

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.

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Other business report

Update on Raising the Participation Age (RPA)

1. The Education and Skills Act 2008 introduced legislation to Raise the Participation Age (RPA) of young people in learning to 17 from 2013 and until their eighteenth birthday from 2015. They must continue in education or training either through full-time education (school, college or home education); work-based learning (Apprenticeship) or part-time education or training if employed, self-employed or volunteering for over 20 hours a week. Local authorities take on a new statutory duty to support RPA, and have a significant role in bringing together schools, colleges, employers, and other learning providers to coordinate action for this cohort, and therefore have an interest in how RPA will work.
2. DfE launched a three-month consultation (January to April) on taking forward RPA implementation. The LGA responded and recommended:
 - 2.1. Working not for reward, holding an office, and self-employment should constitute as productive 'participation' if accompanied by part-time learning, as should registered carers.
 - 2.2. The local authority ability to fine employers for breach of duties would be used as a last resort, based on local discretion and could be introduced on a staggered and/or tiered approach according to size/type of employer. Surplus from fines must be reinvested by local authorities to raise participation (not returned to DfE).
 - 2.3. Micro enterprises (less than 20 employees) which are in many cases predominant employers in local areas, while exempt from financial sanctions, could be subject to non-financial sanctions which should be a matter for local negotiation.
 - 2.4. That Government, in discussions with local authorities, review the potential new costs as a result of these duties.
3. On 2 July, the DfE published its response to the consultation. The most important issue to report is that the Government will now not require employers to carry out their obligations for 16 and 17 year olds in checking a young person is enrolled on a course before employing them, and arrange work hours to fit around learning. Councils were tasked to enforce this, and fine employers where it was evidenced they had failed to discharge these obligations. The Education Secretary has said that the duties on employers, together with the enforcement process against young people and parents, will remain in statute,

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and introduction may be reviewed at a later stage. The local authority duty to support RPA remains.

4. On the same day, DfE announced reforms to post 16 funding, which in essence means funding will move from per qualification to per learner. It is effective from September 2013, in parallel with the commencement of RPA. It suggests that learners will have to follow a defined programme of study, rather than a number of individual courses. The Government expects that this will provide young people with a better mix of skills, and chimes with LGA calls under the Hidden Talents campaign to support young people to be better prepared for the future. The proposals require further detailed work and to provide this, the DfE will establish a Ministerial working group for learning providers to implement some of these changes. The LGA will call for involvement given out strategic role in post 16 planning, and our role as a provider, particularly for vulnerable young people.
5. The LGA has organised a roundtable session on RPA on 26 July for councils from across England to discuss directly with lead DfE officials next steps for implementation, which will include developing guidance and regulations. The LGA will call for involvement given councils' strategic role in post 16 planning, in maintaining schools and as a provider of post-16 education and training.

Inquiry into schools duty to provide careers guidance

6. The Education Select Committee has announced an inquiry on careers guidance for young people in light of the new statutory duty to secure access to independent and impartial careers guidance for pupils, which passes from local authorities to schools from September 2012. Written evidence must be submitted by 3 September 2012. An LGA draft response will be circulated to Board members during August.
7. A key line of inquiry is how local authorities have supported schools to take on this duty. It will also look into the quality and impartiality of careers guidance provided by schools and colleges; preparedness of schools; and support for vulnerable groups. Local authorities maintain responsibility to support young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) as they will not be in receipt of careers guidance from a learning institution.
8. The LGA has commissioned NFER to conduct evidence based research into this issue. The findings from this report will be useful if the LGA is invited to give oral evidence.
9. Special Educational Needs and Disability
10. The Government has confirmed that, along with changes to the funding of mainstream schools, it will radically transform the way it will fund provision for children and young people with special education needs, including those aged

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16-24. Through their funding formula schools and colleges will be provided with budgets to meet the needs of learners with low levels of special need. Local authorities will be expected to provide 'top up' funding for individuals with high levels of need. Local authorities will receive a 'high needs block' as part of the DSG which will bring together a number of existing pre and post 16 special needs budgets. The Education Funding Agency plans to provide LAs with the initial notification of the high needs block allocations by the end of July. LGA officers continue to work with local authority partnerships, providing support and information.

Hidden Talents Campaign

11. In June the LGA launched new research assessing the level of match between the further education qualifications provided to young people, and the jobs available to them in the local economy. The conclusions are a cause for concern as nationally there is an oversupply of skills in some sectors and an undersupply in others. The LGA is optimistic that local solutions exist, and that local partnerships – including schools, colleges and employers – need the levers over skills provision locally to give young people the skills they require for local labour markets.
12. On 27 June, Cllr Shona Johnstone, Vice Chairman of the LGA Economy and Transport Board, gave evidence on behalf of the LGA to the Work and Pension Select Committee Inquiry into youth unemployment and the Youth Contract, specifically focusing on the £126m available for 16-17 year olds not in education, employment or training. She emphasised the complexity of the current system where young people can receive support from at least 8 national organisations, funding 33 schemes and said that local authorities should be the glue that links learning providers with young people themselves. Further supplementary evidence has been submitted to emphasise the need for local authorities to have an oversight role in how nationally selected Youth Contract providers are delivered provision in local areas.
13. On Tuesday 10 July Cllr David Simmonds chaired a Parliamentary Roundtable in the House of Commons – held jointly with the Princes Trust – on youth unemployment. We used the roundtable to explore the activity local authorities are leading to support the most disengaged young people into work and learning, and to discuss how these approaches might be better enabled by the national system. Around 20 MPs attended the event.

Children and Young People's Health Outcomes Strategy

14. In January the Secretary of State for Health (SofS) announced a children and young people's health outcomes strategy would be unveiled later this year, an independent forum was set up to develop a set of recommendations.

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15. In June the forum invited a number of stakeholders including the LGA to take part in its assurance process ahead of presenting the forum's recommendations to the SofS in early July. We will update members when the report is published which is due in Autumn.
16. Read the full LGA submission here: www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/childrens-health/-/journal_content/56/10171/3597908/ARTICLE-TEMPLATE

Children's Commissioner

17. The Government has announced that it will be reforming the office of the Children's Commissioner in line with the recommendations of John Dunford's independent review of the role of the Children's Commissioner. It has accepted in principle all of his recommendations and has said that they will consult on the legislative changes needed to implement them.
18. The draft legislation would create a new role for the Children's Commissioner, focused on promoting and protecting the rights of children. The Children's Commissioner would have powers to:
 - 18.1. carry out investigations;
 - 18.2. carry out assessments of the impact of new policies and legislation on children's rights;
 - 18.3. undertake research;
 - 18.4. monitor the effectiveness of complaints and advocacy services for children and young people;
 - 18.5. access places where children are cared for or accommodated away from home, so that their concerns can be heard;
 - 18.6. request the information needed to carry out full and robust investigations;
 - 18.7. require those to whom recommendations are made to set out how they intend to respond.
19. The aim of the draft legislation will be to make the Children's Commissioner more independent from Government and more directly accountable to Parliament, in particular through an annual report to Parliament that will allow for more effective scrutiny of the impact that the Children's Commissioner's activities have had on the promotion and protection of children's rights.

National Youth Agency (NYA)

20. The NYA has have engaged in several activities around the youth agenda this year. Membership of its Supporting Services for Young People Group on the Knowledge Hub (KHub) is now 337, and we have complimented this with a monthly e-bulletin highlighting developments on the KHub as well as producing a 'how to' guide.

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21. Alongside youth work the NYA have also been focusing on three other areas of work this year; troubled families, business involvement with the sector and measuring outcomes.
22. The troubled families work seeks to identify and highlight the role that youth work plays in the troubled families agenda. To this end they will be holding a conference on the troubled families agenda on 12 September in Birmingham. Speakers include Robert McCullough Graham (Associate Director of the DCLG Troubled Families Team), Councillor Ken Meeson and Fiona Black, NYA Chief Executive.
23. The business involvement work will focus on piloting the role of business brokerage in Manchester with the British Chambers of Commerce. This will be a joint piece of work with the North West Regional Youth Work Unit.
24. The third area of work is continuing with our work on evidencing the value of youth work. They will fund and work with the Young Foundation in two pilot areas – Norfolk and Staffordshire and work and work with four further local authorities including Solihull and Oxfordshire to test practical tools for measuring the impact of their services.
25. The NYA are also provide tailored support to 40 councils, 16 of which started in April 2012 – Wolverhampton; Walsall; Reading; Herefordshire; Ealing; Manchester; Ipswich; Derbyshire; East Cheshire; Luton; Central Bedfordshire; Hillingdon; Norfolk; Sheffield; Rotherham; Salford. They have a further 6 Councils with no confirmed start date as yet: Lancashire; Hounslow; Bristol; North East Lincs; Kirklees; Nottingham City and 2 Councils with a September start date: Camden; Telford.

National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)

26. Reporting activity in the April to June 2012 period has included the publication of reports on:
 - 26.1. Alternative Provision for Young People with Special Educational Needs
 - 26.2. Developing Indicators for Early Identification of Young People at Risk of Temporary Disconnection from Learning;
 - 26.3. Fostering Partnerships – A Review of Current Practice;
 - 26.4. Children and young people’s Experiences of Fostering and Adoption Processes: A Literature Review;
 - 26.5. The Impact of Safeguarding Peer Reviews;
 - 26.6. Changes to the Funding of SEN Provision: Views of Lead Members;
 - 26.7. A Best Practice Review of the Role of School Forums; and
 - 26.8. The Soulbury Committee Workforce Survey 2010-11.
27. Newly commissioned studies included the aforementioned Fostering Partnerships – A Review of Current Practice and most recently Practice

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examples of effective transition of CEIAG from local authorities to schools. Researchers are also working on proposals for a study looking at the longer term impact of safeguarding children peer reviews and an evaluation of peer challenge activity across regions in the context of sector-led improvement and support (jointly commissioned by LGA and CIB).