

LG Group

Education and Children's Services Funded Research Programme

Winter/Spring
2011



Funded research programme

The Local Government Education and Children's Services Research Programme (LGECSR) is designed to support both the work of local authorities and the LG Group. The programme is managed by the Local Government Association (LGA), on behalf of the LG Group and the sector, and is overseen by a Board, which includes representatives from LGA, Local Government Improvement and Development (LGID), Local Government Employers, The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, National Youth Agency and The Association of Directors of Children's Services.

The work is carried out by researchers, information specialists and statisticians at the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER).

The programme offers a unique opportunity for the LG Group to address topics and issues of key interest to local government, which are unlikely to be prioritised by other national sponsors. Topics to be investigated are agreed by the LGA and NFER, according to the needs and priorities of local authorities (LAs) and the LG Group.

In addition to research, EMIE at NFER provides an information, intelligence and analysis service to LAs and the LG Group.

Current Research

Safeguarding children: council responses to Laming

The second Laming report recommended improvements in child protection following the death of baby Peter Connelly. This study aims to provide evidence of key learning from changes in local authority practice in response to the report. Changes will be analysed in relation to the LGA's 'Five Point Plan', covering reasons for improved performance, issues, associated challenges and enabling factors.

www.nfer.ac.uk/research/projects/safeguarding-children-laming/

Safeguarding children: peer review

The safeguarding children peer review programme, led by LGID, supports councils in identifying areas for improvement in local safeguarding services. This research will gather reflections on the peer review process and its outcomes, find out what has changed locally as a result, highlight its benefits and draw together learning points to share with the sector. It will comprise desk research of relevant documents, and telephone interviews with officers from five selected councils and with the peers involved in their reviews.

www.nfer.ac.uk/research/projects/safeguarding-children-peer-review/

Young people's aspirations and their relationship with youth unemployment in rural areas

Youth unemployment is a serious issue affecting rural areas. The NFER is conducting research in Suffolk and two other rural authorities to test the assumption that low aspirations are a contributing factor to relatively high levels of youth unemployment. This research will explore the extent to which young people have low aspirations and the main reasons for this. Based on a review of previous evidence and detailed case studies, it will provide recommendations about what these LAs can do to improve young people's aspirations, with hoped-for positive outcomes for youth employment.

www.nfer.ac.uk/research/projects/aspirations-unemployment-rural-areas/

Governance models in schools

Recent developments in policy relating to schools, and the response of professionals, have highlighted issues surrounding school governance and the role of school governors. This research aims to review the current model of accountabilities in school governance and consider alternative models that may be fit for purpose in the future. It involves three strands: a review of recent literature, surveys and qualitative interviews with stakeholders – governors and governor coordinators.

www.nfer.ac.uk/research/projects/governance-models-schools/

Views of young people with special needs and their parents/carers on the Green Paper

This project will gather examples of consultations held by LAs to gauge the views of service users on proposed models of assessment and provision for children and young people with special educational needs and learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. It will entail desk research and telephone interviews with staff in LAs in different parts of the country.

www.nfer.ac.uk/research/projects/views-SEN-Green-Paper/

Experiences of transition to adult services for young people with special needs

For vulnerable and dependent young people, the period from 14 to 25 years can be particularly problematic, involving wholesale change in the nature of support services available. This study will explore the experiences of young people with special educational needs and learners with learning difficulties and disabilities who have experienced the transition, together with their parents/carers and local authority staff. Information will be gathered through case study interviews in five local authorities, identified through a rapid desk review of local authority policies.

www.nfer.ac.uk/research/projects/SEN-transitions/

Views of young people and their parents on different approaches to SEN/LLDD residential education provision

Where children and young people have complex and/or specialist needs, LAs have the power to provide appropriate residential provision on their behalf. The 2010 Ofsted review of Special Educational Needs and disability highlighted the variability in provision of specialist services for children with SEN and LLDD which has resulted in some children and young people being placed great distances from home. This in-depth study aims to capture the views of young people and parents/carers about different residential care options, using desk research to identify different care options and a programme of interviews with young people and their parents/carers.

www.nfer.ac.uk/research/projects/SEN-residential-education/

Council progress on tackling child poverty

The 2010 Child Poverty Act places a legal obligation on current and future governments to end child poverty in the UK by 2020. Local authorities have a duty to work with local partners to tackle child poverty. Specific requirements are to carry out a needs assessment to identify local issue and to prepare a local child poverty strategy. This study will provide an overview of the current 'state of play' within the sector, including issues and challenges and progress made. Following desk research to obtain relevant documents, the research will provide case studies of good practice at local level.

www.nfer.ac.uk/research/projects/council-progress-child-poverty/

Hidden talents

The purpose of this research is to support local authorities by identifying a range of opportunities for local authorities and business to work together. It is also investigating how local authorities can create linkages between the different policy agendas relating to engaging young people, economic development and business support to achieve improved outcomes for young people and employers. The team will collect relevant literature and examples through extensive searches and requests to local authorities.

www.nfer.ac.uk/research/projects/hidden-talents/

Promoting engagement in education, employment and training: a project evaluation

Four LAs (Cumbria, Bradford, Sandwell and Plymouth) are implementing a pilot project aiming to promote engagement of young people in education, employment and training. The project encourages young people aged 16–24 who have experience of being NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) to become involved in planning and delivering initiatives at local level. This study will evaluate the engagement process and outcomes for young people over a three-year period.

www.nfer.ac.uk/research/projects/engagement-education-employment-training/

Assessing the economic benefits of early intervention

It has been argued that by spending money on early intervention to prevent or reduce social and economic problems, LAs can benefit from cost savings in the longer term. This study aims to identify and describe the approaches used to assess the economic benefits of early intervention in relation to children, young people and their families. It will also identify priorities for further research in the area.

www.nfer.ac.uk/research/projects/economic-benefits-early-intervention/

National census of councillors 2010

The LGA and IDeA have been surveying local councillors since 1997. The 2010 survey aims to provide councillors and LAs with a comprehensive and timely overview of local government experiences and representation in relation to a number of key issues, including political party, length of service, educational background and demographic factors (such as age, gender and ethnicity). It will also consider the extent and nature of changes over time.

www.nfer.ac.uk/research/projects/councillors-census-2010/

Local Authority Research Consortium Year 3

The Local Authority Research Consortium (LARC) is a group of English LAs which conduct research, supported by the NFER, Research in Practice and the IDeA. LARC aims to help authorities identify how to make faster progress on improving outcomes, and to report findings nationally. In 2010, the programme involves a review of work on 'invest to save' decisions in relation to integrated working. The NFER will interview key stakeholders about the type of evidence needed to inform decision making in this area.

www.nfer.ac.uk/larc/

Replicating and sustaining validated local practice

This research project builds on the work of the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes (C4EO) which has devised a system to identify, validate and share effective practice at local level. LAs are invited to submit examples of practice to a validation panel for assessment. Those which demonstrate evidence of improvement in outcomes for children, young people and their families are eligible for validation. This project aims to consider whether validated examples have been, or could be, replicated and sustained.

www.nfer.ac.uk/research/projects/replicating-sustaining-local-practice/

Publications Available now

Safeguarding Children: a literature review



new

This report draws together evidence on changes and improvements in child protection since the 2009 Laming review. It presents evidence of developments across a wide spectrum of practice, including: professional development, capacity and recruitment, interagency working, quality assurance and monitoring, serious case reviews, and referrals and assessments. However, there is limited evidence to date on specific developments in safeguarding practice.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LSGL01/

Information, advice and guidance for young people

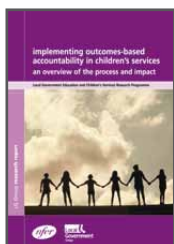


new

This study evaluated the 'fitness for purpose' of the information, advice and guidance (IAG) services provided to young people aged 14–19. The research found that IAG services were widely welcomed and found to be helpful. 'Good' IAG services were characterised by partnership working, clear strategic direction and ownership by all stakeholders. The report contains examples of good practice and recommendations for improvement.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LIAG01/

Implementing outcomes based accountability in children's services: an overview of the process and impact

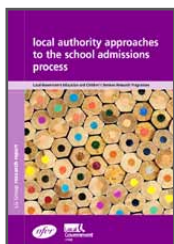


new

Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) is an approach that LAs can use to assist with planning services and assessing their performance. It focuses on identifying outcomes and monitoring and evidencing progress towards those desired outcomes. This report provides case studies of LAs using OBA to focus on improving outcomes for children, young people and families. The study found that OBA was having an impact on working practices in children's services and staff believed that it would contribute to improved outcomes for children and young people in the future.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/OBA02/

Local authority approaches to the school admissions process



new

Recent legislation has emphasised the important role of LAs in promoting equity and fair access within the school admissions process. Schools need to maintain a balanced and representative intake that reflects the local community; parents have a right to be heard and to contribute to shaping school policies. The research found that in most areas the admissions process had improved in terms of uniformity and transparency, but that there was a need to adopt a more 'joined up' approach in future to ensure that places are available in the localities where they are needed.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LAW01/

Mapping the terrain: 16–19 funding transfer



When this report was written, it was intended to transfer responsibility for further education to LAs from the Learning and Skills Council. This report looked at progress, challenges and future development. LAs had made progress in understanding the range of activities and information systems. However, there were challenges in achieving a full understanding of providers, student needs and the funding system. The report identifies the need for effective communication between all parties, allied with trust and transparency.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LFT01/

Collaborative good practice between local authorities and the further education sector



This study involved nine case studies of good practice. Three types of collaboration between LAs and FE colleges were considered to have positive benefits for young people. These were: comprehensive provision 14–16; transition support; and information, advice and guidance. They were reported to contribute towards improved progression and engagement of young people in education and training. Key elements of collaboration were mutual trust and respect, honesty, transparency and equality of standing between LA staff and their FE partners.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LAP01/

Publications Available now

Using non-formal learning to re-engage young people who are NEET



This research focused on eight projects selected as examples of good practice. Effective strategies included: establishing effective partnerships with other organisations; employing skilled and motivated project staff; tailoring the activities to young people's needs; having effective monitoring and evaluating, recognising young people's achievements and supporting transition to positive outcomes. The project informed a guidance document for those interested in developing similar programmes.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LIN01/

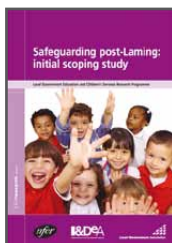
The impact of the Baby Peter case on applications for care orders



This study looked at the impact of the case of Baby Peter Connelly on LAs' applications for care orders and child protection more widely. The study involved a survey of Directors of Children's Services and six LA case studies. There was evidence of a rise in applications for care/supervision orders following the publicising of the case. LA staff report implications of the increase in care orders on staff workload, morale, recruitment and retention.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/BPI01/

Scoping review on safeguarding



This review looked at research since 2009 (following the Laming review on safeguarding children). The database searches identified 48 relevant items, including good practice guidance, quality assessments, interagency training and information sharing. Website searches found 41 items, most of which were responses to the Laming report. The report summarises the main findings and identifies potential areas of further research.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LGM01/

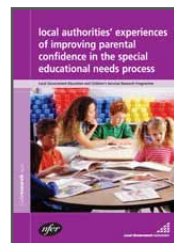
Mental health services for care leavers



Recent legislation has emphasised the importance of LA support for young people leaving care. This small-scale research found that young people value the services they receive, especially from personal advisers. However, there is a case for a specialised service for care leavers aged 16 to 21. Voluntary services are considered particularly effective for meeting low-level mental health needs, but those supporting care leavers may not be aware of these services.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LAT01/

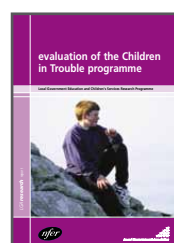
Local authorities' experiences of improving parental confidence in the special educational needs process



This research focused on LAs with evidence of good practice in supporting children with special educational needs (SEN). Partnership working is enhanced where SEN teams have a positive ethos and approach towards parents. Such teams prioritise accessibility, interaction and effective communication with parents. LAs need to ensure that parents have good quality, face-to-face contact with SEN professionals at the earliest possible stage in the process.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LAM01/

Evaluation of the Children in Trouble Programme



The Children in Trouble Programme aims to reduce the use of custody for children and young people. This study evaluated the impact of the first four projects. Each used a different approach. Evidence suggests that using community sentences that target the root of the offending behaviour can reduce the seriousness and frequency of re-offending. The Programme enabled LA staff to share experiences and raise wider issues affecting the use of custody for young offenders.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/CTI01/

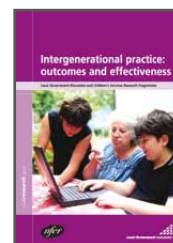
An analysis of youth offending teams' inspection reports



This study looked at the performance of youth offending teams (YOTs), which were established in 2000. NFER analysed 60 inspection reports and found that over two thirds of YOTs were judged to be performing well. YOTs scored highly in relation to three areas: working with courts, working with young people in custody, and management and leadership. They scored least well on working with victims. There is evidence of an improvement in the quality of management and leadership of YOTs in recent years.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/YOT01/

Intergenerational practice: outcomes and effectiveness



The NFER studied five intergenerational projects. The views of younger and older people about each other were generally positive before the projects started, but participants were more likely to speak to people of a different generation after taking part. Participants enjoyed the activities; they also gained a better understanding of one another, made friendships and developed new skills. Young people improved their academic outcomes and older people improved their wellbeing.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/IPI01/

Children and young people's views on web 2.0 technologies



Web 2.0 technologies are online tools which allow users to share, collaborate and interact with one another. This small-scale project focused on young people's personal use of social media, and on the potential to use these tools in a community, or a LA. Young people are confident users of such technology, although not all have equal access to it at home. The research concluded that there is considerable potential for using Web 2.0 technologies to collect the views of young people and involve them in democracy.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LWT01/

Publications Available now

Local authorities and school improvement: the use of statutory powers



This report examines how LAs support and challenge their schools. Based on evidence from 12 LAs, the study found that statutory powers were considered a last resort and were not often used. More common strategies included: regular monitoring and reviewing of school performance; categorising schools in terms of performance and need; providing differentiated levels of support; using School Improvement Partners to challenge schools and feed back to LAs; peer support networks and collaborative approaches to school improvement.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LGI01/

Consultation practices used in planning Children's Services



Children and Young People's plans are strategic documents, outlining the coordination and development of services to deliver and improve outcomes for children. LAs were developing their consultation strategies by allocating responsibility for consultation to individuals or departments and conducting audits to provide a picture of consultation findings across the authority. The research concluded that it is important to provide feedback to participants and to publicise the impact on policy of gathering views from children and young people.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/RYP01/

Supporting local authorities to develop their research capacity



The Local Authority Research Consortium (LARC) is a group of English LAs that conduct research, supported by the NFER, Research in Practice and the IDEa. LA staff identified the main benefits of research involvement as: informing and developing practice, developing staff expertise, sharing learning across authorities and providing evidence of impact of services on children, young people and families. The main challenges are insufficient resources (especially time) and a lack of confidence among staff.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LAL01/

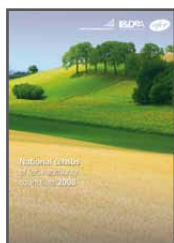
Teacher resignation and recruitment survey 2008



This survey collects information about the employment rates of primary and secondary teachers in maintained schools in England and Wales. The staff turnover rate in 2008 was 11.7 per cent and the recruitment rate was 12.2 per cent. These rates were similar to 2006. There was a slight increase in the percentage of the teaching profession who left the maintained sector in 2008, but this was more than compensated for by the number of new recruits.

www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/research/projects/resignation-recruitment-2009

National census of local authority councillors in England 2008



The LGA and IDEa have been surveying local councillors since 1997. This fifth survey of LA councillors in England was undertaken in the autumn of 2008. The majority of councillors were male, white and aged over 45. They spent an average of 22 hours per week on council business. Over 80 per cent of councillors would recommend taking on the role to others and cited a desire to serve the community as their primary motivation.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LGZ01/

Back catalogue

Narrowing the gap in outcomes: governance
June 2009

Narrowing the gap in outcomes: leadership
June 2009

National census of local authority councillors in England 2008
January 2009

Narrowing the gap in outcomes: early years (0-5)
November 2008

Consultation practices used in planning children's services
September 2008

Supporting the development of Children and Young People's Plans (CYPPS): the case-study data
May 2008

Evaluating the early impact of integrated children's services: round 1 final report
May 2008

Analysis of Children and Young People's Plans 2007
May 2008

Narrowing the Gap in Outcomes: Further Overview of Data and Evidence on the ECM Outcomes for Vulnerable Groups. Progress Report and Update
March 2008

Teacher resignation and recruitment Survey
March 2008

Intergenerational practice: a review of the literature
March 2008

The role of the lead member for children's services. Final report
March 2008

Narrowing the Gap in outcomes for vulnerable groups: overview and analysis of available datasets on vulnerable groups and the five ECM outcomes
November 2007

Annual survey of trends in education 2007: schools' concerns and their implications for local authorities
November 2007

The impact of school fires: a study of the wider economic and social impacts on schools and the local community
October 2007

Perceptions of the LGE: research summary
May 2007

Guidelines for official publications in local authorities
March 2007

CAMHS funding and priorities
December 2006

Delivering the ten-year childcare strategy: a survey of current plans (research summary)
November 2006

Schools' concerns and their implications for local authorities: annual survey of trends in education 2006
October 2006

Annual survey of trends in education 2006
October 2006

The role of the lead member for children's services: final report
September 2006

EMIE Publications Available now

Managing school reorganisation



This report provides a practical guide for LAs to develop their strategies and approaches for school reorganisation, based on lessons learnt by LAs. It was produced by EMIE at NFER in collaboration with the Virtual Staff College (VSC) and Appleyards Education, as a core reader for the VSC's School Organisation Officers' course.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/SOV01/

Research and data teams and their work for children's services



This report presents the findings of a survey of LA research and data teams conducted by EMIE at NFER in March–April 2008. It focuses on the organisation and work of LA research and data services in the context of integrated children's services and investigates the impact of recent changes on teams. It identifies areas of difficulty and challenge and examples of successful working.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/EMI01/

EMIE Back catalogue

The Sustainable Communities Act: analysis of proposals submitted by councils
December 2009

Linking school organisation and school improvement
March 2009

Locality-based working in Scotland
November 2008

School organisation: partnering for success
September 2008

Better brighter futures 14–19 reform: Beacon Scheme Round 9
August 2008

Healthy schools: Beacon Scheme Round 8
November 2007

School improvement: Beacon Scheme Round 8
October 2007

Choice, diversity and access: the role of the local authority as commissioner of school places
September 2007

Partnership working and the education of looked after children (research spotlight 1)
July 2007

Contact

For further information on the research programme:

NFER:
Caroline Sharp
c.sharp@nfer.ac.uk

www.nfer.ac.uk/research/local-government-association/

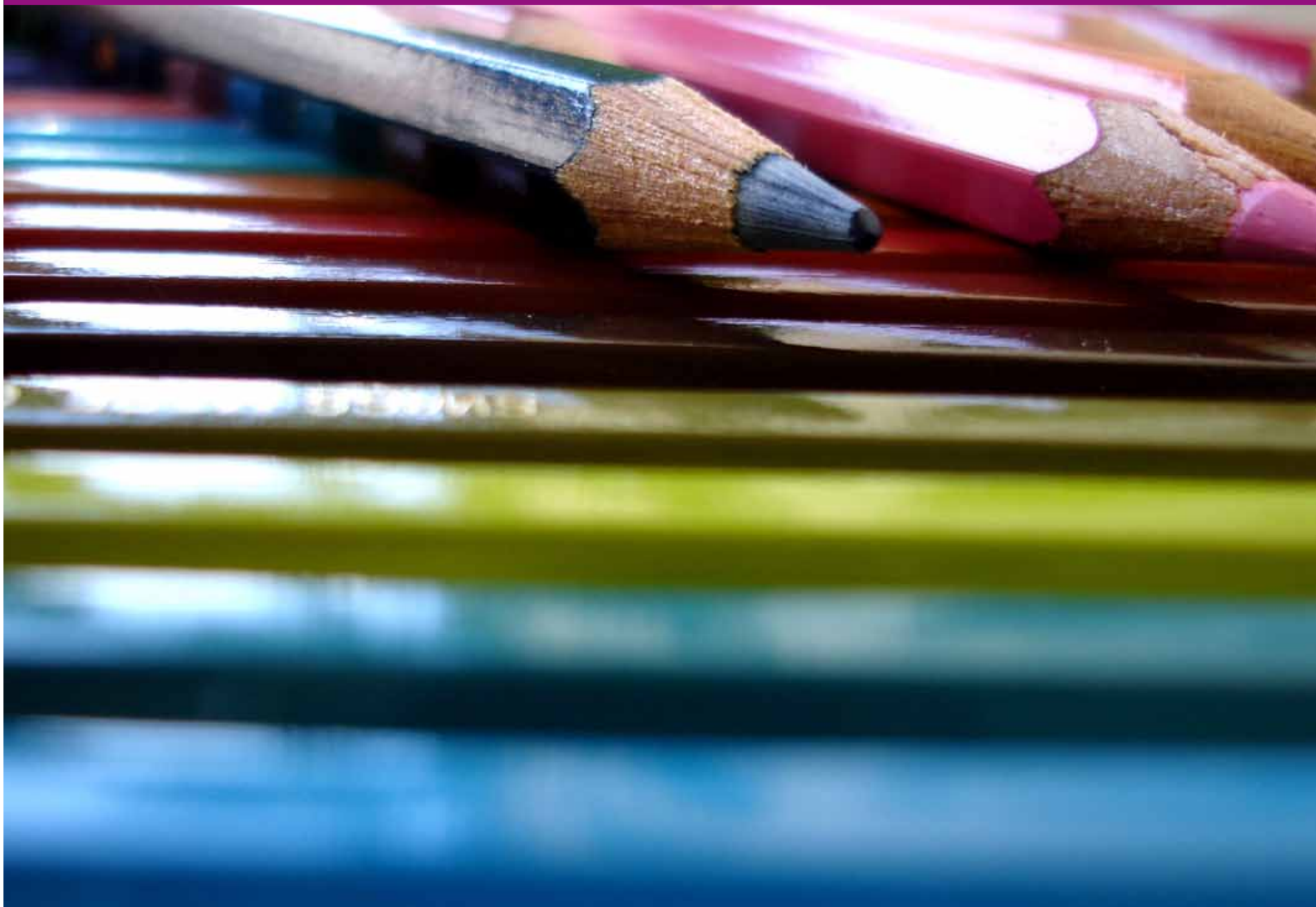
LGA:
David Pye
david.pye@local.gov.uk

www.lga.gov.uk

For further information on publications:

NFER (production):
Juanita Coulson
j.coulson@nfer.ac.uk

NFER (website):
Claire Wanless
c.wanless@nfer.ac.uk



Education and Children's Services
Funded Research Programme
Winter/Spring 2011