

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

Children and Young People Board

1. The Children and Young People Board met on 21 May and discussed a range of issues including adoption scorecards, schools funding and the Children's Improvement Board (CIB). We had presentations from Sarah Counter, Principal of Canary Wharf College and Tom Philpott, Head of Partnerships for the New Schools Network, who discussed the role of free schools, the benefits and challenges of setting them up and how councils and Free School proposers can work together. Enver Solomon, Policy Director, and David Hounsell, Economic Adviser, from the Children's Society also attended the meeting to discuss the role of local government in promoting positive wellbeing for Children following the release of their report *Promoting positive wellbeing for children*.
2. Members also discussed the proposed Children and Families Bill that was announced during the Queen's Speech on 9 May 2012. It will include a number of provisions to deliver better support for families. The Bill is expected to be introduced in early 2013 and it will include measures to replace Special Educational Needs Statements and Learning Difficulty Assessments (for 16 to 25-year-olds) with a single, simpler 0-25 assessment process and Education, Health and Care Plan from 2014, part of the biggest reforms to SEN provision in 30 years. More detail about the proposals was published by the Department for Education the following week in a long awaited Next Steps document. The LGA provided an 'On the Day' briefing to member councils on the proposals and welcomes the opportunity to work with the Government on the detail ahead of the introduction of the Children and Families Bill, which is available on our website: www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/briefings-and-responses

Children's Improvement Board

3. Cllr Rita Krishna attended the meeting of the Children's Improvement Board (CIB) on 14 May as a representative of the LGA. The meeting was also attended by John Goldup, deputy Chief Inspector and National Director Social Care at Ofsted, for a discussion about the relationship between sector-led improvement and inspection.
4. Concerns were raised by the CIB about the scale of planned Ofsted activity over 2012-13 and the fact that this was likely to make it more difficult for councils to engage in safeguarding peer reviews. A commitment was made to regular follow up meetings between Ofsted and the CIB. Support to councils on adoption was discussed and the CIB confirmed that it would be offering support

to any councils whose performance falls below the thresholds set by the government but will not be involved in any judgements about council performance or decisions about government intervention which will rest with the Department for Education.

‘Tackling child sexual exploitation: Helping local authorities to develop effective responses’

5. On 1 June, I chaired an event to launch the LGA and Barnardo’s joint publication ‘Tackling child sexual exploitation: Helping local authorities to develop effective responses’ to help councils develop effective responses to tackling child sexual exploitation. The event brought together Lead Members for Children’s Services with professionals in both the police and Local Safeguarding Children Boards to share good practice.

APPG for Runaway Children and Missing Children

6. On Thursday 10 May, I gave oral evidence to the joint inquiry into children who go missing from care alongside Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families, Tim Loughton MP. The session will examine a range of issues on how to prevent children from going missing from care including looked-after children who are placed outside their home authority, data collection and information sharing, police responses and the role of inspection and assessment.

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