

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

### **Conferences, Meetings and Public Events**

1. On 31 October, I attended the APPG for Families in the Early Years to give evidence on the role of children's centres and early years' provision in improving social mobility. The following day, I returned to Parliament to take part in a roundtable hosted by the Children's Society, where I outlined the financial challenges facing children's services ahead of the Autumn Budget.
2. I presented our children's services campaign, [Bright Futures](#), to the Westminster Education Forum on 16 November, before taking part in a panel session on responding to funding pressures in children's services.
3. I signed an [open letter to the Government](#) in November, joining Barnardo's, Action for Children, The Children's Society and National Children's Bureau in calling for urgent action to address the funding gap in children's services.
4. On 6 December, we hosted a conference with the National Youth Agency about youth services, with speakers from a range of local authorities alongside the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, the National Citizen Service Trust, the Royal Society for Public Health and others. At the conference, we launched our [Vision for Youth Services](#), part of our *Bright Futures* campaign, outlining our long-term vision for youth services and the role councils can play in delivering these.
5. I met with the Chief Executive of the NSPCC on 18 December to discuss our *Bright Futures* campaign and identify ways to work together next year. I also attended the Children's Inter-Agency Group to speak with a range of high-profile children's charities.

### **Board business**

6. Recently I have written to the new Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP, to welcome him to his new role and to suggest an introductory meeting. I will report back on our discussions following the meeting.
7. At the Board's meeting on 10 January we considered interim findings on variations in local spending on children's services, as part of research we have commissioned from Newton Europe. Working with a sample of local authorities, we intend to develop a deeper, more complete picture of council spend on children's services while identifying areas of good practice and the underlying levers driving cost and performance. The output of this work will have a range of valuable practical applications, including informing a future children's services finance diagnostic offer to the sector, and more details will be available in due course when the research concludes.

### **Publications**

8. On 8 January 2018 we published a report on [Enabling School Improvement](#). While the council role in education continues to evolve, one thing that has remained constant is the

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vital role that councils play in driving school improvement to ensure that children, young people and their families all have access to a good school place. Bringing strategic clarity and coherence to local education systems, councils act as independent and impartial brokers and evaluators for school improvement support, resulting in stronger support for schools. In their efforts to drive up school standards, councils have taken a variety of different approaches to developing effective school improvement systems, responding differently to the challenges facing the education system.

9. On 8 December 2017, we published a report on [Working with schools to improve the health of school-aged children](#). While the health of older people gets lots of attention in the debate about the future of the NHS and the ageing population, there has been a host of warnings about the state of children's health too. This report showcases the work being done by schools and local authorities across the country to improve the health of children.

#### **Press Releases and Statements**

10. I have recently made public statements on the charity warning that [councils can only help children in crisis](#), [the announcement of no additional children's services funding in the 2017 Autumn Budget](#), [the number of child protection investigations carried out by councils](#), [Ofsted's Annual Report](#), [DfE's Social Mobility Action Plan](#), [DfE's announcement on boarding schools](#), [the CRIDE and National Deaf Children's Society report on specialist support](#), and [referral rates to children's services](#).

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