

Item 3a

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

LGA Annual Conference

1. The Children and Young People Board held several well attended events at the LGA's Annual Conference last month. On 26 June we published our joint action learning research with the Department for Education (DfE) into the council role in education. The research focuses on how councils and schools are working together in eight local authority areas, shining a spotlight on what is actually happening on the ground. It clearly shows that councils are working well with local schools to meet the challenges of school place planning, school improvement and supporting vulnerable children in a more autonomous school system. The research was well received and we will be discussing it further at the next Children and Young People Board meeting in Leeds in July.
2. My colleague Cllr Rita Krishna chaired a well attended workshop at the LGA's Annual Conference which showcased sector-led improvement in both children's and adults services. Presentations were made by Solihull Council on improving their services for adults and by Shropshire Council on approaches to sector-led improvement for children's services in the West Midlands. There are clearly common approaches developing through sector-led improvement programmes and commitment from councils to supporting sector-led approaches. The LGA launched a new publication at the conference "Sector-led improvement in local government". This tells the story so far and brings together the LGA's work across sector led improvement including children's and adults' services. It gives a summary of all the support available for councils to help them take charge of their own improvement. The document is available on our website: www.local.gov.uk/sector-led-improvement
3. As part of Corporate Parenting Week we also held a lunchtime fringe session on children in care. Looking after other people's children is one of the most important things councils do and corporate parenting is a responsibility for all elected members. It is also a service facing ever-rising demand pressures. This session provided an opportunity to hear from the Department for Education about its policy direction, including on the emerging issues around children's homes. David Holmes, Chief Executive of the British Association of Adoption and Fostering provided a voluntary and community sector perspective and Portsmouth City Council outlined how their placement strategy is helping to improve provision and outcomes while driving down costs. The following discussion with the panel of speakers included questions on adoption reform and how to increase councillors' awareness of corporate parenting.

National Summit for Family and Friends Carers

4. On 12 June, I took part in a National Summit for Family and Friends Carers organised by Grandparents Plus. The summit brought together grandparents and other kinship carers with politicians from central and local government. I participated in a panel session with Julie Wilkes, Grandparents Plus trustee and Cathy Ashley from Family Rights Group. Kinship carers play a hugely valuable role in providing loving and stable homes for some children that cannot stay with their parents and this should not be forgotten amidst the focus on adoption as a permanence option.

Primary Prevention: Cheaper than Cure, Better Outcomes for Children Conference

5. I took part in the Wave Trust's Primary Prevention - Cheaper than Cure, Better Outcomes for Children Conference on 13 June 2012. I presented the local government perspective on child abuse and neglect.

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