

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

Children's Improvement Board/sector led improvement May 2012

1. I attended the meeting of the Children's Improvement Board (CIB) on 23 April with Cllr Rita Krishna from the Children and Young People Board. The Board agreed four priorities for 2012-13 which were:
 - 1.1. Reducing the number of councils in DfE intervention
 - 1.2. Establishing an effective system of peer challenge and support
 - 1.3. Better engagement of stakeholders including adult services
 - 1.4. Supporting councils in managing the impact of policies
2. Delivering on these priorities will depend on the active engagement of key councillors and senior managers. As happened last year, a significant part of the CIB's budget will be allocated to regions, based on delivery plans which will focus particularly on ensuring every council receives a peer challenge by December 2013 and that councils in the region are supported early when in difficulty. Following the publication of adoption score cards, CIB will be offering support to any council that falls below the performance thresholds set by the Government.

Action Learning Research

3. On 21 March we held an event for Lead Members for Children's Services on the council role in education and the LGA/DfE action learning research. A write-up of the event can be found on the LGA website.

Children and Young People Board meeting and sector-led improvement

4. The Children and Young People Board met on 28 March. The focus of discussion was the Government's response to the schools funding consultation and we agreed to ask authorities for evidence of how the proposed reduction of in the number of local factors in schools' formulae will impact locally to inform our response to the consultation.
5. Following the Board meeting I chaired an event on engagement with sector-led improvement. In all 32 Lead Members and member peers attended the event and the learning from the safeguarding children peer review programme was shared. Lead Members were able to identify the kinds of support they required to continue to engage in sector-led improvement.
6. Their ideas will be taken forward in the planned new Lead Member induction session in July on the Children's services focussed Leadership Academy programme, continuing links with regional networks and improvements to the safeguarding peer review guidance.

Care Leavers Roundtable

7. On 16 April, I attended a roundtable organised by the Care Leavers Association and partner organisations, alongside Children's Minister Tim Loughton MP. The roundtable was convened to discuss how care leavers can be more effectively supported. It focused on how Government departments can 'care-proof' their policies to make sure that they support, rather than hinder young people leaving care. Councils of course play a key role in this too and the LGA will be meeting Who Cares? Trust to explore some of the issues for young people.

All Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

8. On 18 April, I participated in a meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. Along with the Education Minister, Tim Loughton MP, stakeholders discussed whether "Every local authority offers different support to looked-after children and care leavers: is this right?"

Media

9. I have made numerous media appearances over the last couple of months discussing various issues of importance to the sector, including being interviewed by on 'BBC Breakfast', following news that half of the free schools due to open this year have not yet secured premises. I discussed how councils have been active in pupil place planning during an interview by BBC Radio 4's 'Today Programme' following a report that rising numbers of infants face missing out on preferred primary schools this year. I was also interviewed by the Guardian on 24 April following reports on the growing number of what it calls 'Titan' schools which are rapidly expanding to meet the increasing number of pupils.

Royal National College for the Blind

10. I visited the Royal National College for the Blind on 9 May 2012. The College provides specialist education to blind and visually impaired young people and the visit was arranged to develop a better working relationship between the College and councils. The Government aims to introduce, from April 2013, a funding and planning system which will apply in the same way to all types of providers: maintained schools, academies, free schools, special schools, Further Education colleges, and independent special schools or colleges. The new system will help local authorities to co-ordinate a single education, health and care plan for children and young people with a disability. The new model will provide a degree of stability for the providers but allow local authorities to provide a greater degree of choice to parents and young people, including access to residential provision.

Visits to councils

11. I have made several visits to councils over the last two months including Kent County Council, East Riding of Yorkshire and Cheshire West and Chester.

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