

Dr Carolyn Wilkins OBE
Chief Executive
Oldham MBC
Level 3, Civic Centre
West Street
Oldham OL1 1UG

Wednesday, 3 May 2017

Dear Dr. Wilkins,

Re: Oldham Council Resolution – the Impact of Austerity on Women

Thank you for your letter of 28 March. The LGA agrees that it is important to review the impact of policy decisions and implementation on different individuals and households to ensure that no-one is disproportionately or unfairly affected, and to recognise and mitigate any unintended consequences.

We have explicitly highlighted our concerns about the shortfall in funding for Early Years services, and delivery of the 30 hours offer in particular, including in our submission to the Department for Education's (DfE) consultation on the new EYFS funding formula.

We continue to work closely with the DfE on the implementation of their childcare and early education offer, and have emphasised the need for both adequate funding and sufficient local freedoms and flexibilities to ensure that councils are able to secure sufficient and appropriate provision, particularly for children and families in more disadvantaged areas.

The LGA has worked closely with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), local authorities and other stakeholders throughout the design and implementation of the welfare reforms.

The scale and breadth of the reforms, and their interaction with other key areas of policy including housing, employment and public health, presents a complex picture. We highlighted the risks of cumulative and potentially disproportionate impacts on some households in a report on the Local Impacts of Welfare Reform that we commissioned from the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (CESI, now part of the Learning and Work Institute) in 2013.

We have consistently emphasised the important role that councils can and should play in supporting disadvantaged jobseekers, addressing the undersupply of genuinely affordable housing and providing an adequate local safety net.

We will shortly be publishing updated findings, which consider the local impacts and behavioural responses to the welfare reforms to date, and the vital role of councils in helping households to sustainably manage reductions in benefit income.

We have identified some areas where it is important for Government to do more to understand and mitigate the risks to women, and for councils to have adequate freedom and funding to support those affected; in particular: lone parents, young women NEET, mothers of young children in low income households, and women fleeing domestic violence. This includes:

- Highlighting the local impact of the lowered Benefit Cap on lone parent households. We have argued for great devolution of resources and responsibility for employment and skills, and a more effective approach to co-location of JCP and other support services to enable councils and other partners provide more integrated support to disadvantaged jobseekers, including lone parents and mothers with young children.
- Working closely with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and stakeholders to ensure that there is sufficient funding for the provision of women's refuges and supported housing for women fleeing domestic violence under the Government's revised approach to Supported Housing.
- Continuing to press for the long-promised review of Children's Centre services, and highlighting the importance of early intervention and community-based support for low income families.
- Identifying and highlighting good practice in integrated approaches to public health, in particular through Health Visiting, to support mothers with young children.

We are, of course, always keen to have local experiences and case studies to strengthen our evidence base in discussions with Government.

If there is anything further that you would like to share as your work develops, or if you would like more information about our work in this area, please contact Rose Doran, Senior Adviser rose.doran@local.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lord Porter of Spalding', written in a cursive style.

Lord Porter of Spalding CBE
Chairman