



Japan Local Government Centre, London

Monthly Report for August 2009 (Britain) – Using Public Excellence Overseas

The Local Government Association (LGA), which represents most English and Welsh local authorities, has called on the UK Department for International Development (DFID) to use local government expertise more in its international aid programmes, rather than private sector contractors. In its *Using Public Excellence Overseas* submission to DFID, the LGA argues that using local government's existing expertise in international development work would represent better value for money as it would be cheaper and would enrich council staff's working experience with transferable skills which could be utilised in Britain.

The LGA argues that other countries such as Canada, Norway and the Netherlands place more emphasis on the role of public officials in their international development programmes, offering a proven model of how this could work. They also point out that UK local government has recently seen a marked increase in requests from the developing world for officer exchange and advice. In its submission, the LGA stresses this is not "a renewal of old fashioned town twinning", nor a "bid for resources".

The paper was drawn up by the UK Local Government Alliance for International Development, which consists of the LGA, the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives, the Improvement and Development Agency and the National Association of Local Councils. It follows an earlier response by the Alliance to the July 2009 DFID White Paper *Building our common future*. Cllr Richard Kemp, LGA Deputy Chair and Chair of its European and International Strategy Group said:

"Council staff would be able to do international aid cheaper, better and more effectively than the expensive private consultants that ministers currently pay to do the job, saving the taxpayer millions of pounds. We have a ready-made army of civil servants with the skills and the know-how to help people in other parts of the world.

"Town hall workers can gain a wealth of knowledge, experience and skills by spending short periods of time working in developing countries or emergency situations abroad, which can then be used to help improve services for local people here. We live in a truly international world, where events in far-flung parts of the globe have a real and significant impact on what happens here in the UK. It's in everyone's interests that we continue to support and help developing countries in a way that gives the British taxpayer the best value for money."

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