

10 January 2018

## **The future of children's social care improvement task and finish group**

### **Purpose**

For discussion and direction.

### **Summary**

This report sets out the work undertaken by the future of children's services task and finish group since its first meeting in January 2017 and how the proposals contained in the *Bright Futures* report, which was the culmination of the group's work, will be monitored in future. This report also proposes the creation of a new task and finish group that will focus on gaining a clear understanding of the challenges facing councils in their work to deliver to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) support, with particular reference to implementation of reforms set out in the Children and Families Act 2014.

### **Recommendation:**

That the Children and Young People Board note the work undertaken by the task and finish group to date, agree the creation of a new task and finish group focussing on SEND and; nominate one member from each political group to participate.

### **Action:**

Officers to action as appropriate.

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## **The future of children's social care improvement task and finish group**

### **Work undertaken to date**

1. The future of children's social care improvement task and finish group was established by the LGA Children and Young People Board to develop a coherent, evidence-based narrative of the current state of children's social care improvement support in England, and a clear vision for how this support should be designed and delivered in future.
2. The task and finish group met six times between January and September 2017, with work focussed on three specific strands, reviewing the range of children's social care improvement activity taking place across central and local government, collation and analysis of existing evidence of this activity and; commissioning and overseeing any new research to fill any identified gaps in this evidence base.
3. The work of the task and finish group culminated with publication of the *Bright Futures report* to coincide with this year's NCAS conference. *Bright Futures* sets out seven key areas where councils and their partners should work together to deliver the most effective services for children, young people and their families
  - 3.1 A stronger focus on outcomes for children;
  - 3.2 Consistently strong local leadership;
  - 3.3 A culture of continuous improvement;
  - 3.4 The right support for children at the right time;
  - 3.5 Sustainable funding to help children thrive;
  - 3.6 A better understanding of what works for children and;
  - 3.7 Strengthened morale and support for social workers.
4. To support publication of *Bright Futures*, the LGA has to date focussed primarily on disseminating the report and highlighting the key messages to a wide group of stakeholders. This includes:
  - 4.1 Speeches at the Solace, County Council Network and Association of Independent LSCB Chairs conferences.
  - 4.2 Circulating copies to regional Lead Member networks.
  - 4.3 Circulating copies with the Education Select Committee, the All Party Parliamentary Group for Children, and the All Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers, as well as the Secretary of State for Education.

- 4.4 The production of a two page version of the report, highlighting our three primary campaign asks, which has been sent to all UK Members of Parliament, and Cllr Richard Watts has given a copy direct to the Leader of the Opposition. Labour have since referenced this document in several Parliamentary debates and questions.
5. In terms of statistics, the report has had:
- 5.1 Over **6,500** total views of our online campaign hub;
  - 5.2 **11** media releases produced, generating **46** episodes of national coverage;
  - 5.3 **39** Tweets promoting the campaign and publication, reached over **91,600** people;
  - 5.4 **892** downloads of our campaign publication and **1,523** summary page views;
  - 5.5 **583** views of a joint letter to government, signed by LGA and the Chief Executives of four major children's charities, drawing on the key messages from *Bright Futures*;
  - 5.6 **3,634** views of our specially produced 60 second summary video;
  - 5.7 **1,540** printed copies produced.
6. At the Children and Young People Board office holders meeting that took place on the 6 December it was agreed that the task and finish group's formal work should come to an end, but that the group should reconvene on an informal basis in twelve months' time to review progress on the recommendations made in the *Bright Futures* publication.

### **The proposed creation of a new task and finish group focussing on SEND**

7. Feedback from member councils has highlighted Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) as an area that is causing considerable concern as rising demand for support for children and young people has not been mirrored by increased funding. This has been combined with both an Ofsted inspection framework that has highlighted the mixed council performance picture and the April 2018 deadline for transferring all children and young people with SEND statements to Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).
8. Given the complex nature of the SEND policy landscape, the Children and Young People Board is asked to agree to create a task and finish group that, between January and September 2018, will develop a coherent, evidence-based narrative of the current state of SEND provision in England, and a clear vision for how this provision should be designed and delivered in future.
9. In order to undertake this task, the group will:
- 9.1 Review the role of councils, central government, health and other partners in delivering SEND support. Specifically this could include; gaining a clear picture of

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the rising demand for support and it's drivers, sufficiency of funding and the impact of reforms to high needs funding, identifying what effective multi-agency work to support children and young people with SEND looks like, including joint commissioning and; the impact of Ofsted inspection of SEND provision.

9.2 Collate and analyse existing evidence on the impact and effectiveness of this activity.

9.3 Commission and oversee new research to fill any identified gaps in this evidence base.

10. The task and finish group Chair will provide regular updates at future CYP Board meetings, and a final report will be presented to the Board in September 2018.

#### **Next steps**

11. A draft work programme, along with terms of reference, will be drafted and shared with task group members, once nominated, subject to the agreement of Children and Young People Board.