

Children and Young People Programme Board – report from Baroness Shireen Ritchie (Chair)

The role of councils in education

1. The chairman, Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson and I met with Education Secretary Michael Gove on 29 September to take forward discussions on the future role of councils in education. The meeting was very positive and LGA representatives made proposals for a strong role for councils in education, in line with the proposals set out in the LG Association report 'Local freedom or central control?'
2. The Secretary of State agreed to reflect on the LG Association proposals and that the next round of meetings of the Ministerial Advisory Group should consider them in more detail. He also agreed to work closely with the LGA during the drafting of the white paper on Education, now expected in November.

National Children and Adult Services Conference

3. Preparations are well under way for the National Children and Adult Services Conference in Manchester (3-5 November). Andrew Lansley, Secretary of State for Health and Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education - as well as Sir David Nicholson, Chief Executive of the NHS, Tim Loughton MP, Minister for Children and Families and Professor Eileen Munro have all confirmed that they will be addressing this year's National Children and Adult Services Conference in Manchester.
4. The conference will be held shortly after the Comprehensive Spending Review announcement and Helen Bailey; Director of Public Services will be speaking from HM Treasury. It will be a key opportunity to discuss new policy initiatives as well as implementation plans.
5. This will be an essential and timely conference for lead members with responsibility for Children and Adult Services to attend, as well as Directors and members of senior management teams, for whom it will be an important development opportunity.

Munro Review of Child Protection

6. On 1st October I attended the launch of Irene Munro's first report *The Munro Review of Child Protection - Part one: A Systems Analysis*. The report addresses the key issues we need to take forward to improve our child protection system.
7. The report uses a 'systems approach' to help us to understand why previous reforms have not led to expected improvements. There are questions and observations throughout the initial report that I hope will stimulate professional

discussion and national debate amongst our member councils. The review will engage in regular feedback and discussion events, in which the LG Group will play a positive role. The report is attached and can be downloaded at www.education.gov.uk/munroreview/

Role and Performance of OFSTED

8. The Education Select Committee has launched an inquiry and call for evidence into the role and performance of Ofsted. Specifically they will be exploring what the purpose of inspection should be (covering the entirety of Ofsted's remit), the impact of the process on school improvement, the performance and consistency of Ofsted's inspectors and how Ofsted will interact with schools operating under greater autonomy. The Committee has asked for written submissions to be made by Friday October and is likely to hold oral evidence sessions towards the end of October evidence.

Children and Young People Programme Board Awayday

9. On 14 September I chaired the Children and Young People Programme Board's annual awayday. We started the event by discussing the role of Local Government in Education with Lord Hill of Oarford, Parliamentary under Secretary for Schools. The Minister acknowledged the key role that local government must play in this agenda. The Minister confirmed the LG Group's argument that schools need to be freed from control by central, not local; government has been understood and accepted by Ministers. The Minister confirmed that transition to Academy status should not either materially advantage or disadvantage the school concerned
10. Colleagues were joined by David Norgrove, Chair of the Family Justice Review to discuss issues relating to the Family Court Service. LG Association agreed it should submit evidence to the Family Justice Review, calling for a suitable community-based alternative to the current system. Evidence should stress the Board's belief that well-qualified and motivated social workers will be central to the success of any such system, and accordingly, the Family Justice Review should co-ordinate with and cooperate closely with the Munro Review
11. The day finished with a panel discussion involving Penelope Gibbs, Prison Reform Trust; Jane Slowey, Chief Executive, Foyer Federation; David Utting, Secretary Independent Youth Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Commission. The discussion covered 'where next for Youth Justice' and it was an incredibly stimulating day with a great deal of interesting debate.

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