

Our ambition for children

Purpose of report

For discussion.

Summary

This report sets out possible elements of a vision for 'our ambition for children' for Lead Members for Children's Services and members of the Board to discuss and comment on.

Recommendation

That members provide their views on 'our ambition for children.'

Action

Officers to take action arising out any discussion, as directed by members.

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Background

1. In July the LGA launched our campaign to rewire public services. It is an ambitious programme that provides much-needed solutions to how we can deliver public services despite the pressures on public spending, which has seen councils facing the biggest cuts in the public sector. The aim is to influence debate now and the party manifestos being written for the next General Election in 2015. As part of the campaign, a specific set of proposals for children's services was published¹. The key principle underpinning these proposals was the need for decision-making for public services to be brought together in one place. We argued that what people want more than anything else is for services to be built around children and their families, not around buildings, institutions and wasteful bureaucracy.

Setting out our ambition for children

2. We now want to build on these proposals to set out a clear set of shared ambitions for children and how all parts of the public, private and voluntary sector can work together, and with children and young people, families and the wider community to achieve them. Following this discussion by the members of the CYP Board and Lead Members for Children's Services we will be looking to launch a national debate, culminating in the launch of a set of proposals at the LGA Annual Conference next summer.
3. The intention is not to try to 'codify' an agreed set of outcomes, in the way that 'Every Child Matters' sought to do. But members are invited to discuss and comment on whether the set of ambitions set out below, represent a fairly commonly agreed set of ambitions:
 - 3.1 That children and young people should feel that they are loved and that they are safe and secure;
 - 3.2 That they are healthy and happy;
 - 3.3 That they get a good education that allows them to fulfil their potential, and achieve their ambitions; and
 - 3.4 That they are well-prepared for adulthood, equipped to follow their chosen career path and in their turn make a positive contribution to society and to the life-chances of future generations.

The principles underlying our ambitions

4. The real challenge will be how to achieve these ambitions in practice. Members are invited to discuss and comment on whether the following principles capture what needs to be done:

¹ See http://www.local.gov.uk/publications/-/journal_content/56/10180/4048108/PUBLICATION

Item 1

- 4.1 The vision should be for all children and young people. It should focus on improving outcomes primarily through universal services such as health visitors and schools. It should talk about moral purpose and the need for greater local democratic accountability and local democratic engagement.
- 4.2 It should seek to avoid the current 'deficit' model whereby local providers such as schools and health services are encouraged to focus on 'what they are good at', with councils and other services such as the criminal justice system are seen as 'safety net' for the most vulnerable and for when things go wrong.
- 4.3 Local government's unique selling point is that it is the only part of the public sector that has a responsibility for children and young people from 0- 25 and the only one that can join up things locally on the ground, focused on the needs of the individual. It has a unique local leadership role, but this does not mean that it will be the provider of services. It will have an increasingly strategic role as commissioner of high quality local services and champion of children, young people and their families.
- 4.4 Another theme should be getting away from a 'deficit' and 'blame' model for inspection. The inspectorates should be part of the range of tools available to councils, councillors and local parents and young people to hold local providers to account. The aim should be to improve the local offer, not point the finger of blame. This model is deterring good people from coming forward and remaining in key frontline roles such as social workers and teachers.
- 4.5 A theme needs to be the contribution to deficit reduction and growth that reforming local public services can make. The focus needs to decisively switch to early help and intervention and on joining up services around individuals and families. One possibility would be to commission some research on the amount of money/plethora of different funding streams which support children and families, but currently operate in uncoordinated silos.
- 4.6 We need to incorporate the 'voice' of children and young people in the development of the vision, right from the start.

Focusing on the growth of children and young people

5. Comments are invited on the proposal that the focus should be on the 'growth' of a child, from birth to adulthood (0 – 25), rather than on 'service areas' like 'education' and 'health': for example:
 - 5.1 **0 – 5:** the council role in commissioning health visitors, children's centres and delivering improvements in early years in terms of 'universal' services. Adoption, permanence, early help, family intervention and improving early support for children identified as having SEN for more vulnerable groups.
 - 5.2 **5 – 11:** In terms of universal services: improving primary schools, ensuring fair access to schools, providing sufficient places and commissioning for improved health outcomes for children. In addition, improving support to children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and encouraging local businesses to

Item 1

work with primary schools to raise ambition and aspiration, particularly among the most disadvantaged groups.

5.3 **11-16**: Supporting improvement in secondary schools; commissioning support with particular health and family issues for adolescents; providing youth services and positive activities for young people; and making sure schools provide high quality and independent career advice. On the social care side, supporting families with teenagers; providing 'permanence' in case of family breakdown; and supporting young people with SEND.

5.4 **16 –25**: A focus on jobs for all, economic development and working with business to prepare young people for the world of work – i.e. the set of youth unemployment ('hidden talents') issues. This will include supporting the Raising of the Age of Participation; the need to complete the transfer to councils of funding and commissioning 16-19 education and training; and local support for transitions to adulthood and work, particularly for the most vulnerable young people and those with SEND.

Financial Implications

6. There are no financial implications for the LGA arising from this report.