

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

1. At the end of January, I opened the National Youth Agency's conference *Hard Times: Great Expectations*, transforming services for young people. The conference was attended by local authority representatives from across the country and provided the opportunity to discuss, reflect on and explore the shape and provision of services for young people in the post-spending review landscape. I then attended a youth round table with Tim Loughton on 1 March to discuss youth policy and was able to brief the Minister directly on issues raised at the conference. We are expecting a youth Green Paper after the summer and will continue to work with the National Youth Agency to support councils in developing their youth offer.
2. Early February saw the publication of Professor Eileen Munro's interim report on child protection entitled *The Child's Journey*, which we have been fully involved with and members of the Children and Young People Programme Board will be attending a round table in March to discuss next steps. The review considers how social work teams can work together with universal children's services to aid early intervention work and remove barriers to good-quality work. The report once again highlights the need to reduce the bureaucracy placed on social workers, something which we have been calling for.
3. I sent a joint letter with Cllr Chris White to Michael Gove in response to the work of Darren Henley's review of music education. We welcomed the news that funding for music education in 2011-12 will remain the same as it was in 2010-11 at £82.5 million. In the current financial climate it is a good settlement for music services, and is consistent with the LG Group's broader strategies for school autonomy and the un-ring fencing of council budgets. We will work with DfE and DCMS colleagues as they develop and consult on the National Plan for Music Education.
4. I have been in further correspondence with Michael Gove, following his attendance at the LG Group Children and Young People Board in January, in a bid to find out more information about the DfE's calculation of top slice from formula grant to pay for central costs in academy schools. I have asked the department to examine the LG group's alternative approach of recouping costs on a case-by-case basis as schools convert. The Secretary of State has not yet shared the calculations behind the top slice but has written to explain that the top slice is based on the proposed growth in academies. He has also committed to reviewing the calculation and method of reduction from 2013/14 onwards. I have written back to ask that the full calculations are shared.

5. On 2 March, I attended a meeting with Nick Gibb about unnecessary bureaucracy on schools and councils. The DfE is contributing to the list of duties on Councils, to be published by DCLG shortly, with a view to reducing burdens and bureaucracy.

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