

Review of Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on providing youth services

Purpose of report

For discussion and for the Board to provide a steer to LGA's response on the review of the youth services statutory guidance.

Summary

During autumn 2019, the Government intends to review the Statutory Guidance for local authorities in respect of their duty to provide youth services. The aim of the review is to clarify the Government's expectations around the duty. As part of the review, there will be a call for evidence to better understand how the current guidance is being used and what improvements may need to be made to the guidance. The review will not be considering any changes to the statutory duty itself.

Colleagues from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport will present to the Board their plans for consultation and seek input from Board members on what the revised statutory guidance should include.

Recommendation

Members are asked to provide feedback to DCMS on the content of the revised statutory guidance, and to officers to shape the LGA's response to the review.

Action/s

Officers to take any action arising from discussion of the report.

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Review of Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on providing youth services

Background

1. In July 2019, the former Minister of Civil Society launched a review of the guidance for Local Authorities on providing youth services,¹ following its announcement in the Civil Society Strategy last year.²
2. Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide youth services. Section 507B of the Education Act 1996 states that local authorities must 'secure as far as necessary practicable, sufficient provision of educational and recreational for young people' and make sure young people have a say in the local offer.³ This duty will not be amended by the review, which focusses only on the statutory guidance associated with it.
3. The current youth service statutory guidance (**Appendix A**) was issued to local authorities in 2012 and places emphasis on local authorities '*duty to secure, as far as reasonably practicable, equality of access for all young people to the positive, preventative and early help they need to improve their wellbeing. This includes youth works and other services/activities*'.
4. This guidance highlights two key responsibilities for local authorities
 - 4.1 **Involving young people** – ensuring that local authorities ascertain the views of young people and to take them into account when determining activities and services for them.
 - 4.2 **Securing access to sufficient services and activities** – there is no prescribed stipulation on what local authorities should fund or deliver and to what level. Instead local authorities are encouraged work with partners to develop a localised offer. They are encouraged to work with the voluntary and community sector, look at the mix of provision, what facilities are needed and working with young people to determine the nature of a local offer.
5. Since this guidance has been issued, the landscape for delivering service has changed significantly. Due to a reduction of funding, local authorities have had to reprioritise. They have had to redirect resources away from universal services including the provision of youth services to deal with the rise in demand for children's social care, LGA have highlighted this

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/review-launched-into-statutory-guidance-for-local-authorities-on-providing-youth-services>

² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/732765/Civil_Society_Strategy_-_building_a_future_that_works_for_everyone.pdf

³ Section 507B Education Act 1996

issue as part of their Bright Futures campaign and have developed a Youth Services vision⁴. This will be used as part of our negotiations with government about the new guidance.

The review

6. Colleagues from the DCMS will be in attendance to talk through the review, the scope and the process to be followed, and to seek input from Board members on what would be most helpful in the new guidance. The LGA will work with the government as it develops this new guidance.
7. The LGA will be responding to the call for evidence as part of the review. In particular, it will be important to ensure that the clarification of the duty does not result in additional unfunded burdens on local authorities, for example, prescribing the level and type of service expected. We will also push for the long-term funding of youth services as a key early intervention lever and place emphasis on local authorities leadership role in working with stakeholders and the voluntary/community sector to co-ordinate a fully-funded and sustainable local youth offer.
8. Furthermore, we will seek clarity around how local youth services fits with the government's ambitions for young people and national youth programmes such as National Citizenship Service (NCS).

Implications for Wales

9. The statutory duty applies only to local authorities in England.

Financial Implications

10. None.

Next steps

11. Members are asked to make any comments about the review and provide a steer to help shape the LGA response to the call to evidence and any future work to be undertaken to ensure the sufficiency of youth services.

⁴ <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/campaigns/bright-futures/bright-futures-childrens-services/bright-futures-our-vision-youth>