

Overview and progress of the LGA's Children and Young People Board's work programme

Purpose of report

For information and comment.

Summary

This report provides an overview of the LGA Children and Young People Board's priorities and work programme and an update on progress for the Board since the last meeting.

Recommendation

That members note the progress made on the Board's work programme and priorities for the year.

Action

To be taken forward by officers as directed by members of the Board.

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Background

1. The LGA business plan 2013/14 centres on three priorities:
 - 1.1 Funding for local government;
 - 1.2 Economic growth, jobs and prosperity; and
 - 1.3 Public service reform.
2. The Board's work programme focuses on the impact of these priorities on services for children and young people and takes forward the debate on the LGA's rewiring public services campaign, which includes specific propositions for children's services. At its last meeting on 10 September 2013 the Board discussed the projects underway. A brief outline of those projects with progress since the last meeting is as follows:

2013/14 work plan progress

- 2.1 **Funding for local government:** We have commissioned CIPFA to undertake a project to improve children's services costs data in preparation for the 2015 Spending Review. This is a sector-led project, jointly commissioned with the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE), the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) and London Councils. We are working to prepare a response to the proposed national funding formula for schools; to highlight the challenges facing councils in responding to increasing demand for school places; and provide support for councils in implementing high needs place funding arrangements for 2014/15.
- 2.2 **Economic Growth, jobs and prosperity:** Since the start of this project we have been gathering evidence to demonstrate that councils are best placed to identify and support young people not in education, training or employment and supporting councils in their responsibilities relating to the raising of the age of participation in education and training. We are working to influence the shape of Government's reform agenda and the Cabinet Office Review into schemes for 16 – 24 year olds. This was prompted by the Youth Contract's poor performance combined with pressure from the LGA and others and focuses on rationalising the complexity of provision for young people. We have submitted evidence based on our Hidden Talents campaign work, published research exposing the pitfalls of centralised approaches, and held a number of meetings with Ministers, including the Deputy Prime Minister and with partner organisations.
- 2.3 **Public Service Reform - Children's social care:** Our lobbying against the provisions of the Children and Families Bill which could remove councils from adopter recruitment has led to amendments being tabled by Peers for the House of Lords Committee stage and an announcement by the Minister to introduce a

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government amendment to ensure that the power is exercised with caution. The online resources published by the LGA to help councils to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation were viewed by over 1,500 people in the first month and have been commended by the Deputy Children's Commissioner. We also launched our action research into more effective commissioning of children's homes at a fully booked event in September.

- 2.4 Public Service Reform - Education:** promoting a strong role for councils in education for children and young people from early years through to post-16 education. We are reviewing the impact of the new Ofsted inspection framework for councils' school improvement services and a report on the use of scrutiny in holding schools and Academies to account is being launched at the National Children's and Adults conference. We are also working to ensure that reforms to councils' statutory duties in the Children and Families Bill for children and young people with Special Educational Needs allow councils to retain the flexibility to respond to the needs of individual children and young people and local circumstances. As a result of our lobbying, amendments have been tabled by Peers for the House of Lords Committee stage to improve accountability for parents and young people. Work to prepare councils to prepare for the implementation of the reforms in 2014 is being undertaken with pathfinder councils
- 2.5 Public Service Reform - Children's health:** Working with partners we have helped to set up a Children's Health and Wellbeing Partnership (CHWP) to take a strategic lead on children's health issues. Its aims include: overseeing the safe transfer of 0-5 public health commissioning to local government in 2015; taking a cross departmental approach to early intervention, prevention and integrated care and support for children and young people; and helping local government to understand its new responsibilities. We are also holding public health events and publishing information for members and officers to help them tackle health inequalities and improve the long term health outcomes for children, young people and families.
- 2.6 Sector-led improvement and innovation:** Following the withdrawal of DfE funding in April 2013 (and subsequent consultation with local authorities), the LGA Children and Young People's Board agreed that the LGA would continue some key elements of the Children's Improvement Board led programme and continue to work in partnership with ADCS and SOLACE to support councils and to continue a high level dialogue on improvement and on the relationship with regulation by Ofsted.
- 2.7 The key elements of the sector-led offer are:** a leadership academy for lead members for children's services (with 13 attending the most recent one in September); joint work on leadership in partnership with SOLACE and the Virtual Staff College (who provide leadership support for DCSs); quicker and easier access to data reports on children's services; the safeguarding peer review and shorter "diagnostics" on safeguarding and care; and up to five days immediate specialist children's services support for councils receiving an inadequate Ofsted judgement. LGA's Principal Advisers are the first point of contact for advice for

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councils and each region has a lead member, a chief executive and a DCS who leads on sector-led improvement, as well as the regional networks of lead members for children who receive regular updates from the LGA.

Financial Implications

3. There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.