

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
Position: Programme Officer
Phone no: 020 7664 3173
E-mail: lucy.ellender@local.gov.uk

Other business report

National Youth Agency (NYA)

1. The NYA has continued to promote and support the Supporting Services for Young People Knowledge Hub (KHub). The total number of users on the NYA's KHub site are now 360. They are continuing to provide resources and materials from the sector free to download for all members.
2. The NYA's conference on the troubled families agenda on 12 September in Birmingham is now fully subscribed. Speakers include Robert McCullough Graham (Associate Director of the DCLG Troubled Families Team), Councillor Ken Meeson (one of the current Children and Young People Board's representatives for the NYA) and Fiona Black, NYA's Chief Executive.

Tailored Support strand

3. The NYA are currently advertising for the remaining support packages. Of the 40 councils that they are intending to work with, 17 Councils commenced work in the Spring 2012 – Wolverhampton; Walsall; Reading; Herefordshire; Ealing; Manchester; Ipswich; Derbyshire; East Cheshire; Luton; Hillingdon; Norfolk; Sheffield; Rotherham; North East Lincs; Bristol; Hounslow. 5 Councils have started work on the pilot for the new cost calculator and testing some of the outcomes toolkits. These are; Staffordshire, Norfolk, Reading, Solihull and Oxfordshire. There are currently 7 Councils with a September/October start date for tailored support: Telford; Salford; Kirklees; Lancashire; Nottingham City; Enfield; Cornwall.

Emerging Themes strand

4. The three areas of focus for this year - troubled families, business involvement with the sector and measuring outcomes on the value of youth work are all progressing on schedule. The NYA are in the process of analysing the results of a national survey of heads of youth services to examine their involvement with the troubled families agenda. The results will be launched at the conference next month.
5. The business engagement programme of work is ongoing, with the aim of producing a strategy for councils for brokering support from businesses into the youth sector.
6. The third area of work on evidencing the value of youth work and the NYA are working with the Young Foundation to test their calculator within Norfolk and Staffordshire councils. Through our tailored support programme they are working with five councils to test practical tools for measuring the impact of their services.

National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)

7. Since the last Children and Young People Board update, NFER has completed two projects as part of topslice funded activity - Local Authority approaches to Children's Trust arrangement and a statistical review of destinations of young graduates to support the LGA Hidden Talents campaign. Ongoing projects include analysis of numbers of academy schools by local authority, best practice examples of effective

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transition of Careers education information and guidance (CIEAG) from local authorities to schools, an evaluation of the NYA tailored support offer to local authorities and two projects jointly funded by LGA and the Children's Improvement Board (CIB) on the longer term impact of safeguarding children peer reviews and an evaluation of sector led improvement and peer challenge. NFER looks forward to new commissions coming from the Children and Young People Board and areas suggested include home to school travel and the impact on schools of the revised OFSTED inspection categories.

Media

8. During the Summer the LGA's media team has responded to a number of media stories around school playing fields, adoption figures and academies.
9. The LGA issued media lines following a DfE announcement that almost £60 million would be returned to local authorities after about 30 threatened to seek a judicial review of the amount of cash the government had taken away in order to expand its academies programme. The story was picked up by the Financial Times. At the root of the controversy was the Government's decision to deduct a uniform amount from each local authority to reflect the growth in academies, which are financed directly by Whitehall rather than via local authorities. Councillor David Simmonds, Chairman of the Children and Young People Board, said councils supported school choice but it had to come hand in hand with fair funding. "We want to see equality of funding across all types of schools, but under the current system that is not the case. Instead, we have two-tier funding with local taxpayers effectively subsidising the roll-out of academies."
10. Cllr Simmonds was quoted in the Telegraph responding to an increase in the number of toddlers and young children being adopted. More than 4,700 children were adopted in England and Wales last year. Of these almost 3,000 were aged between two and four, the highest number in this age group since 1977. In a statement issued to media, Cllr Simmonds said the overall increase was "heartening" but that adoption was not always the best option for children. He said: "Social workers are working with a system that has five times more children waiting for adoption, than we have adopters."
11. The LGA responded to media coverage about the sale of playing fields by highlighting the need for a transparent and objective process that is open to public scrutiny and applies to all schools, including Academies. Cllr Simmonds was widely quoted in the press and appeared on a number of TV and radio programmes, including the Today programme, Five Live, ITV Daybreak, BBC News, Newsnight, Sky News, Channel 4 News, Channel Five News, the Telegraph and Guardian. He said that councils did not support the selling off of school playing fields except when a school is closed or merged or in exceptional circumstances, and then applications have to meet strict agreed criteria. The LGA was concerned that ministers seem to be increasingly disregarding the advice of the independent School Playing Fields Advisory Panel and have approved five cases recommended for refusal in the last 15 months, more than for the whole of the previous nine years. He suggested that it was likely to become more of a problem in years to come as we see more and more schools taking on academy status and becoming exempt from the guidance that applies to other schools.