

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

Conferences, Meetings and Public Events

1. On 20 February I met with Nadhim Zahawi MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Education. We discussed two major issues: the funding of children's services, and the prospect of additional funding for LGA sector-led improvement of children's services.
2. On 8 January, I met with Charlie Taylor, the new Chair of the Youth Justice Board. We discussed a range of issues related to youth justice, including how to make the case for sustained funding, the role of education and the evidence base for intervention programmes. I also raised councils' concerns around the safety of young people in secure custody, and was assured that the YJB is pursuing this with the Youth Custody Service.
3. I attended the APPG on Nursery Schools, Nursery and Reception Classes on 16 January to give evidence about nursery provision. In particular, I highlighted the underfunding of the 30 hours free childcare offer, and the difficulties faced by local authorities as budgets are cut and staffing levels are reduced. I also stressed to MPs the importance of early help in terms of supporting children and families and reducing costs later on.
4. On 18 January Deputy Board Chair Cllr Gillian Ford addressed a meeting of the Alliance for Children in Care and Care Leavers, a coalition of organisations that work to support children in care and care leavers. Cllr Ford outlined the LGA's work on children's social care, with a particular focus on our recent "Bright Futures" report, and discussed how the Alliance and the LGA can work together to fulfil our shared ambitions for children and young people.
5. The LGA hosted a conference on 24 January entitled "Improving children's lives: what works with families". This took a holistic view of supporting families and considered a range of topics including reducing family violence, reshaping financial support and early years. Presentations from the conference are available [here](#).
6. Also on 24 January, I joined Vice Board Chairman Cllr Roy Perry at a roundtable on alternative provision, particularly considering how councils can work with schools in their area to support children and young people who have, or are at risk of, falling out of the education system.
7. Deputy Board Chair Cllr Lucy Nethsinga attended the Adoption Leadership Board on 12 February. The Board discussed issues including extending its remit to include special guardianship orders (SGOs), engagement with the judiciary, adopter recruitment and a review of adoption and SGO support.

Publications

[Don't be left in the dark: children and young people's mental health](#)

8. On 2 February we launched a short guide to children and young people's mental health, part of the LGA's 'Don't be left in the dark' series. The guide provides an overview of the challenges facing mental health and wellbeing services for children and young people.
9. At least one in 10 children and young people are affected by mental health problems, and the unreported figures are likely to be even higher. Young people are increasingly struggling with problems like anxiety, depression and self-harm, with nearly 19,000 young people admitted to hospital after harming themselves in 2015, a 14 per cent rise over three years. We are also just beginning to understand how the increasing prevalence of social media in young people's lives is negatively impacting their emotional health.

[Meeting the health and wellbeing needs of young carers](#)

10. On 25 January we published a report into how councils can tackle inequalities in supporting the education, physical health and emotional wellbeing of young carers.
11. Councils are under a legal duty to identify young carers and carry out assessments that consider the impact on the child and whole family. Identifying and keeping young carers engaged and involved so that the impact of their caring responsibilities can be minimised is no easy task. Meeting these challenges requires concerted effort on many different levels.
12. We cannot ignore that children's services have been affected by budget cuts and increasing demand. But, as the case studies in this report show, even in difficult circumstances there is good work already being done that we can learn from.

Press Releases and Statements

13. I have recently made public statements on the [LGA's call for compulsory independent mental health counselling in secondary schools](#), and colleagues have made statements on [the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health report on the state of child health](#), and that [half of children who are assessed as in need of extra help by council child protection teams have experienced or witnessed domestic violence](#).

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