

Children and Young People Board – report from Cllr Richard Watts (Chair)

Conferences, Meetings and Public Events

1. On Wednesday 21 September, I attended a Westminster Education Forum event on alternative provision and exclusion within the education system. I hosted a seminar on this topic, highlighting the LGA's positions on best practice, quality and progression.
2. On Tuesday 27 September Cllr Liz Green, Deputy Chair of CYP Board, attended a conference hosted by Westminster Briefing entitled: *Improving School Admissions: Meeting the Needs of Parents, Carers and Pupils*. Cllr Green engaged in a policy-focussed seminar attended by admissions officers and Governors from across the country.
3. On Wednesday 19 October Cllr Roy Perry gave a talk entitled 'Exploring the Changing Relationship Between Schools and Local Authorities', at an event hosted by Inside Government on the 'Future Role of Local Authorities in Education Services'. His keynote considered the implication of the March 2016 White Paper *Educational Excellence Everywhere* and the *Education and Adoption Act*. He addressed the challenging environment for local authorities currently and the crucial role of local authorities in achieving high outcomes for children.
4. On Monday 17 October, Cllr Gillian Ford (Deputy Chair), Cllr Roy Perry (Vice Chairman) and Clive Harris (Adviser, Children) attended a Centre for Public Scrutiny Roundtable, chaired by Lord Bob Kerslake, on the future of children's services. The roundtable was prompted by the publication of DfE's paper *Putting children first*, and focused on new models for delivery, the rise of children's trusts and how to these trusts might be structured and held accountable.

Children and Social Work Bill

5. On Wednesday 28 September I attended a meeting with representatives from groups campaigning around the forthcoming Children and Social Work Bill, including Article 39, the National Association of Independent Reviewing Officers, the British Association of Social Workers, the Association of Lawyers for Children and Liberty. We discussed the Bill, their concerns around clauses 29 to 33 and our work addressing these concerns with the Department for Education.
6. On Tuesday 11 October, Cllr David Simmonds (Chairman of the Asylum, Migration and Refugee Task Group) and I attended a meeting with the Rt. Hon. Edward Timpson MP (Minister for Vulnerable Children and Families, DfE). We discussed the Children and Social Work Bill and the upcoming debate in the House of Lords. We addressed areas of strength and weakness within the Bill, highlighting clauses 29 to 33 and our particular concerns around the proposed powers to allow the Secretary of State, without the consent of local partners, to exempt individual authorities from requirements imposed by children's social care legislation.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children Summit

7. On Thursday 13 October, the Children and Young People Board, in conjunction with the Asylum, Migration and Refugee Task Group, hosted a summit on Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and the National Dispersal Scheme. The summit was attended by a range of local authorities and campaigning groups, and enabled the LGA to encourage the voluntary dispersal of children throughout the country as well as discuss alternative dispersal mechanisms.

The Alan Wood External Advisory Group

8. In my capacity as Chair of the Board, I have attended multiple meetings of the Alan Wood External Advisory Group. This group is chaired by Alan Wood (former ADCS President) and advises the ongoing DfE review of the role of the council in education and children's services. Our focuses are the role of the local authority in: the planning of school places; special educational needs and disability provision; early years provision; post-16 education and training; and effectiveness and quality in schools. Of particular importance to the group is the potential reduction in the Education Services Grant as well as the proposed transition to academy status, the timeline and possible mandatory nature of this process, and the extent to which new trusts would infringe upon local authority powers.

Consultations

Early Years National Funding Formula Consultation

9. On Thursday 22 September the LGA submitted a response to the DfE's EYNFF consultation. The LGA noted that a review of the historical formula and methodology was welcome, and should see funding allocations more closely match the costs of provision in different places. However, the LGA response also raised considerable concerns about the deliverability of the additional 15 hours of free childcare for working parents at the current levels of national funding, and argued strongly against constraints on local flexibility.

Soft Drinks Industry Levy

10. The LGA responded to the government's Soft Drinks Industry Levy Consultation which ended on 13th October. The LGA has previously called for fundamental reforms, such as a mandatory reduction of sugar in soft drinks, better sugar labelling on food and drinks products, calorie counts on menus in chain restaurants and for councils to be given powers to ban junk food advertising near schools.

Local Transformation Plans for Children & Adolescent Mental Health Services

11. The LGA has undertaken a survey to seek views from Directors of Children's Services on how efforts to transform CAMHS are progressing. Results will be fed into the planned LGA's "State of the Nation Report" for CAMHS, which will identify key recommendations for national partners to support local transformation, and highlight good practice underway in some areas.

Reporting and acting on child abuse and neglect

12. The LGA and ADCS submitted a joint response to the joint consultation by the Home Office and DfE on reporting and acting on child abuse and neglect. We have opposed the introduction of mandatory reporting or a formal duty to act, arguing that there is no evidence that these systems will provide greater protection for children and young people nor lead to better outcomes. We are concerned that the resulting increase in inappropriate contacts / referrals risks weakening the child protection system in this country, which already receives a higher volume of referrals than many countries with mandatory reporting systems. Instead, we have advocated for the investment of efforts and available resources in prevention, early identification and early help through a host of measures aimed at children and young people themselves, professionals and the general public.

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