



COOPERS & LYBRAND/SOCIETY OF EDUCATION OFFICERS

Briefing on Education and Local Government Reorganisation

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Contents

Section	Paragraphs
Introduction	1 - 4
I Characteristics of the education service	101 - 118
II The role of the Local Education Authority	201 - 225
III Responsibilities and policy choices	301 • 314
IV External relations	401 - 407
V Key tasks prior to transfer	501 - 507
Appendix	
A Illustrations of different levels of LEA involvement in three aspects of education	
B Core responsibilities of the LEA	
C Co-operation between Council Services	

Introduction

1 This brief concerns the planning of education services and is intended to help elected members, chief executives and others involved in establishing authorities created or reshaped by the local government review.

2 The time available for this complex task between the elections for new authorities and the transfer of services could be as little as 11 months. Before the detail of that transfer can be planned, strategic decisions must be taken about the nature of the council's involvement with education.

3 It was for these reasons that Coopers & Lybrand, in collaboration with the Society of Education Officers, decided to produce a detailed brief to help decision makers understand a much changed education service by identifying the key issues.

4 The brief is divided into a number of sections as follows:

- I Characteristics of the education service, which identifies those special characteristics of the education service that influence the way it is best managed
- II The role of the Local Education Authority (LEA), which sets out possible options and recommends that new authorities decide at the outset what level of involvement they intend to have with service delivery
- III Responsibilities and policy choices, which summarises the core statutory functions of the LEA and describes some of the principal policy choices open to it
- IV External relations, which lists the wide range of external bodies with which the new authority will need to establish and maintain relations
- VI Key tasks prior to transfer, which summarises strategic and operational tasks that must be put in hand in the months leading up to transfer of services

I Characteristics of the education service

A special case?

101 Every local government service has particular characteristics that influence the way in which local authorities manage and provide that service. Education is no exception. Its distinctive characteristics include:

- the devolved management and resourcing of the service;
- the key role of school governing bodies;
- the scale of the service in terms of budget and workforce;
- the freedom of schools to choose whether to remain part of the local authority or become grant-maintained;
- the extent of consumer involvement and interest in the range of services provided, which includes front line services like adult education and youth work as well as schools.

102 In meeting the challenge of local government reform any new council with education powers - whether a unitary authority or the reshaped upper tier of a two tier organisation - will need to take account of these characteristics in its corporate planning.

Devolved management

103 Spending on primary and secondary education must, by law, be substantially delegated to individual schools. Barring a small number of "mandatory exceptions", at least 85% of each LEA's schools budget must be delegated

104 Although the LEA still determines the overall size of the education budget, the schools' budgets must be allocated substantially by a formula based on the number and age of pupils. This leaves the authority little scope for differentiating funding between schools or directly influencing educational policy through its funding arrangements. The Local Management (LM) scheme must be agreed by the Secretary of State and both the process of drawing it up and its content must conform to very detailed requirements laid down by the Department for Education (DFE) or the Welsh Office.

105 Decisions on how each school's budget is spent are a matter for each governing body and headteacher to determine in the light of the school's particular needs. This means that, once the overall budget has been decided and allocated, the LEA's function is largely to serve its schools.

School governors

106 Accountability to the LEA for ensuring the sound educational and financial management of the school rests with the governing body. The headteacher has day to

day responsibility for management of the school and is, in most cases, a member of the governing body and its principal professional adviser.

107 Despite the voluntary nature of their work, governing bodies have significant duties and powers. Apart from oversight of the budget, these include selection of staff who, although legally appointed to the LEA's service, are in fact engaged without any necessary involvement or consent of the authority itself. Only in the case of appointments of headteachers do governors have a duty to consult the authority.

Scale of the service

108 Education is a staff-intensive professional service. The scale of the service is often underestimated by authorities which do not have education powers. Most such authorities, were they to acquire education powers as a result of local government reorganisation, would experience an increase of 50-70 per cent in the revenue budget, a substantial increase in the capital budget and a more than doubling of the total number of employees.

109 The implications of this scale of increase for an existing authority's infrastructure and management systems are substantial, particularly if taken in conjunction with the transfer of social services.

Grant-maintained schools

110 The power to call a ballot of parents to determine whether the school should remain as part of the local authority or become directly funded by the state as a grant-maintained (GM) school represents a significant management challenge to LEAs. It introduces an element of permanent uncertainty which affects, in turn, the nature of the relationship between the LEA and individual schools.

111 The loss of schools to the GM sector is also not "cost neutral" to an LEA. This is because GM schools are entitled to a share of LEA central costs, many of which cannot be reduced pro-rata. Thus an authority can find itself needing additional funding from elsewhere in its budget merely to continue to provide the same range of central services to the schools remaining in the LEA sector.

112 Local government reorganisation could be a trigger for persuading some schools to seek GM status rather than to become involved in a further reorganisation (following as it does a difficult period of unprecedented change in the education service). Alternatively, it could be an opportunity to establish new and more appropriate links between an LEA and all schools (both LM and GM).

113 Any new arrangements that result in school budget reductions or a narrower (or lower quality) range of support services, carry the danger of provoking a substantial move among schools to GM status.

Consumer involvement

114 Education touches a significantly higher proportion of local people than other personal services. The majority of households are involved, or about to be involved, in the education system either as pupils, parents or students, or as adult learners, young people involved in organised youth activity or members of community groups using school facilities.

115 Although the school is usually the front line in terms of customer relations, the number of stakeholders involved means that the LEA will need to pay particular attention to the sensitivity with which issues are handled. It will also need to ensure that arrangements exist for the consumer's voice to be heard and for services and advice to be provided.

Implications for new authorities

116 Key tasks for new authorities in responding to the particular characteristics of the education service will be:

- to reassure those to whom management has been devolved (headteachers and governors) that the nature of that devolution is understood and respected;
- to convince them that the new authority has something of value to offer and that this is not the time to consider leaving the local authority sector;
- to involve headteachers, governors and representatives of staff and parents in discussions about the arrangements for education services at the earliest possible stage;
- to ensure that there is continuity in terms of resourcing, service levels and service quality.

117 At a practical level the LEA needs to know what headteachers and governors want. Many of the new services which a new authority may consider providing will only be viable if schools are willing to use their school budgets to buy into them.

118 Consultation with providers and consumers of education services is a longstanding practice among LEAs. A new authority's willingness to act in partnership with them in developing its plans for service provision will reassure heads and governors that the authority values their experience and wishes to respond to their needs.

II The role of the Local Education Authority

What kind of LEA?

201 Every LEA must undertake a number of statutory duties. However, the way in which those duties are discharged, and the extent to which the authority wishes to have involvement in service provision beyond the purely statutory, will be a matter of choice. That choice must be made at the outset as it will determine the character, shape and size of the education department. It will also be tempered by what schools and the community are perceived to want and expect

202 There are three questions which new LEAs will need to address:

- **level** - what level of involvement do they wish to have in the education service?
- **management** - where does education fit into the council's corporate management and departmental structure?
- **support** - on what basis should support be available to the LEA itself and to schools and other service providers?

Level of involvement

203 The spectrum of choice for new authorities is very wide. At one end the LEA can take a minimalist view of its role, leaving schools to fend for themselves and monitoring their performance from a distance. At the other end the LEA can regard itself as having a leadership role for the quality of education, take an active part in promoting good practice, provide professional support for its schools, and encourage development and innovation in education.

204 Likewise in youth and community education it would be open to the LEA to have very limited involvement in service provision, facilitating other providers where necessary. Alternatively, the LEA can choose to be involved in the direct provision of extensive programmes of youth work, adult education and other community provision.

205 The range of possible interpretations of the LEA's role in relation to schools is illustrated by three examples in Appendix A. Each provides an illustration of low, medium and high levels of involvement in key areas of activity.

206 The point at which the LEA decides to locate itself on the spectrum will help it to determine:

- the need for and role of the Education Committee;
- the level of professional leadership and advice the LEA requires;
- the extent to which the management and administration of the service can reasonably be integrated with other services.

207 These decisions will, in turn, send clear messages to the education service about the style and intention of the new authority. Any move to a lower level of involvement than its predecessor in aspects of service which schools or other service providers value may cause concern and need careful explanation.

The case for involvement

208 A strong case can be made for LEAs to adopt a medium to high level of involvement in the provision of most education services. There are a number of arguments:

- As a result of recent legislation the distribution of responsibility for the quality of education is far from clear. The LEA undoubtedly retains some responsibility, and it is difficult to see how that responsibility can be properly discharged without the will and the means to intervene.
- An LEA offering little or no professional support or leadership is more likely to lose schools to the GM sector than one which provides support and leadership. At a time of change schools will seek reassurance that new authorities take education seriously and provide added value for those schools choosing to remain within the LEA sector.
- The effectiveness of the LEA in the eyes of the public will be judged ultimately by the success and popularity of its schools; by the arrangements it makes for children with special needs; and by its capacity to address problems of service quality and delivery where these arise.
- Education can be a major provider of services to the community. Working in partnership with its schools and other council services the LEA can have a significant impact on the quality of life for people of all ages. A close relationship between the authority and its schools is more likely to create the climate in which community education will flourish.

Management of services

209 Experience suggests that the provision of effective and efficient education services is likely to be more credible to schools and other education service providers if the management of these services comes within the remit of an education department led by a chief officer with a professional background in education.

210 Some authorities have delegated the management of certain education services to other departments - for example education welfare to social services. Such arrangements can cause problems, however, and the majority of LEAs remain in favour of a single integrated education function.

211 Being a single integrated function does not preclude education being jointly managed with other council services such as leisure or library services, where there are clear areas of common interest Nor should it be seen as discouraging inter departmental co-operation.

212 In fact the creation of new authorities provides an opportunity to exploit the scope for providing improved services through inter-departmental co-operation. On the one hand there is a unique opportunity for services previously provided by separate authorities to be planned together. On the other hand the creation of new structures provides the chance to re-examine traditional relationships and methods of service delivery.

213 Appendix C lists a number of service areas in which clear relationships between previously separate departments may yield benefits, particularly between education and social services. Integrated management for education and social services is not recommended, however it would almost certainly encounter difficulties because each service has its own distinct client group, professional ethos and priorities. Each also operates within its own separate legislative framework and relates to a different department of government.

214 Close working between departments is aided by having clear roles and responsibilities, and established mechanisms for revising these on a regular basis. In each area the policy and professional lead should be allocated to one or other department, and co-ordination reinforced by agreed arrangements for joint working where this is necessary.

Support service delivery

215 There are two aspects to the issue of support service delivery:

- to what extent can the authority sustain its chosen level of involvement in the support service through its own staff?
- how should the support services which schools and other services need be provided?

The authority's need

216 The answer to the question of how much support should be provided in-house will depend to a great extent on the size of the new authority. Each LEA as a minimum, however, should ensure that it has the capacity to provide professional leadership, to advise headteachers on management issues and to set standards for, and make judgements about, the overall quality of education in its schools. In addition each LEA must secure those professional services, for example educational psychology, that are essential to its statutory functions.

217 Smaller LEAs may have difficulty in providing a full range of professional support and advice in-house. This may be a problem of cost, or of its ability to attract people of appropriate calibre.

218 Where disproportionate cost would be involved in meeting in-house provision alternative arrangements may need to be considered. These would be most likely to be necessary in such areas as:

- professional advice across the full range of the national curriculum;
- specialist help with less common forms of SEN.

219 Alternative sources of help might include co-operation with a neighbouring authority, or the purchase of services from other public sector suppliers, (eg university departments of education) or from the private sector.

220 Experience suggests, however, that joint appointments with other LEAs, or services shared on the basis of joint management between authorities, can cause problems. If agency services provided by a neighbouring LEA are necessary they should be established on the basis of a contract for the purchase of the services from the employing authority backed by a service level agreement. Some joint member oversight of arrangements will be necessary where statutory duties are being undertaken on an agency basis, such as is likely in the area of special educational needs.

Schools' needs

221 There is a wide range of services that an LEA might consider providing to schools. These include professional advice, curriculum support, in-service training, financial advice, accountancy services, learning resources, personnel advice, technical support for IT, buildings and grounds maintenance services and so on. The key point to bear in mind when considering the range of services is that the school is in the position of purchaser. In the case of many support services the LEA may be only one - of a number of potential providers.

222 The implications of this for the LEA are that:

- there is no point in planning to provide services which schools do not want or which are more expensive than those provided by others (unless the extra cost represents higher quality which schools are willing to pay for);
- services should be structured on a basis that enables them to respond to fluctuating demand - (many LEAs have restructured their services into business units and other forms of arms length organisation in order to achieve greater flexibility).

223 Emphasis has already been placed on the benefit of consulting headteachers and governors on their needs at an early stage of planning. New authorities should consider the range and quality of services provided to schools by the existing LEA, and what schools themselves think about those services. Existing services will be the benchmark against which the new offer will be judged.

224 Where new smaller LEAs are created in the area of a larger authority, there will need to be consideration of arrangements for safeguarding existing services through joint arrangements. Experience in inner London and elsewhere suggests that such arrangements can have a short life and cause significant financial and operational problems. While joint arrangements will need to be considered as an interim measure, pending the establishment of alternative services, they should not generally be relied on in the long term.

225 Where it is judged important to guarantee the continued availability of a particular service required by schools - for example a county-wide music service or a centre for advanced level fieldwork - a more permanent future may be secured by establishing the service on a free standing commercial basis or as a charitable trust

III Responsibilities and policy choices

Core responsibilities

301 The succession of major reforms of the past six years has narrowed the range and changed the character of the responsibilities of LEAs. But substantial responsibilities, including many statutory duties, remain.

302 It is not appropriate for this brief to provide a definitive list of statutory duties. Appendix B provides a summary of the core areas in which each LEA must exercise its responsibilities whatever view it may take about its wider role in education or about the policy choices open to it which are discussed below.

Policy constraints

303 As well as determining the nature and level of its involvement with the education service and ensuring that core responsibilities are covered, each new council will also need to consider policy in a number of areas. Although the extent of government regulation is far greater than previously, and much detailed decision making is now delegated to schools, there continue to be areas of policy choice, through which LEAs can influence the shape of the service and its sensitivity to the needs of local people.

304 New authorities will, however, need to bear certain constraints in mind in considering policy choices:

- with the bulk of spending delegated, the margin available for funding policy initiatives is very restricted;
- significant changes in the policies of predecessor authorities may be controversial, particularly where the impact is immediate (eg a decision to reduce the number of discretionary grants, or a significant shift in the balance of school funding between primary and secondary education);
- there are key issues in education which are particularly sensitive - for example the organisation of secondary education, the future of small primary schools, the integration of children with SEN in mainstream education - where a new LEA should avoid appearing to adopt a policy line before full and open consultation with those directly concerned;
- the new LEA's initial policy decisions will help to establish its character and thus be an important factor in influencing those schools which may see reorganisation of local government as a reason to seek GM status.

Areas of policy choice

305 Despite these constraints, LEAs can expect to make policy choices in a number of areas, some of which are described below.

306 **Scheme of local management** - this is the main instrument through which the values and spending priorities of the education service can be established. It sets the basis of allocation of resources to schools, the conditions under which those resources may be used and the factors that have been taken into account in calculating each school's budget.

307 **School organisation** - the authority will have limited scope to bring about organisational change, but nevertheless will need to establish its policy in a number of areas, such as the organisation of secondary education; the age of admission to primary school; the strategy for removal of surplus school places; and the support for small primary schools. Allied areas will include policy on secondary admissions and home-to-school transport

308 **Special educational needs** - The authority must publish and keep under review its policy and arrangements for SEN. Areas of choice will include the degree of emphasis on mainstream integration; the balance of provision between special schools and units attached to mainstream schools; the help available to pre-school children with learning difficulties; and policy on the placement of children in local authority or independent boarding schools.

309 **Pre-school education** - Despite new government policy announcements, education of children before they reach school age remains a discretionary activity. Authorities choosing to make such provision will need to consider a number of policy aspects, including admissions arrangements, the case for provision being made in nursery classes and schools rather than through the early admission of children to primary school, and the nature of its partnership with the voluntary sector.

310 **Education welfare service** - A new authority will need to decide how it wishes to tackle non-attendance and undertake its responsibilities in relation to child employment through a professional education welfare service.

311 **School meals** - The only obligation on a local authority is to ensure that a child entitled to a free school meal at midday is able to receive one. Provision of a school meals service for other children in primary and secondary schools is a matter of policy choice.

312 **Student grants** - A new authority will need to decide what discretionary grants and other maintenance grants it wishes to make available to students in higher education who are not entitled to mandatory awards, and to others in further education who do not have other forms of support available.

313 **Adult education** - The authority will need to decide what level of provision it wishes to make and whether to provide courses direct or to contract other providers (eg FE colleges) to run them on its behalf.

314 **Youth Service** - the authority will need to determine the level of service and the balance between directly provided activity and support for the voluntary sector.

IV External relations

401 There are a number of external bodies with which the new authority will need to establish and maintain relations.

402 The Department of Education (DFE) and, in Stales, the Welsh Office (WO), are much more closely involved at a detailed level with the education sector following recent legislation. The main areas of regular contact with LEAs will be on school organisation matters; on the publication of examination and other performance related statistics; on the ongoing implementation of new legislation; and in relation to local management, where the DFE/WO must approve schemes of delegation and any amendments to existing schemes.

403 The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) and, in Wiles, OHMCI subsumed Her Majesty's Inspectorate as the government agency responsible for quality assurance in education. OFSTED/OHMCI's inspection programme will include each primary, secondary and special school once every four years. The secondary schools' programme is in its second year; primary and special school inspections started in September 1994. Inspection work is put out to tender and it will be for the LEA to decide whether it wishes to enable its inspectors/advisers to bid for such work on behalf of the authority.

404 The Funding Agency for Schools (FAS) and, in Wales, the School Funding Council (SFQ) were established in 1993. Their main functions are to administer funds for GM schools and, in those LEAs with ten per cent or more pupils in GM schools, to share responsibility with the authority for school planning. An LEA in this position will need to meet the FAS/SFC on a regular basis on school planning issues. Any LEA with GM schools in its area will need to liaise with the FAS/SFC over the appropriate level of grant to be paid to GM schools and withdrawn from the council's overall budget, and on the percentage addition for GM schools' share of I P. A central costs.

405 The Further Education Funding Council (FEFQ) and the Further Education Funding Council for Wales (FEFCW) are the funding bodies for colleges of further education and sixth form colleges. They have strategic planning responsibilities for post-16 education including sixth form provision in schools. The new authority will need to relate to the FEFC/FEFCW in this area of overlapping planning functions as well as on aspects of local provision for both vocational and non-vocational further education.

406 Other bodies with which there will need to be regular contact include:

- the local Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) on aspects of vocational education, careers advice, education-business links and the achievement of the National Targets for Education and Training;
- neighbouring LEAs, particularly on school admissions;

- District Health Authorities, on a range of issues concerned with professional support for children with special educational needs as well as on school health matters;
- Borough, District, Parish and Community Councils all of which will expect to be consulted on aspects of local education service provision;
- Roman Catholic and Church of England/Church of Wales diocesan authorities, in relation to matters affecting denominational schools in the authority area;
- Headteachers' and teachers' professional associations and other associations representing non-teaching staff on a wide range of professional and policy matters as well as conditions of service;
- local branches of national organisations representing governors and parents;
- voluntary bodies active in education (eg in the provision of youth work, supporting parents of children with special educational needs, making provision for pre-school children).

407 It will be necessary for the new LEA to consider carefully the implications, including those for senior officer time, of maintaining relations with such a wide variety of outside bodies on a regular basis.

V Key tasks prior to transfer

Strategic tasks

501 This brief has highlighted a range of strategic and policy issues, some of which are fundamental and need early consideration, others of which will need addressing in due course. The following is a checklist of the more important strategic decisions that are necessary to enable the process of detailed planning of the education service to proceed. They are given in approximately the sequence in which they will need to be taken:

- determine the council's preferred level of involvement with the education service bearing in mind the nature of the service and the council's overall approach to service provision;
- establish the priority to be given to persuading schools to remain in the local authority sector,
- establish machinery for involving headteachers, governors and the main professional associations in planning the new service;
- decide on committee and sub-committee structures;
- decide how corporate services such as finance and personnel are to be provided for education;
- decide on top level management arrangements, the extent of any integrated management of education with other council services, and the location of responsibility for all statutory functions;
- establish a programme for drafting the LEA's Local Management (LM) scheme bearing in mind the constraints of timing and format;
- identify any policy options that must be determined at an early stage in order to ensure a smooth transfer of operations.

502 Of all the tasks facing the new LEA the construction of a LM scheme is arguably the most complex and the most urgent. At the time of writing it remains to be seen whether the DFE/WO are prepared to be flexible over timetables for consultation on and submission of schemes by new LEAs. What is clear, however, is that simply adopting the scheme of the outgoing LEA is unlikely to be an option as the mix of schools to be funded and the level of resources available will be different for the new authority.

503 The LM scheme must be a fine balance between what the LEA wishes to achieve in policy terms and what is practical, given resource limitations and the wish not to impose sharp changes in the budgets of schools. It may not be possible to achieve this balance until a very late stage in the budgeting process when the council's

overall financial position, and the government's Standard Spending Assessment for education, are clear.

Operational tasks

504 In addition to the more strategic tasks highlighted above, new LEAs will need to address a range of key operational tasks in the months leading up to transfer of services. The outgoing LEA will be in a position to help in some, but not all, of these. For a number of tasks it will be for the new authority to take the initiative.

505 The following is a checklist of the more important operational tasks:

- make appointments to the new senior management structure;
- design the detailed structure of the education department and establish the extent to which staff from the outgoing LEA will be available/required to transfer to the successor authority,
- identify likely gaps in the new structure and make arrangements to fill them;
- establish appeals arrangements for school admissions and train members of appeals committees (new authorities will come into being as appeals on school admissions reach their annual peak);
- make local authority appointments to school governing bodies (all existing appointments are likely to lapse on transfer);
- prepare the LEA's first detailed education budget estimates, based on a disaggregation of the outgoing authority last education budget;
- identify all direct customer services (for parents, pupils, students and other members of the public), determine access points to services, train staff and prepare publicity and information leaflets;
- decide how to replace, adapt or link into existing IT networks between the LEA and its schools for financial accounting, information exchange and electronic mail;
- review the operation of all council service units to establish their capability to meet education needs and to relate to schools as direct purchasers of services;
- identify and make provision for the training needs of education committee members, of staff within the new education department, of staff in the council service more generally and of school governors;
- ensure a smooth handover and continuity in services such as:

- student grants
- travel passes
- welfare benefits
- school admissions
- formal assessment of children with SEN
- children out of school and being educated otherwise
- school transport contracts (in particular those to special schools);
- school meals
- payroll
- banking
- emergency building repairs
- maintenance of sports grounds
- contracts for school supplies including food, fuel, fire safety, equipment and curriculum related supplies.

506 Previous experience of transfer of functions suggests that there is a danger of underestimating the magnitude, and significance on the ground, of these operational tasks. This is particularly the case where the timescale is tight, key staff are not yet available and the outgoing LEA is not in a position, or is actually unwilling, to provide practical help.

507 These and other key tasks will need careful mapping to ensure that decisions are taken in time to enable services to transfer smoothly. A badly managed transfer will damage the reputation of the incoming IPA and raise concerns among schools about its ability to provide the level and quality of service they are seeking.

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Youth service

13 There is a statutory obligation on authorities to ensure adequate provision for young people in its area. Youth work is normally undertaken in close collaboration with the voluntary sector, including the grant aiding of activities managed by voluntary bodies.

Student grants

14 LEAs are responsible for calculating and paying mandatory student grants for those in higher education. They may also make discretionary awards to students who do not qualify for mandatory grants, both in higher and further education.

Co-operation between council services

1 The following list provides a summary of other areas where it will be worth seeking service improvements through closer relationships between services:

Service Area	Departments Involved
Pre-school provision for children under five	Education, Social Services and Leisure
SEN provision	Education, Social Services
Out of school education	Education, Social Services
School library services	Education and Library Services
Community use of schools	Education and Leisure
Dual use of sports facilities	Education and Leisure
Holiday activities for young people	Education, Leisure and Social Services
Health education for young people	Education, Social Services and Environmental Health
Educational activities in day centres and old people's homes	Education, Leisure, Social Services and Housing

Core responsibilities of the LEA

1 The following summarises the main statutory and other core functions of LEAs.

School planning

2 Except where proportions of children attending GM schools exceed 75 per cent, the LEA is responsible for planning the provision of sufficient school places, and thus ensuring that there is a school place for every child. In areas with 10 per cent or more children in either primary or secondary GM schools, the responsibility for planning that age range is shared with the FAS/SFC. Even where the GM proportion reaches 75 per cent or above, and responsibility passes to the FAS/SFC, the LEA remains responsible for any reorganisation proposal involving county or voluntary schools.

The curriculum

3 Although there is now a national curriculum determined by central government which governors and headteachers are under a duty to provide, some curriculum-related statutory responsibilities remain with LEAs. These include, for example, 'the consideration of complaints about the curriculum in LEA maintained schools; the duty to make and maintain a written statement of curriculum policy, and the duty to draw up an agreed syllabus for religious education.

4 Other curriculum related activities include the administration of grants for education support and training (GEST); the duty to respond to OFSTED/OHMC I inspection reports where they judge a school to be failing; and involvement in the administration and verification of pupil attainment tests.

Finance

5 The LEA retains major responsibilities for the financing of the education service. This includes setting the education budget and the general schools budget (GSB); the distribution of that budget to county and voluntary schools through an approved scheme of local management; the publication of information about school budgets; the oversight and auditing of each school's own management of its resources; and the withdrawal of delegation where a school's budget is, in the view of the LEA, being mismanaged.

Employment

6 The LEA has a range of employment responsibilities, including that of advising governing bodies on personnel issues (including advice to governors on headteacher appointments), overseeing headteacher and teacher appraisal, and undertaking police checks on employees with access to children. LEAs also share with governing bodies, employer responsibilities under the Health and Safety legislation.

Property

7 The LEA will normally have a landlord/Tenant relationship with governing bodies, thus retaining major responsibilities for the overall condition and adequacy of education premises. The LEA carries responsibility for drawing up and administering the annual capital building programme for improvements and for major repairs and maintenance in county and voluntary schools.

Special educational needs

8 Recent legislation has reinforced the LEA's substantial responsibilities towards individual children who have SEN. These include keeping arrangements for SEN provision under review, undertaking statutory assessments of the needs of individual children; providing and reviewing statements of specific needs of individual children; and ensuring that the needs of SEN pupils are adequately met. These responsibilities apply to all children attending maintained schools, including GM schools.

School admissions and attendance

9 The LEA is responsible for enforcing school attendance, for making arrangements for education otherwise than at school (eg at a pupil referral unit, or through hospital or home tuition) and for ensuring that the education provided for any child being educated at home by its parents is satisfactory. The LEA also carries responsibility for admission arrangements to "county" and "voluntary controlled" schools, and must review admission arrangements annually with the governors of "Voluntary aided" schools who are responsible for deciding their own admissions.

Transport

10 The LEA has a duty to provide free school transport, or assistance with public transport fares for those entitled to it by virtue of the distance from their home to the nearest available school. The duty applies to all pupils of compulsory school age, including those attending GM schools. The LEA has discretion concerning its arrangements for post-16 pupils but must offer the same support to equivalent students attending FE colleges as is given to pupils attending schools.

Welfare

11 The LEA has discretionary powers to provide clothing for schoolchildren, to pay maintenance allowances to students over 16 and to provide various other kinds of help to support individual children's education. It also has a duty under the Children Act 1989 to collaborate with the social services on a range of matters, in particular on arrangements for care of children under eight years of age.

Adult education

12 Although the main duty to provide further education in England and Wales passed to the Funding Councils in 1993, the LEA retains the duty to provide for non-vocational further education - commonly referred to as adult education.

Illustrations of different levels of LEA involvement in three aspects of education

Quality assurance

Low	Monitoring four-yearly inspection reports by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) and other school performance indicators.
Medium	Helping schools implement post OFSTED inspection action plans; providing professional management support to headteachers; intervening when performance indicators show cause for concern.
High	Tendering for OFSTED inspections of schools within the LEA; supplementing OFSTED inspections with a regular programme of LEA inspections and surveys.

Professional development

Low	Administering training grants (GEST) on behalf of the Department for Education.
Medium	Providing a range of professional advice to support school in-service training activity,
High	Offering curriculum advice, providing professional development centres and designing and running in-service training programmes to which schools and individuals can subscribe.

Special education needs (SEN)

Low	Fulfilling the minimum statutory requirements of the Education Acts on provision for children with SEN.
Medium	Deploying a team of specialist professional help to support teachers of children with SEN, and increasing the capability of mainstream schools to cater for children with SEN.
High	Making educational psychologists available for non-statutory work in support of teachers and children; involving LEA staff in annual statement reviews.