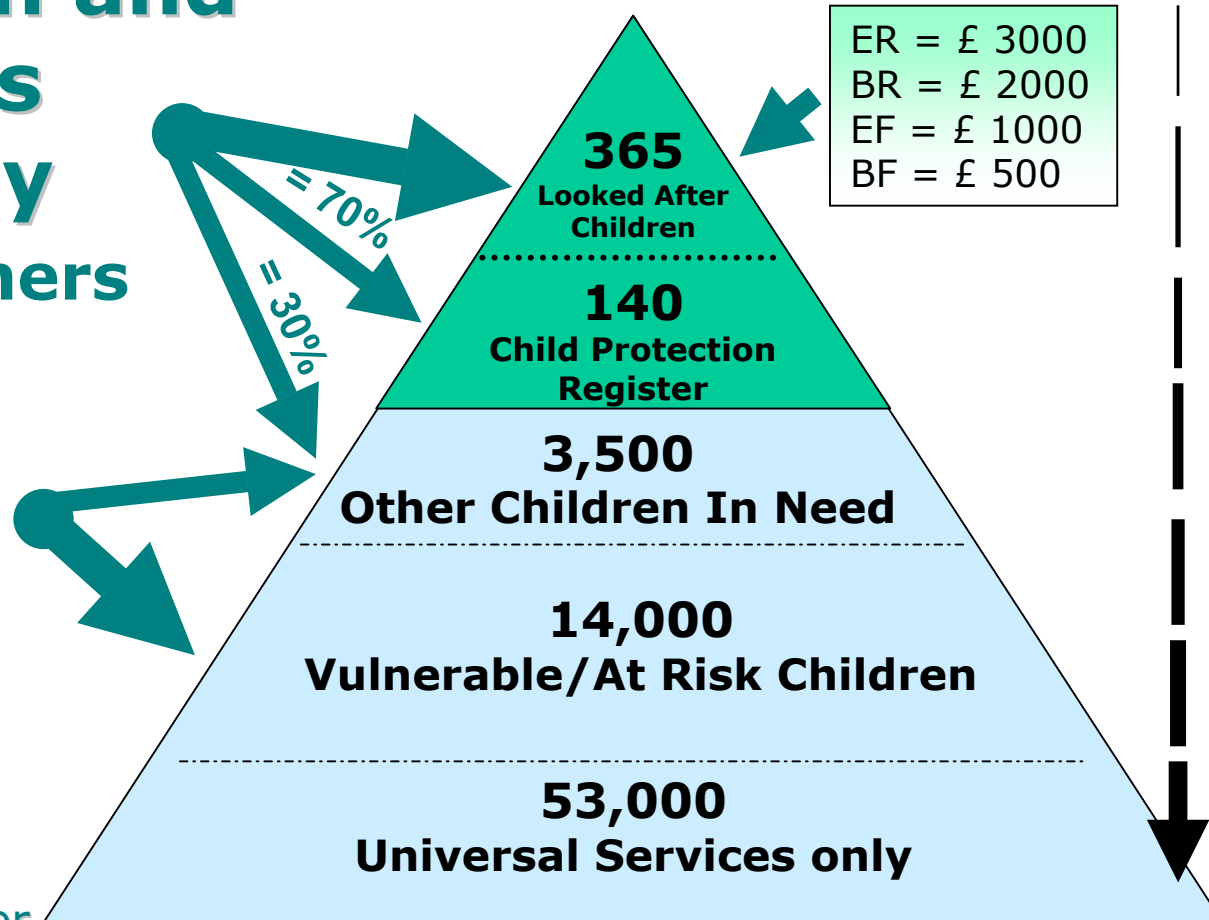
## The Challenge!

- ✓ **Local variation and inconsistency**
- ✓ **Not just in “preventive” services**
- ✓ **Bring all up to the level of the best**
- ✓ **It can be done**
- ✓ **Sustain good performance**

# Children and Families Strategy

## Our partners

- Connexions
- Police
- Education & Youth
- Children's Fund
- Health
- Housing
- Leisure
- Sure Start
- Voluntary Sector



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## What works!

- ✓ **The Child Protection system**
- ✓ **Recruitment and Retention – workforce**
- ✓ **R&R – Foster care, to a point**
- ✓ **Smarter commissioning**
- ✓ **Corporate commitment/parenting**

# Obstacles/pressures - our attitude towards children

“I would that there were no age between sixteen and three and twenty; or that youth would sleep out the rest; for there is nothing in the between but getting wenches with child, wronging the ancientry, stealing and fighting”

Shakespeare



# Is it so different today?

- ✓ **Angels or demons**
- ✓ **Soham – innocent/passive victims**
- ✓ **Sick hoodies**
- ✓ **Feral thugs**



# Is it ?

- ✓ **Respect = more ASBOs**
- ✓ **More kids locked up**
- ✓ **Still not equally protected**
- ✓ **High cost/high harm families**



## The prevailing culture

- ✓ **Ambivalent re children**
- ✓ **Ambivalent re the children's workforce**
- ✓ **Utopian expectations**
- ✓ **Unforgiving, 'blame' culture**

## Further obstacles/pressures

- ✓ Unsophisticated, headline grabbing diagnosis, e.g. 'The care system is a failure'
- ✓ Resulting in – imperfect, short term remedies, e.g. 'Externalise it'

## Further obstacles/pressures

- ✓ **Impatience – the quest for ‘a quick fix’**
- ✓ **The silver bullet**
- ✓ **Failure to build on ‘what works’**
- ✓ **Obsession with structural responses**

## Some specific obstacles/pressures

- ✓ **The adult/children's services interface**
- ✓ **The workforce**
- ✓ **Local Placement choice**
- ✓ **Resources & VFM**
  - ✓ **Schools funding**
  - ✓ **Collaborative commissioning**
  - ✓ **The NHS – cost shunts**
  - ✓ **The Family Court System - waste**

## We need - LEADERSHIP

- ✓ **Consistent**
- ✓ **Sustained**
- ✓ **Accountable**
- ✓ **Passionate**

# ...more than structural change

**1971** Children's, Mental Health and Welfare Departments Abolished

**SSD's Established**

**2006** SSD's Abolished

**Children's and Adults Services Established**



# The last word

*Come writers and critics,  
Who prophesize with your pen,  
And keep your eyes wide,  
The chance wont come again.  
And don't speak too soon,  
For the wheel's still in spin.....*

*(Bob Dylan)*

*...and it's getting faster!*



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