

Item 3a

Children and Young People Programme Board – report from Cllr David Simmonds (Chairman)

Children's Improvement Board

1. On 19 December I attended a meeting of the Children's Improvement Board, which leads the programme of sector-led support for children's services funded by DfE. Following the discussion at the last meeting of the LGA Executive and a separate meeting I had with Tim Loughton MP, the Minister for Children and Families, I stressed the need to increase the level of councillor involvement in children's services improvement. A further meeting is planned with Tim Loughton, involving LGA senior members and Carolyn Downs, to focus on the role of Lead Members for Children's Services in driving improvement at a local and national level.

Early Intervention Foundation

2. Graham Allen MP was asked by the Government to carry out an independent review of early intervention and has written two reports on the subject, with the second focusing on how early intervention programmes can be financed. Both reports highlighted the importance of locally determined action and the core role of councils. One of the Review's recommendations was the establishment of an Early Intervention Foundation to build the evidence base for early intervention programmes, support commissioners and help develop a social finance market. In late November, I met with Graham to discuss this and the LGA will continue to work with his office as the proposals develop, to ensure that a Foundation can offer effective support to councils.

Annual Youth Justice Convention

3. On 2 November, I attended the Annual Youth Justice Convention, where I participated in a plenary debate about the civil disorder in August alongside representatives from the police, voluntary and community sector and the justice system. The debate recognised that only a very small proportion of young people in our communities were involved and the importance of not perpetuating negative stereotypes of all young people. The discussion also picked up on the impact of the youth justice system and the need to effectively support young people that have entered the criminal justice system for the first time and who may be vulnerable as a result.

Joint meeting with the Office Holders of the Community Wellbeing Programme Board

4. On the 23 November I co-chaired a meeting with the office holders of the Community Wellbeing Programme Board and the Children and Young People Programme Board to discuss the support offer to councils on children's health. We agreed the importance of looking at children's safeguarding within a wider context, with the full range of agencies involved. The two Programme Boards will continue to work together on this issue.

Media appearances

5. I gave a number of interviews on the BBC News Channel, Sky News and BBC London Radio to discuss the Prime Minister's announcement on tackling troubled families following Sir Merrick comments on the announcement in December. My comments were also featured in the Guardian in a piece discussing whether the funding the Prime Minister had announced would be enough. I said that we are not looking to do this in a bureaucratic way and that the challenge is to do this without a substantial injection of new money.
6. I have also responded to a number of other media stories on adoption week, academy funding, and care proceedings which have featured in the national and trade press.

Visits to councils

7. I visited Cheshire West and Chester to discuss our improvement work and we will be working with the council in the coming months. In Derbyshire I met with two portfolio holders to discuss the work of the Children and Young People Programme Board and our support offer for improvement.

Capital Revenue Task and Finish Group

8. I have continued to chair the Capital and Revenue Task and Finish Group element of the Ministerial Advisory Group. We have been discussing local flexibility, schools forums and capital procurement and delivery.
9. The next meeting will be taking place on 11 January.

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