

Children and Young People Board

Agenda

Monday 21 May 2012
11.00am

The Westminster Suite (8th floor)
Local Government House
Smith Square
London
SW1P 3HZ

To: Members of the Children and Young People Board
cc: Named officers for briefing purposes

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LGA Children and Young People Board
21 May 2012

There will be a meeting of the LGA Children and Young People Board at:

11.00am on Monday 21 May 2012 in the Westminster Suite (8th floor), Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ.

Attendance Sheet

Please ensure that you sign the attendance register, which will be available in the meeting room. It is the only record of your presence at the meeting.

Apologies

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Labour: Aicha Less: 020 7664 3263 email: aicha.less@local.gov.uk
Conservative: Luke Taylor: 020 7664 3264 email: luke.taylor@local.gov.uk
Liberal Democrat: Evelyn Mark: 020 7664 3235 email: libdem@local.gov.uk
Independent: Group Office: 020 7664 3224 email: independent.group@local.gov.uk

Location

A map showing the location of Local Government House is printed on the back cover.

LGA Contact

Lucy Ellender Tel: 020 7664 3173 Fax: 020 7664 3232;
e-mail: lucy.ellender@local.gov.uk

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Children and Young People Board

Date: 2.5.12

Children and Young People Board - Membership 2011/2012

Councillor	Authority
Conservative (6)	
David Simmonds JP [Chairman]	Hillingdon LB
Paul Carter	Kent CC
David Pugh	Isle of Wight Council
Derrick Murphy	Norfolk CC
Robert Light	Kirklees MBC
<i>Vacancy</i>	
Substitutes:	
Susie Charles	Lancashire CC
Roy Perry	Hampshire CC
John Osman	Somerset CC
Labour (5)	
Rita Krishna	Hackney LB
John Merry CBE [Vice Chair]	Salford City
Catharine Grundy	Birmingham City
Paul Lakin	Rotherham MBC
Anne Burns	Cumbria CC
Substitutes:	
Ebrahim Adia	Bolton MBC
Catherine McDonald	Southwark LB
Liberal Democrat (3)	
David Bellotti	Bath & NE Somerset Council
Liz Green [Deputy Chair]	Kingston upon Thames RB
Kath Pinnock	Kirklees MBC
Substitutes:	
Peter Downes OBE	Huntingdonshire DC
Independent (1)	
Apu Bagchi [Deputy Chair]	Bedford BC
Substitutes:	
Gillian Ford	Havering LB
Paul Cullen	Richmondshire DC

LGA Children and Young People Board Attendance 2011-2012

Councillors	6.9.11	20.10.11	25.01.12	28.03.12	21.05.12	16.07.12
Conservative Group						
David Simmonds	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Paul Carter	No	No	No	Yes		
David Pugh	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Derrick Murphy	No	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Robert Light	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		
<i>Vacancy</i>						
Labour Group						
Rita Krishna	Yes	No	No	Yes		
John Merry CBE	No	Yes	No	Yes		
Catharine Grundy	Yes	Yes	No	No		
Paul Lakin	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Anne Burns	No	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Lib Dem Group						
David Bellotti	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Liz Green	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Kath Pinnock	Yes	Yes	No	No		
Independent						
Apu Bagchi	Yes	Yes	No	Yes		
Substitutes						
Susie Charles	Yes	Yes		Yes		
Roy Perry	Yes	Yes	Yes			
Catherine McDonald	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
John Osman		Yes				
Pete Robbins			Yes			
Chris Maines			Yes			
Paul Cullen			Yes			
Peter Downes OBE				Yes		

Agenda

Children and Young People Board

21 May 2012

11.00am

Westminster Suite (8th Floor), Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

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Date of Next Meeting: 16 July 2012, venue to be confirmed

Free Schools

Purpose of report

To provide background information for the discussion on free schools.

Summary

Sarah Counter, Principal of Canary Wharf College and Tom Philpott, Head of Partnerships for the New Schools Network will attend the meeting to discuss the role of free schools, the benefits and challenges of setting them up and how councils and Free School proposers can work together.

Recommendation

This report is to inform the discussion around Free Schools.

Action

LGA officers to proceed as directed.

Contact officer: Ian Keating
Position: Senior Adviser (Children and Young People)
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Free Schools

Background

1. State schools with additional freedoms as compared to council-maintained schools have existed for several decades. In the 1980s, City Technology Colleges were established in deprived areas. In the 1990s, existing state schools were given more freedom and independence as Grant Maintained schools. In 2000, Academies were established as independent state schools in deprived areas, with sponsors from business and education.
2. Following the 2010 General Election, the Government fast-tracked the Academies Act 2010 through Parliament to allow (among other things) groups to apply to set up Free Schools from June 2010. Once they are open, Free Schools have the same legal status as academies with the same freedoms from the national curriculum, national terms and condition for teachers' pay and conditions and national regulations on the length of school days. They are funded directly by central government through the Education Funding Agency as academies are.
3. The Education Act 2011 introduced the 'academies and Free Schools presumption' which means that where councils identify the need for a new school in an area, they must first invite proposals for Free Schools or academies. Where proposals are made, the council may make recommendations to the Secretary of State on their preferred option. However, the decision as to which proposal is accepted lies with the Secretary of State and he or she may accept a proposal that has come forward after the council has submitted the proposals it has received.
4. If no proposal for a Free School or academy is received by a council, it can run a competition for a school proposal from another provider (but cannot put forward a proposal for a council-maintained school). If a Free School or academy proposal is submitted as part of the competition, proposals from other types of providers (e.g. trusts or faith groups) will fall, and only the Free School or academy proposals will be considered by the Secretary of State.

Requirements on Free Schools

5. Free Schools must:
 - 5.1. teach students only within the reception through 19 years old age range. Any school teaching nursery or over-19s will not be funded for those years as a Free School;

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- 5.2. abide by the Schools Admissions Code;
- 5.3. have more than 5 pupils over the age of 5;
- 5.4. take account of the SEN Code of Practice;
- 5.5. be run by a Charitable Trust;
- 5.6. provide a broad and balanced curriculum including the core subjects such as Maths, English and Science. Free Schools do not have to follow the National Curriculum; and
- 5.7. achieve good results and do well in inspections.

Free School Types

6. Groups can apply to set up:
 - 6.1. Mainstream Free Schools – accessible to all students and bound by the School Admissions Code and the SEN Code of Practice. They must demonstrate clear evidence of demand from local parents of pupils of the appropriate age.
 - 6.2. Special Free Schools – for pupils with a statement of Special Educational Need. They must demonstrate that local authorities would be willing to refer pupils to the school.
 - 6.3. Alternative Provision Free Schools - for pupils not flourishing in mainstream education, who have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion. They must demonstrate that existing schools or local authorities would be willing to refer students to the Free School.
 - 6.4. 16-19 Free Schools – For pupils of college/sixth-form age. They must demonstrate demand from parents and pupils in the local area.

Progress in establishing Free Schools

7. There are currently 24 Free Schools open across England. Additional schools approved by DfE to open in September 2012 and beyond include:
 - 7.1. 56 Mainstream Free Schools
 - 7.2. 5 Alternative Provision Free Schools
 - 7.3. 3 Special Free Schools
 - 7.4. 2 Hybrid Free Schools

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8. However, it is understood that many of the Free School due to open this September have yet to finalise negotiations around a site. A further round of applications will be approved by DfE before summer 2012 to open in September 2013.

The New Schools Network

9. On its website the New Schools Network (NSN) states that it aims to improve the quality of education – particularly for the most deprived – by increasing the number of independent, innovative schools within the state sector. It offers free services to Free School proposer groups including:
 - 9.1. advising and supporting groups during the Free School application process;
 - 9.2. providing groups with specialist support;
 - 9.3. running events and seminars;
 - 9.4. providing feedback on draft applications;
 - 9.5. facilitating matchmaking between Free School groups and volunteers.

Issues for councils

10. One issue is that potential Free School providers deal directly with DfE and councils get very late notice about proposals in their areas which potentially have an effect on neighbouring schools. A number of councils are working proactively to encourage and engage Free Schools providers at an early stage to avoid this risk. The difficulty that some Free Schools are having in finding a site may encourage them to work more closely with their local council in preparing their bids.
11. The guidance around the way the new ‘academies presumption’ will work is still with Ministers, although the provisions came into force in February this year. LGA officers have been involved in discussions around the new process and have stressed that the basis on which Ministers make decisions needs to be transparent, especially in cases where they might choose to reject a council’s preferred proposal or accept a proposal that has come forward after the council has made its recommendations.
12. As a result of the ‘academies presumption’, Free Schools will have a role to play in meeting increasing demand for school places. Some councils are actively engaging potential Free School sponsors to meet identified need and others are explicitly sharing their projections with potential Free School groups to help

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them make their case for the establishment of Free Schools in areas where new places are needed.

The role of local government in promoting positive wellbeing for children

Purpose of report

To provide background information for the discussion on the role of local government in promoting positive wellbeing for children with Enver Solomon, Policy Director of The Children's Society.

Summary

Enver Solomon, Policy Director of The Children's Society will attend the meeting on the 21 May.

Recommendation

This report is to inform the discussion around positive wellbeing for children.

Action

LGA officers to proceed as directed.

Enver Solomon, Policy Director, The Children's Society.
Enver.Solomon@childrenssociety.org.uk, Tel: 020 7841 4494

David Hounsell, Economic Advisor, The Children's Society.
David.Hounsell@childrenssociety.org.uk, Tel: 020 7841 3465

The role of local government in promoting positive wellbeing for children

Background

1. Since 2005 The Children's Society has developed a unique research programme, which has measured and analysed children's self-reported wellbeing. Through conducting focus groups and asking wellbeing questions to over 30,000 8 to 16 year olds across the UK, we now understand the level of wellbeing and its drivers within all key aspects of children's lives, including family life, school life and experience in their local area.
2. The programme has developed methods that robustly capture children's self-reported wellbeing. The measurement tools developed so far include a set of statements that capture a child's overall life satisfaction, the *Good Childhood Index*, which measures wellbeing within ten domains that children have told us are key to their lives, and a local area index capturing wellbeing in a locality.
3. The evidence held in the datasets is extensive. At a national level we know that;
 - 3.1. At any time 9%, or 500,000, children aged 8 to 15 in the UK have low subjective wellbeing.
 - 3.2. Personality and socio-demographic factors explain some, but not the majority, of variations in children's wellbeing.
 - 3.3. External factors such as life events, family relationships and amount of choice and autonomy have a significant impact on wellbeing.
4. Focusing on local area wellbeing we know that;
 - 4.1. 1 in 7 children are unhappy with this aspect of their lives, and there is a significant association between a child's unhappiness in their local area and their overall life satisfaction.
 - 4.2. 1 in 4 children do not feel safe when they are out at night in their local area, and 1 in 3 feel there is nothing to do in their local area.
 - 4.3. Satisfaction with local facilities declines significantly from 7.1 (out of 10) at age 10 to 11, to 5.5 at age 14 to 15.

What can local decision-makers do to promote positive wellbeing for children?

5. All decisions that impact on a child's life will to some extent impact on that child's wellbeing. This includes decisions made at a local level, including decisions take by local authorities on policy and service delivery. Our evidence clearly highlights six priorities that decision-makers in local authorities can focus on to promote positive wellbeing for children in their area. These were set out in our policy report *Promoting positive wellbeing for children* (copies of which will be provided at the meeting), and are that children need to have;
 - 5.1. enough of the items and experiences that matter to them;
 - 5.2. positive relationships with family and friends;
 - 5.3. opportunities to take part in positive activities to thrive;
 - 5.4. a safe and suitable home environment and local area;
 - 5.5. a positive view of themselves and an identity that is respected; and
 - 5.6. the conditions to learn and develop.

What this could look like in practice

6. A fundamental step for promoting positive wellbeing for children is to understand the level of wellbeing, and its drivers, for children in a specific setting. This will mean conducting a wellbeing survey tailored to the information needs of decision-makers. Approaches could include a census-style survey in a locality, a survey of a specific group such as children in care, or targeted survey work on a particular issue such as children's views on local safety.
7. The Children's Society has developed a wide range of survey questions and tools. Surveys can be administered either online or through paper questionnaires and the specific indexes or questions can be selected from the extensive set developed through the programme. The data gathered can be benchmarked against national levels. We are also currently working with the Office for National Statistics to ensure that national surveys will gather data that provide comparable benchmarks and trends to locally gathered data.
8. Once the local evidence has been gathered the next step is to use the evidence to review current policies and services. The locally gathered data can be used to supplement the six priorities outlined above. Children's wellbeing will vary by area, therefore policy changes and service re-design to promote wellbeing will

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also need to vary. However, as an example, a key driver of children's wellbeing is being involved and having choice in decisions that affect them. Co-producing services designed for children, with children, will help promote the wellbeing affected by that service.

Conclusion and next steps

9. The movement to measure and understand wellbeing has gathered pace in recent years, at a local, national and international level. The tools are available for local authorities to measure children's self-reported wellbeing in their area. This data can be used to support the re-design policy and services to promote positive wellbeing for children. The six priorities for positive wellbeing can be used as an outcomes framework to assess progress. Promoting positive wellbeing will help all children experience a good childhood and receive the best possible start in life.

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Adoption scorecards

Purpose of report

For discussion and direction.

Summary

Local authority adoption scorecards were published on 11 May, following the commitment made as part of the Government's Adoption Action Plan. The LGA has consistently argued strongly against the introduction of scorecards and has continued to make this case to the Department for Education (DfE).

DfE has identified a number of councils whose performance it considers is causing significant concern. There will now be a process of initial discussions with those areas and for some a further "diagnostic" process. It is anticipated that some areas will receive Improvement Notices. The Children's Improvement Board will have a role in supporting improvement and the diagnostic, but will not be involved in any decisions about intervention which will be taken by DfE alone.

The Children and Families Bill announced in the Queen's Speech will contain proposals related to adoption and care proceedings. This is the subject of **Item 4** on the agenda.

Recommendation

That members discuss the issues outlined in the paper and provide direction to officers.

Action

LGA officers to action as directed.

Contact officer: Cassandra Harrison
Position: Senior Adviser
Phone no: 020 7665 3878
E-mail: cassandra.harrison@local.gov.uk

Adoption scorecards

Background

1. A commitment to publish local authority adoption scorecards was announced as part of the Government's Adoption Action Plan in March. Their publication was due in April during the local government purdah period, but in line with members' discussion at the previous Board meeting, Ministers agreed to postpone publication until after the local elections. On 11 May scorecards were published for each local authority, along with a spreadsheet of the underlying data.
2. The LGA has consistently argued strongly against the introduction of scorecards and has continued to make this case to the Department for Education. The scorecards do not provide a fair picture of council performance or a sound basis for comparison. This is supported by a recent report by Ofsted which found that court proceedings were the main reason for delay. The approach is also contrary to the Government's wider position on local performance and improvement.
3. The LGA, Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and the Association of Directors of Children's Services released a joint statement condemning the scorecards. Cllr Simmonds was interviewed on radio and television and the sector's position was widely reported across the media.

Performance thresholds

4. Two interim 'performance thresholds' have been set:
 - 4.1. the average time it takes for a child who goes on to be adopted from entering care to moving in with his or her adoptive family – 21 months.
 - 4.2. the average time it takes for a local authority to match a child to an adoptive family once the court has formally decided that adoption is the best option - 7 months.
5. 80 councils meet both thresholds, 72 do not meet one or both. The first indicator does not take into account the length of court proceedings, which are largely outside of councils' control. Nor do the thresholds reflect the challenges facing councils in finding adoptive homes for children that are harder to place, such as sibling groups. Other forms of permanent care for children, such as special guardianships are also not captured.

Further discussion and 'diagnostic'

6. The DfE has identified a number of councils whose performance it considers is causing significant concern. They are not necessarily the councils which rate

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lowest according to the performance threshold indicators. The DfE's intended process is to hold initial discussions with the lead member and Director of Children's Services in those councils to better understand the council's analysis and any improvement plans. The Children's Improvement Board (CIB) will offer support and attendance at the meeting to those councils.

7. In councils where further understanding is required beyond the initial discussion, a "diagnostic" process will be initiated. CIB and DfE have jointly commissioned Outcomes UK in partnership with BAAF to carry out the diagnostic. This will provide an opportunity for a council to tell its own story behind the data and to look at a wider picture of the effectiveness of support for children in care. Where this diagnostic shows genuine concerns about performance, and that the council would benefit from additional support, CIB will be able to discuss priorities for improvement support with the council and broker links to support available from peers in other councils.
8. It is anticipated that a number of councils will receive Improvement Notices. DfE will make recommendations to Ministers about intervention; CIB will not be involved in these decisions. A briefing note on the CIB role circulated to councils on 4 May can be found at **Appendix A**.

Next steps

9. It is anticipated that scorecards will be updated with more recent data in the autumn. It is recommended that the LGA continue to make the case against the flawed approach of scorecards. A potential alternative that could be presented to DfE is council self-reporting via LG Inform. However, it is important that any metrics would be useful to the sector in supporting improvement. This could include, for example, the wider picture of permanence options including special guardianship. Work is underway to explore this, including with the Children's Improvement Board in relation to work already undertaken on local data.
10. A Children and Families Bill was announced in the Queen's Speech on 9 May and is expected to be introduced in Parliament in early 2013. It will include proposal that seek to reduce the numbers of adoptions delayed in order to achieve a perfect or near ethnic match between adoptive parents and the adoptive child. However, a recent report by Ofsted found little evidence of delay caused by an unrealistic search for a 'perfect' ethnic match. The Bill will also implement some of the reforms to the court system from the Family Justice Review. More detail can be found at **Item 4** and a further paper will be brought to the Board once more detail on the proposals is available.

Financial Implications

11. The LGA's work on this issue falls within the budgeted resource for the Children and Young People programme.



Appendix A

CHILDREN'S IMPROVEMENT BOARD BRIEFING NOTE ON ADOPTION

In March, the government published “An Action Plan for Adoption: Tackling Delay” which aimed to speed up and improve the adoption system. This is a priority for the government and will form part of a wider review of the care system to be published in the summer. A key driver of this initiative will be performance scorecards, published by government for each local council, which will include indicators on the timeliness of adoption processes. It is important to emphasise that there are serious concerns about the use of scorecards and the way in which the data is to be presented. Representations to change this are still being made on behalf of councils through the LGA, ADCS and SOLACE.

The Children's Improvement Board (CIB) has a role in responding to this national initiative. CIB is a partnership board responsible for the overall delivery of a programme to develop sector led improvement for children's services. This note provides information for councils on CIB's role and on what is expected to happen after the publication of the scorecards. At the time of writing, discussions are still taking place with DfE but the note sets out our best understanding of the situation at the present time.

An important part of CIB's role in sector led improvement is to support councils as they manage policy changes on the ground. New policies and priorities present challenges and, as in the case of adoption, may have implications for the view that government takes of council performance. CIB wants to support councils to understand their own strengths and weaknesses and work with their peers to improve performance. Its work is part of a drive by local government to move away from top down inspection and control towards a sector led approach. CIB is therefore of the view that a sector led response to the government's position on adoption will be more effective in terms of service improvement and more sensitive to the challenges that councils face, than one that is driven by government and/or Ofsted.

CIB will be offering improvement support to any councils whose performance falls below performance thresholds set by the government. Some of this support will be delivered through regions so that it can be responsive to the needs of different areas.

In addition, our understanding is that there will be a smaller group of councils that DfE determines are causing significant concern, and for which an

improvement notice could be under consideration. CIB will not be involved in identifying these councils but will support them directly once they are known.

In anticipating the support requirements for these councils, CIB and DfE have jointly commissioned Outcomes UK in partnership with BAAF to carry out a “diagnostic” follow up to the scorecard. This will provide an opportunity for a council to tell its own story behind the data and to look at a wider picture of the effectiveness of support for children in care. Where this diagnostic shows genuine concerns about performance, and that the council would benefit from additional support, CIB will be able to discuss priorities for improvement support with the council and broker links to support available from peers in other councils. The overall process which is due to take place within a condensed timetable over the next three months, is set out in the attached appendix.

The diagnostic will not make any recommendation about particular action to DfE. The decision about whether to issue any improvement notices will be made by DfE following the diagnostic and discussion with the council.

CIB is keen to support councils through this process. If you would like further information, please contact the following members of the CIB team:

John Harris johnharris2010@hotmail.co.uk

Sally Halls sallyhalls54@gmail.com

Alex Walters alex4.walters@btinternet.com

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www.local.gov.uk/CIB

Adoption - stages in the process for councils identified by DfE as causing concern

Stage 1 – Initial discussion

DfE will hold an initial meeting with the council to discuss the scorecard data, the council's analysis and any proposed improvement plan. The CIB team will contact the council to offer support for the meeting. CIB is able to offer a member of its team to attend the meeting and contribute to the dialogue about the current situation and what might be offered by way of targeted sector support.

DfE decides next action as follows:

- no further action by DfE – council is encouraged to take up targeted sector support offer from CIB;
- OR further analysis is needed through diagnostic assessment

CIB will contact the council to offer support for the initial discussion

Stage 2 – Diagnostic Assessment

The aim of diagnostic assessment will be to assist the council in understanding its 'story behind the baseline' and identify improvement priorities. The product of the diagnostic assessment will be a report to the council and DfE setting out a wider analysis of current performance in relation to care and adoption, the barriers to progress, and the improvement priorities. The report could assist the council, working with CIB, to specifying targeted sector support required. The report will be advisory in nature and will not make specific recommendations to DfE as to whether ministerial intervention is required.

Stage 3 – DfE Consideration of Next Steps

In the light of initial discussions with the council and the diagnostic assessment, the DfE will make a recommendation to ministers as to whether intervention is required. The assumption is that where ministers do decide to intervene, a targeted sector support offer is commissioned by CIB in partnership with the council.

DfE decides next action as follows:

- no further action by DfE – council is encouraged to take up targeted sector support offer
- OR DfE recommends ministerial intervention, with targeted sector support offer

Children and Families Bill

Purpose of report

For Information.

Summary

This report outlines the main provisions expected within the proposed Children and Families Bill that was announced during the Queen's Speech on 9 May 2012. It also includes the LGA's reaction, drawing on the on-the-day briefing on the Queen's Speech.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the report.

Action

Officers to give members further information once it is available.

Contact officer: Liz Hobson
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Phone no: 020 7664 3229
E-mail: liz.hobson@local.gov.uk

Children and Families Bill

Background

1. The Queen's Speech on 9 May 2012 included a proposed Children and Families Bill that will include a number of provisions to deliver better support for families. The Bill is expected to be introduced in early 2013 and it will include measures to improve provision for children with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities, to improve the family courts and adoption; and measures to strengthen the powers of the Children's Commissioner.
2. The LGA's on-the-day briefing on the Queen's Speech included a summary of the Bill's main provisions and the key issues for the LGA.

Special Education Needs

3. The main measures are:
 - 3.1. replacing SEN statements and Learning Difficulty Assessments (for 16- to 25-year-olds) with a single, simpler 0-25 assessment process and Education, Health and Care Plan from 201;
 - 3.2. providing statutory protections comparable to those currently associated with a statement of SEN to up to 25 in further education – instead of it being cut off at 16;
 - 3.3. requiring local authorities to publish a local offer showing the support available to disabled children and young people and those with SEN, and their families;
 - 3.4. giving parents or young people with Education, Health and Care Plans the right to a personal budget for their support; and
 - 3.5. introducing mediation for disputes and trialling giving children the right to appeal if they are unhappy with their support.

Key issues for the LGA

4. Services must be locally based in order to deliver support to parents and young people with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEN) and it is right that local authorities continue to take on the role of co-ordinating this support. Indeed the vast majority of those who responded the Department for

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Education's SEN Green Paper consultation last year agreed with the proposal to put local authorities at the heart of the process.

5. The assessment system needs to be far more transparent, with a strong role played by the voluntary sector and other agencies including health and social care. Many local authorities have developed new and innovative ways of assessing a child's needs. Local authorities, including the 30 areas involved in the SEN Pathfinder projects, are already creating new ways of undertaking education, health and care assessments, involving parents and young people in the process of developing new systems.
6. The Government needs to be open about how national funding will be allocated to local authorities so that they can meet their new responsibilities and the needs of their most vulnerable young people. The Government's funding proposals are currently out for consultation and an LGA response will be submitted by the 21 May 2012 deadline.
7. The Government plans to extend the right of parents and young people to challenge decisions made about special educational needs decisions for young people between 16-25, presumably by extending access to SEN Tribunals. We also expect proposals that people wishing to use the SEN Tribunal must use mediation before hand. Both of these changes are likely to increase the cost to local authorities.
8. Placing a duty on local authorities to publish a 'local offer' of SEN needs clarification. For example, if provision made by an academy is part of the local offer and a parent is unhappy about the provision or a decision made by the academy, will the academy be subject to the SEND tribunal?
9. Further detail is expected to be published shortly in the long awaited Next Steps document and the LGA will be providing further briefing to coincide with the publication.

Family Courts

10. The main measures are:
 - 10.1. creating a time limit of six months by which care cases must be completed;
 - 10.2. making it explicit that case management decisions should be made only after impacts on the child, their needs and timetable have been considered;

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- 10.3. focusing the court on those issues which are essential to deciding whether to make a care order and getting rid of unnecessary processes in family proceedings;
- 10.4. requiring courts to have regard to the impact of delay on the child when commissioning expert evidence; and
- 10.5. requiring parents in dispute to consider mediation as a means of settling that dispute rather than litigation and freeing up judicial time by allowing legal advisers to process uncontested divorce applications.

Key issues for the LGA

- 11. The LGA supported the Family Justice Review and believes that children must not become the victims of the lengthy court process.
- 12. Councils are dedicated to putting children first and those in care need to be saved from the years of uncertainty created by the current court system and we welcome Government measures to speed up the system.

Adoption

- 13. The main measures are:
 - 13.1. Enacting those parts of the Adoption Action Plan which require legislation. The Plan seeks to improve and speed up the adoption system, and the Government has stated that this Bill will look to reduce the number of adoptions delayed in order to achieve a perfect or near ethnic match between adoptive parents and the adoptive child.

Key issues for the LGA

- 14. A recent report by Ofsted found that the most significant cause of delay for children is not councils slowing things down in relation to matching and ethnicity but the length of time it takes for cases to be completed in court. The average time taken to complete care proceedings is almost fourteen months. The report stated "Processes for matching children with adoptive placements were generally robust. There was little evidence of delay caused by an unrealistic search for a 'perfect' ethnic match."
- 15. Councils take their responsibilities towards children in their care extremely seriously. Social workers must be able to make the best decision for the individual child and should not be deterred from considering all options, including special guardianship arrangements. They will consider a child's religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural backgrounds when trying to find

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their ideal home too. However, as Ofsted recently confirmed, these factors do not delay placing a child with a loving family if they are otherwise suitable.

16. We acknowledge that there is a variation in performance across councils and recognise that at times the system has been risk averse, but we want to work with Government to change that and remove barriers that delay decisions, including tackling the significant delays in the family courts.
17. Councils are committed to improving services continually for our most vulnerable children and the LGA and its partners are developing an £8 million programme that will encourage children's services professionals to share information on what works. Helping councils to improve adoption processes will be a key part of this.

Financial Implications

18. There are no financial implications for the LGA.

Schools funding update

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

This report updates members on recent developments in schools funding issues.

Recommendations

That members:

1. Note this report and
2. Agree to receive further reports on any future developments.

Action

Officers to continue to provide updates to the Board.

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Schools Funding update

Schools' Funding

1. The DfE's consultation document "School Funding Reform; Next Steps towards a Fairer System" was issued on 26 March 2012. The closing date for responses is 21 May 2012.
2. The key points of the DfE document are:
 - 2.1. Ministers have said that their aim remains to move towards a national funding formula. But they will not do this until the next Spending Review period.
 - 2.2. The proposals concentrate wholly on local funding formulae. From April 2013 local authorities will be constrained to a small number of factors in the formula (the consultation says that the current 37 permitted factors will be reduced to less than 10). These are:
 - 2.2.1. Age Weighted Pupil Unit. This will no longer be allowed to vary by year but will be by phase, with possibly a difference for different Key Stages.
 - 2.2.2. Deprivation. Only free school meals (FSM) at school level or IDACI (income deprivation affecting children index – a DCLG developed measure which aims to measure deprivation affecting children in small areas) will be permitted.
 - 2.2.3. Looked after children.
 - 2.2.4. SEN at school level ('low cost'); authorities will not be able to use direct measures such as numbers of children on school action or school action plus and will have to use measures of prior attainment.
 - 2.2.5. English as an additional language for a period of 3 years in the school system.
 - 2.2.6. A lump sum – which could be £100,000 to £150,000.
 - 2.2.7. Premises factors – split site schools and rates.
 - 2.2.8. PFI costs.
 - 2.3. The proposals do not contain any provision for a small schools factor other than the lump sum. DfE are understood to be developing further proposals in this area.

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- 2.4. All schools will get a minimum funding guarantee of -1.5 per cent per pupil. It will be up to authorities in consultation with schools forums as to the level of any ceiling.
- 2.5. Schools Budget Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant (LACSEG), which is paid to academies to compensate for the central services they no longer receive from councils, will disappear in its current form. Instead the resources currently provided in LACSEG will be delegated to both academies and maintained schools. Maintained schools will be allowed to 'de-delegate' allowances for services such as insurance and services for ethnic minority pupils. Academies will also be allowed to buy in services from councils if they want to but not to 'de-delegate' as they do not have delegated budgets. This will replace LACSEG within the schools budget.
3. The LGA, in line with previous practice, will submit a joint response with the Association of Directors of Children's Services. This will be informed by a survey of councils sent out following the last Board meeting which asked councils to look at the effect of reducing the number of factors in local formulae as proposed by the DfE and any unintended consequences that might have. At the time of writing this is still in draft, but will be available in time for the meeting, and will be sent out in advance if at all possible. However the key points are expected to be in line with the LGA reaction on the day of publication of the consultation document:
 - 3.1. Our education system needs a clear and transparent national funding formula for schools at local authority level which provides a level playing field between maintained schools and academies. While it's good that Government has not rushed to implement a formula that would not achieve these objectives, schools and councils must have the flexibility to distribute their funding allocation to best meet the needs of children in their local communities.
 - 3.2. This might mean providing a higher allocation for a small rural school to ensure that it can stay open or ensuring that factors used to measure deprivation, such as free school meals, meet local circumstances.
 - 3.3. The local funding formula is not to blame for large variations in funding between similar schools in different local authority areas. Government must recognise that the vast majority of the variation comes from its national formula which is based on outdated and misleading data.
 - 3.4. It isn't good enough to hold back addressing the unfair national funding system until at least 2015, and pushing through overly simplistic local funding arrangements next year risks making things worse. While

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Whitehall prevaricates the education of millions of children could continue to suffer, potentially limiting their prospects for years to come.

- 3.5. The Education Secretary has previously said schools funded through councils still have a major part to play in our education system. He needs to scrap centrally determined constraints from Whitehall and adhere to this commitment to help councils and schools ensure every child receives adequate funding for their education.

Capital

4. There has also been no Government response to the consultation on the James Review into schools capital; this is also now expected soon. The key issues remain the scope of any single capital pot to distribute funding locally and how new school building is to be procured. There have been discussions about a regional procurement model using existing authority expertise but nothing has yet been announced.
5. Allocations for the Priority Schools Building programme have also not yet been announced. The LGA carried out research which established that it has been three times oversubscribed. This was carried by the Today programme which also interviewed Cllr Simmonds.

Academies top slice

6. The second Government consultation on the academies top-slice for 2011-12 and 2012-13 closed in January 2012. There has been contact at both officer and member level with DfE focussing on a fair way of estimating the top-slice for both 2011-12 and 2012-13. However the official position remains that we are awaiting a response from DfE. It also remains the case that the legal action by 29 councils which concerns the 2011-12 is officially stayed.
7. We are expecting a future consultation to cover arrangements in 2013-14 and following. In its response to the consultation on business rates retention, the Government indicated that they would explore removing the funding for central education functions from formula grant into DfE budgets. This would be likely to mean that authorities and academies would be paid grants direct from DfE. The LGA has not seen firm proposals but we have indicated to DfE that a clear split of responsibilities between authorities and academies is vital.

Financial Implications

8. None specific to this report.

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Children's Improvement Board Update on Activity – May 2012

Purpose of report

For information and comment.

Summary

This report updates the Children and Young People Board on recent developments on the activities led by the Children's Improvement Board (CIB) and invites feedback.

Recommendation

That the Board consider and comment on the current and planned activities of the CIB.

Action

Officers from the CIB team and the LGA to take forward the CIB's work programme in the light of the Board's comments

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Children’s Improvement Board Update on Activity – May 2012

Background

1. The Children’s Improvement Board work programme is a major part of local government’s push for greater self-improvement and self-regulation. It is delivered through a partnership between the LGA, the Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS) and SOLACE (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives), supported by funding from the Department for Education (DfE). Updates on CIB activity are a standing item at the meetings of the Children and Young People Board.

Highlights of recent activity

2. The Children’s Improvement Board met on 23 April and confirmed priorities for 2012-13 as:
 - 2.1. Reducing the number of councils in intervention.
 - 2.2. Establishing an effective system of peer challenge and support.
 - 2.3. Better engagement of stakeholders including adult services.
 - 2.4. Supporting councils in managing the impact of policies.

Reducing the number of councils in intervention

3. Reducing the number of councils in difficulty who are subject to DfE improvement notices and are receiving direct, “targeted sector support (TSS)” via CIB will be particularly challenging for local government this year as Ofsted is introducing a new safeguarding inspection regime and the government is publishing adoption scorecards. Regions will shortly be putting together their delivery plans for the next year and are being asked to give this issue particular focus, together with the need to provide “early sector support” to pre-empt performance difficulties.
4. The CIB’s team of regional brokers will move away from a general regional support role and form a smaller team of four Children’s Improvement Advisers. They will work closely with councils who are subject to improvement notices or at risk and with the LGA’s Principal Advisers. This should provide a better coordinated sector-led offer to councils and ensure specialist children’s services input where needed.

Adoption scorecards

5. In terms of support for councils following the publication of adoption scorecards, CIB has committed to offering support notwithstanding concerns about the Government's overall approach. Following the publication of the scorecards and a review of the results by government, some councils may be asked to take part in a further, more detailed diagnostic process. CIB has worked with DfE to commission Outcomes UK and BAAF to carry out this diagnostic with the aim of providing an opportunity for the council to tell the story behind the data and to look at a wider picture of support for children in care and the local context. Where this diagnostic shows genuine concerns about performance and that the council would benefit from additional support, CIB will be in a position to discuss options with the council and link these with support available from peers in other councils.
6. Further information on this issue is provided in the report on adoption scorecards (**Item 3** on this agenda).

Establishing an effective system of peer challenge and support

7. Councils working together in each region are actively engaged in peer challenge which is crucial to making improvement genuinely sector-led. For 2012-13, regions will be asked to build on the substantial progress already made and to set a target of ensuring that every council receives a challenge by 31 December 2012. Because peer challenge is owned by councils and not centrally prescribed, a number of different approaches are developing. In order to allow for the most effective learning from the peer challenges carried out during the year, there will be a full evaluation of peer challenge at the start of 2013.
8. During the first quarter of this year, WS Atkins have been working with 10 pilot councils to develop a data profile which will provide a core of common performance information to support peer challenge. CIB received a report on the project and the piloting and agreed that the profiles would, in future, be supported via LG Inform. This will enable councils to access data on children's services as part of a comprehensive and flexible data resource for local government.

Better engagement of stakeholders

9. The development of a system of sector-led improvement depends on active ownership by councils. As well as upgrading communications to make them more interactive, CIB will have a regular dialogue with regional leads (directors of children's services, Lead Members for children's services and chief

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executives nominated by each region) and will be aiming to hold more meetings outside London. In addition, members of the CIB team are keen to participate in existing meetings and networks of councils. The CIB team met with the nine lead DCSs on 16 April and will meet with all the regional leads including chief executives and lead members on 29 May in Birmingham.

Supporting councils in managing the impact of policies

10. CIB has work in progress and in development to support councils with the impact of a number of different policy changes. In order to develop a more coherent approach, policy support has been grouped to build links between initiatives. For 2012-13 the programmes will be:
 - 10.1. The Munro Review, social work reform and early help.
 - 10.2. Adoption, commissioning for children in care and the Family Justice Review.
 - 10.3. Early and foundation years, commissioning sufficiency and quality.
 - 10.4. And three more discrete issues – data profiles, innovation and commissioning for youth, integrated workforce (legacy of the Children’s Workforce Development Council).
11. Commissioning will be a cross-cutting theme for all programmes.
12. As part of last year’s programme a number of good practice case studies were produced on young people’s services, early help and fostering and adoption. These case studies are now available via the C4EO (Centre for Excellence in Outcomes) website (validated, promising and emerging practice is listed under each of the theme headings on the C4EO home page <http://www.c4eo.org.uk/default.aspx>).

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End of year review 2011/12

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

The LGA Audit and Scrutiny Panel has asked for an end of year report to go to its 30 May meeting on the priorities set out the LGA's 2011/12 business plan, detailing delivery and impact. The section of the table relating to the Children and Young People Board's business is attached at **Appendix A** for information.

Recommendation

That the report be noted.

Action

No further action is required.

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Appendix A

Children and Young People – lead Helen Johnston

2011-12 Business Plan	What we delivered	Impact	RAG
Councils have a strong strategic role in education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local freedom or central control II' report Secretary of State for Education session for Lead Members at NACS conference Event for Lead Members to discuss the interim report of the LGADFE action research into the evolving council role in education Lobbying campaign re concerns about the impact of Government policy on the sector's ability to support Raising the compulsory Participation Age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set the terms of the debate on the continuing council role in education Discussion with the Secretary of State re education as a benefit of LGA membership Lead Members shared best practice, networked with peers and fed into action research Raised profile of key issues of concern to councils, influenced the drafting of statutory guidance and strengthened the council role in the implementation of the Youth Contract 	A
Councils understand and are implementing their role in reducing youth offending and the use of custody for young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction of sector led peer review for Youth Offending Teams Publication on resettlement of young offenders Influenced plans for devolution of youth custody budgets to councils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> YJB revised oversight plans are less prescriptive with data collection burdens reduced Shared good practice Raised profile with VCSs Full assessment of costs and impact being carried out by YJB 	A
Front-line staff are freed up from unnecessary bureaucracy to allow them to spend more time with children and their families through influencing the implementation of the Munro review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Influenced revision of two sets of statutory guidance Lobbied for revisions to Ofsted Inspections Lobbying on Adoption Action Plan, including Parliamentary briefings and strong messages conveyed through media Sector led support on Munro and Adoption through CIB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance shorter and less prescriptive Current draft of Working Together reduced from c400 to c20 pages New inspection framework considers contribution of all services not just councils End to annual rating of children's services Govt publicly recognised limitation of adoption scorecards and scorecards contain contextual information to reflect councils' challenges 	A
Improvements in children's services are made through delivery of a new sector led improvement and support programme (funded through 8m DfE grant).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infrastructure for SLI being set up through CIB Funding for 2012/13 agreed Targeted support delivered to 14 councils subject to DfE notices Programme of peer challenge Data profiles have been piloted and will be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All councils have a focus for SLI in children's services Vote of confidence by Government will help make SLI become reality Councils on improvement notices have access to advice and support Peer challenge will allow the sector to help 	A

<p>Children's services are provided with improvement support for Children's Safeguarding</p>	<p>rolled out via LG Inform</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support to councils on children's centres, innovation, productivity and commissioning 24 Safeguarding peer reviews delivered 80 officer and partner peers accredited through national and regional training events Research on the impact of the peer review on a sample of authorities in intervention undertaken by NFER Two consultation events (one with lead members and one with member peers) on refreshing the peer review held with DCSSs and officer and partner peers 	<p>itself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data profiles provide common set of data Supported councils in areas of new policy Peer review making a significant contribution to sector led improvement, Improvement in review methodology 100% of DCS's and review teams agreed that the review provided a basis for improvement 94% of DCS's said they would recommend a review to a colleague and be willing to take part in a review themselves 99% of review teams agreed that the review developed their own skills 	<p style="background-color: #00FF00; text-align: center;">G</p>
<p>Children's health is a priority in the planned change to the health service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed a support offer with health sector Delivered conference on 'Reducing Health Inequalities for Children and Young People'. Worked with the National learning set for HWBs to produce a product for health and wellbeing boards Raised the profile of children and young people's health on the Knowledge Hub and created a dedicated webpage on CYP pages. Developed a consultation response on the Children and Young People's Health Outcomes Strategy Commissioned research on Children's Trusts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased buy in from health sector. Well attended and received by membership Existing products now fit for purpose in light of the new public health reforms. Product well received by health and local government sector. Gave membership opportunity to discuss the issues and a place to find help and support. Gave local government an opportunity to influence government policy Local authorities more able to share ideas, clarify policy 	<p style="background-color: #FFA500; text-align: center;">A</p>
<p>Councils achieve increased productivity in children's services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch of a new 'Better commissioning and productivity' group on the Knowledge Hub housing a library of over 80 key resources to support commissioning in children's services. Facilitation of the Commissioning and Productivity Forum bringing together commissioners/providers at a national level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sector is better able to network and collaborate on productivity 	<p style="background-color: #FFA500; text-align: center;">A</p>

G	Outcome achieved
A	Progress made towards achieving outcome but work still underway
R	Limited progress towards achieving outcome

Other business report

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

This section provides reports on other business relevant to the Board.

Recommendation

That the Board note the update.

Action

LGA officers to action as necessary.

Contact officer: Lucy Ellender
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Other business report

Alternative Provision and Pupil Referral Unit Consultation

1. The LGA has submitted comments to the Department of Education consultation on improving Alternative Provision (AP) and Pupil Referral Units, (PRUs) which proposes taking forward recommendations in a recent report by Charlie Taylor, the Government's expert advisor on behaviour. The LGA's response strongly supports the proposals to place the responsibility for excluded pupils with schools in order to improve the incentives for schools to make sure the provision is of a high standard.
2. However, we do not accept the argument that PRU provision will automatically be improved by moving all providers to academy status and we cannot see any evidence in Charlie Taylor's report to support that assertion. Local authorities will retain the duty to ensure full time education for all young people in their area, including those excluded from school. To meet that duty they must retain the powers to carry it out, including establishing a local authority PRU.
3. We also disagree strongly with the proposal to ban local authority staff from the management committees of PRUs. This would prevent the majority of local authority employees who have no role in education from contributing to their local community and we argue that it is draconian and should be either be withdrawn or re-drafted in a much more focused manner. Charlie Taylor's report recommended that local school representation should be 'in the majority', not that there should be a ban on local authority representation.

Ofsted consultation on the Regulation of Providers on the Early Years Register

4. The LGA submitted our response to the Ofsted consultation on a revised framework for the regulation of registered early years provision. Their main outcomes were to:
 - 4.1. keep children safe through a robust registration process and taking appropriate and proportionate enforcement action;
 - 4.2. allow more autonomy for registered providers in managing their own services; and
 - 4.3. raise the bar in inspection and reporting by focusing inspection on children's personal and emotional development and the progress that children make in their learning.
5. The consultation put forward numerous proposals to achieve this, the two key ones of interest to the LGA were that the providers themselves would look into

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minor matters that do not suggest any risks to children and that a short inspection summary is all that is needed for small scale providers.

6. After seeking the views of local authorities the LGA's response stated that although we support less top down regulation and self-improvement, children's safety is paramount and we have always acknowledged the need for external inspection when dealing with people in vulnerable situations. Therefore we think that providers do need to be adequately overseen and supported with local government being fully consulted in the details of how any change in inspecting minor matters by providers themselves may work.
7. We also explained the LGA feel it is crucial that Ofsted and local authorities work in better partnership to drive up quality of provision of early education providers. Ofsted must maintain a consistent, efficient and ongoing dialogue with councils, who best understand their local areas' needs and existing provision.

Child Sexual Exploitation

8. Following the Government's launch in November 2011 of a National Action Plan to tackle child sexual exploitation, the LGA and Barnardo's have jointly produced a practice briefing entitled "Tackling child sexual exploitation: Helping local authorities to develop effective responses". This guidance consolidates guidance, legislation and good practice to show the key elements of a comprehensive local response and suggest how local authorities and other stakeholders can tackle this abuse, and the advantages of partnership working and information sharing. This briefing will be launched in May. In addition we will be holding a launch event for Lead Members for children's services and professionals from the police and Directors of children's services to explore these issues further and share good practice from local authorities across the country. The Government's interim report on the National Action Plan to be released in May will mention this joint briefing as useful progress and a helpful tool to help councils develop their own locally appropriate responses.

Corporate Parenting Week

9. Looking after other people's children is one of the most important things councils do. However outcomes for children and young people that are in, or have left, care remain stubbornly worse than for other children. For these reasons the LGA is holding the first annual corporate parenting week from 25 June to 1 July 2012. It will be a week of local and national activities highlighting the importance of corporate parenting and an opportunity to promote local action.
10. Corporate parenting week will be predominately aimed at elected members and provide opportunities for:

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- 10.1. highlighting to all councillors that corporate parenting is their responsibility and to find out more about their role in corporate parenting;
 - 10.2. sharing ideas and good practice across the country;
 - 10.3. showcasing the achievements of looked after children and young people in local areas;
 - 10.4. talking to children and young people about their views on local services and how they could be improved; and
 - 10.5. recruiting people to come forward and foster or adopt in local areas.
11. This year's corporate parenting week will take place during the LGA Annual Conference and there will be numerous activities at the conference promoting the week, including a session by the Children's Minister, Tim Loughton MP who will be talking about planned reforms to the care and adoption systems.
 12. To encourage councils to take part in corporate parenting week in their local areas the LGA has produced an accompanying corporate parenting pack, which has been sent to all councils this month. The pack contains a myriad of ideas on how local councils and their members can get involved in the week and promoting corporate parenting.

Social Work Reform Board

13. The Social Work Reform Board (SWRB) is reaching a stage where it is beginning to wind down in its current form and think about ensuring an appropriate legacy of implementation and development of its main products. The College of Social Work will be responsible for many of the elements relating to professional development for social workers, including the professional capabilities framework, which describes the necessary attributes of social workers at different stages of their careers.
14. The LGA is now hosting the employer standards framework, which identifies good practice in supervision and the national model careers framework, which describes the key stages of a career that need to be overseen and encouraged by employers. The initial development of newly qualified social workers will be encouraged by the introduction of the new assessed and supported year in employment. The SWRB is anxious to ensure that it is succeeded by some appropriate monitoring and advisory body to work with the new Chief Social Worker. The LGA will continue to be closely involved representing employer interests and those of the Children and Young People Board through Councillor Susie Charles and supporting officers.

National Youth Agency (NYA)

15. Following agreement from the Children and Young People Board Office Holders, the NYA has agreed its work plan for the next financial year. Developments to date include:

Universal Strand

16. Current membership of the Supporting Services for Young People knowledge hub is at over 300, a significant increase in membership since the re-launch. NYA has worked with DfE and other partners to provide joined up support and promotion of relevant developments.
17. Discussion is taking place about the content of the September Conference, with a provisional theme of 'troubled families' and final arrangements will be made shortly. The proposed date is within week of 10 September.
18. The latest version of The Edge, the NYA's quarterly magazine for councillors, has been published and promoted.

Tailored Support strand

19. Of the 40 councils NYA is intending to work with as a part of the tailored support strand, 16 councils started in April 2012 – Wolverhampton; Walsall; Reading; Herefordshire; Ealing; Manchester; Ipswich; Derbyshire; East Cheshire; Luton; Central Bedfordshire; Hillingdon; Norfolk; Sheffield; Rotherham and Salford. There are a further 6 councils with no confirmed start date as yet: Lancashire; Hounslow; Bristol; North East Lincs; Kirklees; Nottingham City and two councils have a September start date: Camden and Telford.
20. Twenty of the twenty-one councils the NYA provided tailored support packages to during 2011-12 have been completed, with 17 case studies written up and available on the Knowledge Hub. The remaining case studies are awaiting sign off from the councils involved.

Emerging Themes strand

21. NYA is focusing on two areas of work this year – troubled families, and the role of youth work within this area, and piloting the role of business brokerage in Manchester with the British Chambers of Commerce.

Policy and advocacy

22. NYA continue to provide policy support to the LGA.

National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)

23. Reporting activity in April has included the submission of reports on Alternative Provision for Young People with SEN; Developing Indicators for Early Identification of Young People at Risk of Temporary Disconnection from

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Learning; Children and Young People's Experiences of Fostering and Adoption Processes; a Best Practice review of the Role of School Forums; and a School Place Mapping Study. On the latter, a seminar was held at the LGA offices on 1 May with around 100 local authorities represented, primarily by school place planning officers. The event, led by John Freeman and supported by officers representing the LGA, the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) and NFER, fed back findings from the NFER report and facilitated discussion around the current and future issues relating to school place planning and admissions. John Freeman and NFER are currently writing a report which summarises the discussions and proposes a possible programme of support for local authorities.

24. The NFER are looking forward to working more closely on individual project delivery with Lead Members in the new financial year. We also look forward to hearing any feedback on a possible programme of research on the back of the earlier discussions and suggestions made by the Board and the circulated paper which captured the Board suggestions, alongside the individual feedback gathered across projects recently delivered.

Note of decisions taken and actions required

Title:	Children and Young People Board
Date and time:	28 March 2012, 11.00am
Venue:	Local Government House

Attendance

Position	Councillor	Council
Chairman	David Simmonds	Hillingdon LB
Vice chair	John Merry CBE	Salford City
Deputy chair	Liz Green	Kingston upon Thames RB
Deputy chair	Apu Bagchi	Bedford BC
Members	David Pugh	Isle of Wight Council
	Derrick Murphy	Norfolk CC
	Robert Light	Kirklees MBC
	Paul Lakin	Rotherham MBC
	Anne Burns	Cumbria CC
	David Bellotti	Bath & NE Somerset Council
	Rita Krishna	Hackney LB
Substitutes	Catherine McDonald	Southwark LB
	Peter Downes OBE	Huntingdonshire DC
In attendance	Cllr Toni Coombs	SW regional network Chair
	Cllr Linda Burgess	Y & H regional network Chair
	Cllr Patricia Bradwell	East Midlands network Vice Chair
Apologies	Catharine Grundy	Birmingham City
	Kath Pinnock	Kirklees MBC
	Baroness Shireen Ritchie	Kensington & Chelsea RB

Officers: Helen Johnston, Ian Keating, Cassandra Harrison, Colin Hilton, David Pye, Lucy Ellender

Item	Decisions and actions	Action by
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1/6 The Council Role in Education

Schools and Children’s Services Finance update

Cllr David Simmonds set out the three main areas for discussion as schools revenue and funding, schools capital and finally the council role in education. Mike Heiser, Senior Adviser for Finance, introduced the report setting out the changes the Government had announced around the schools funding formula. The Government’s aim was to move towards a national funding formula, however this would now not be in place until the next Spending Review in 2015. They would instead be concentrating on simplifying local funding formulae. The changes meant that LACSEG, in its current form, would disappear and be replaced with 3 blocks of funding divided between schools, special educational needs and early years. The amounts schools received would be calculated using an October Pupil count. There had been no further statements from the Government on capital.

It was noted that School Forums were being reviewed and the 15 member minimum requirement would no longer apply, there would also be restrictions on the number of council officers who could sit on the Forums.

Members were concerned about the possible restrictiveness of the new local funding factors and were worried that the inconsistencies in the current national formula would persist. Members raised particular concerns for small rural schools, which receive higher levels of funding but which provide pupils with a local school, therefore cutting down on school transport times. Members identified that school transport was a major issue for parliamentarians and ministers.

Members raised concerns about the new regulations for School Forums, saying that there would be difficulties in gaining equal representation for schools on school forums, and that the presence of council officers was needed to maintain parity. Members felt there was a lot of differences between School Forums throughout the country.

Decision

Members agreed that a strong response to the consultation would be advisable and that the whole Board should have sight of it prior to its return.

Members agreed to write to authorities to get local case studies the effect of the proposed simplification of local formulae to inform the response.

Action

Officers to collate case studies.

Helen Johnston

Officers to share response to consultation with the Board.

Mike Heiser

Officers to send out write up from Council role in Education event, held on 21 March.

Lucy Ellender

2 Reform of adoption and care systems

Cllr Liz Green introduced this item highlighting some of the LGA's key concerns around the introduction of scorecards as a method of evaluating council adoption services. It was noted that the LGA had been successful in gaining some concessions from the Government and that the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) was currently undertaking several pieces of research in this area.

Some members raised issues about the processes that potential adopters had to undergo before being allowed to adopt. The onerous nature of the process was particularly criticised.

Members agreed that the guidance issued to social workers should be shorter, but still robust, and an important part of improving the service was to ensure that all social workers received quality training.

Members felt that the use of special guardianships was still not fully understood, and that more needed to be made of the fact that these were permanent placements. Another key aspect that needed further consideration by the Government in the use of scorecards was the demographic context the council was working within and the impact that this could have on adoption rates.

Decision

Members noted the report and the LGA's media response to the proposals.

3 Member engagement and the NFER research programme

Cllr Paul Lakin, NFER Champion on the Board, introduced this item setting out the options for increased member engagement with the NFER Research programme and Cllr David Bellotti informed the group about his own involvement in NFER research on School Forums.

Members agreed that members of the Board should be given greater oversight into the research projects to ensure that the research was focussed on the issues of greatest importance and use to the sector.

Decision

Members agreed:

- 1. to use members as champions for Children and Young People Board commissioned research;*
- 2. to have further discussions around the subjects that should be researched by the NFER.*

Action

Officers to put this on a future agenda of the CYP Board

Lucy Ellender

4 Children's Improvement Board (CIB) Update on Activity - March 2012

Colin Hilton, the new Director for Children's Services Self-Improvement, attended the meeting and outlined the four key areas of work for the CIB in the coming months:

1. working with councils on intervention;
2. embedding peer challenge;
3. engaging members;
4. fostering wider understanding of the work of the CIB.

Members agreed that the CIB needed to be seen as a sector-led initiative and not a Government one, with implications for the whole council rather than just children's services departments.

Members raised concerns around the differences between peer challenge and peer review and whether these were being communicated effectively. Colin said that peer challenge was a more general improvement tool focussed on mutual support, whereas peer review was focussed on safeguarding

Decision

Members noted the report and thanked Colin for his attendance.

Action

Officers to proceed as directed.

Colin Hilton

5 Hidden Talents: supporting the most disengaged young people

Members supported the proposals contained in the report and the work that the LGA was doing on this issue, but raised some detailed concerns about the consistent use of terminology within the report.

Decision

Members noted the report and agreed the proposed Next Steps.

Action

Officers to proceed as directed.

Jasbir Jhas

7 Other Business Report

Decision

Members noted the report.

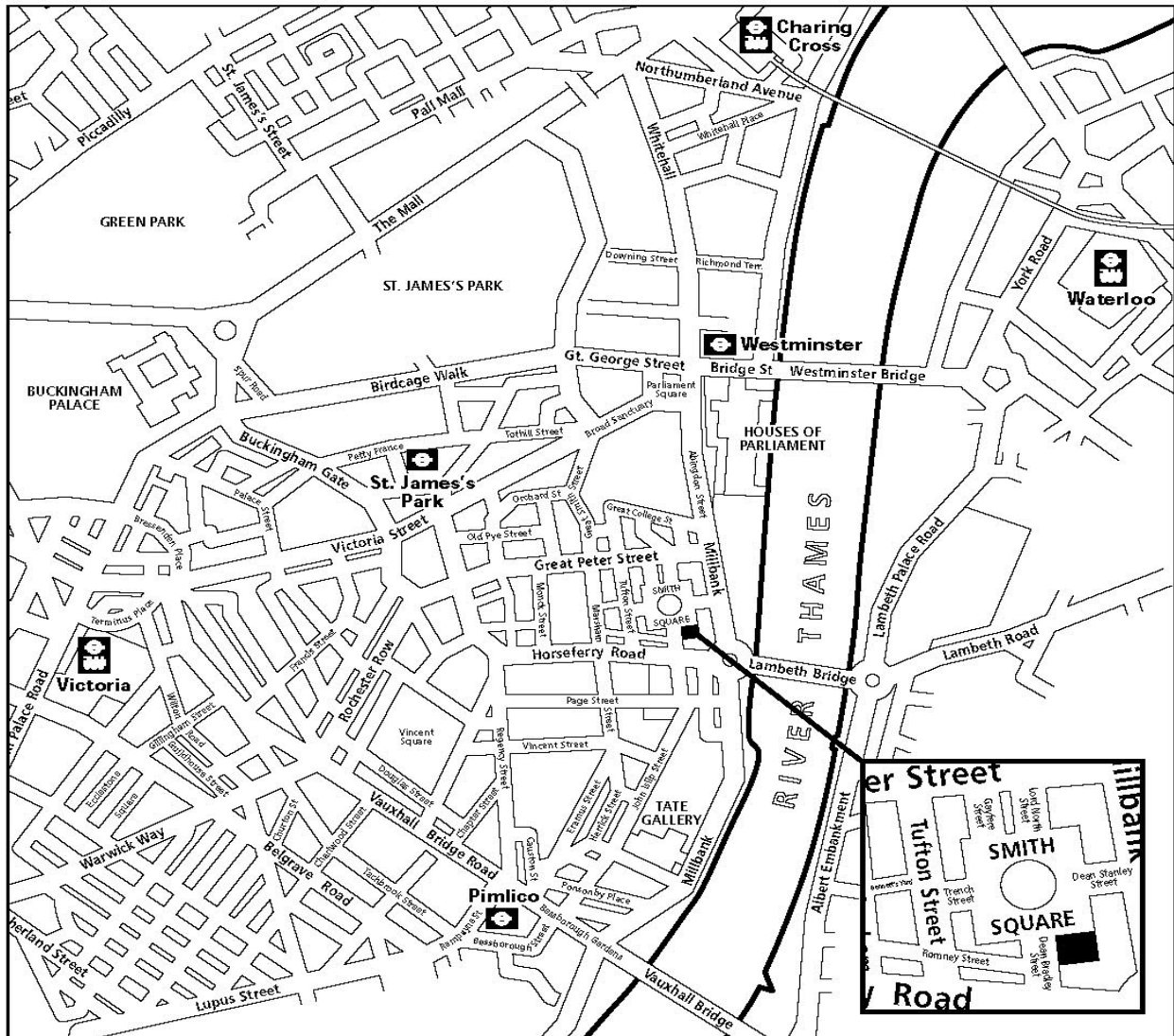
Action

No actions arising.

8 Note of the last meeting – 25 January 2012

Members **agreed** the note of the meeting held on 25 January 2012.

LGA Location Map



Local Government Association

Local Government House
Smith Square, London SW1P 3HZ
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Public transport

Local Government House is well served by public transport. The nearest mainline stations are;

Victoria

and **Waterloo**; the local underground stations are **St James's Park** (District and Circle Lines); **Westminster** (District, Circle and Jubilee Lines); and **Pimlico** (Victoria Line), all about 10 minutes walk away. Buses **3** and **87** travel along **Millbank**, and the **507** between Victoria and Waterloo goes close by at the end of **Dean Bradley Street**.

Bus routes - Millbank

87 Wandsworth - Aldwych **N87**
3 Crystal Palace - Brixton - Oxford Circus

Bus routes - Horseferry Road

507 Waterloo - Victoria
C10 Elephant and Castle - Pimlico - Victoria
88 Camden Town - Whitehall - Westminster - Pimlico - Clapham Common

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