

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

Children and Young People Board Meeting

1. The new political year is upon us and the Children and Young People Board has held its first meeting on 5 September, welcoming several new members and discussing our priorities for the year ahead.
2. One of the key topics of discussion was the council role in education and the recent events surrounding the GCSE results. The Board agreed that it was crucial for the examinations system to be both fair and consistent, and that by changing the grade boundaries in-year the system had been neither. The option of re-sits for affected students did not provide adequate redress on the issue, with young people potentially being denied places in apprenticeships or post-16 courses as a result of the situation. The Board agreed that the likelihood is that these results will increase the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training, a trend that we are all working to reverse, therefore this unfairness needed to be addressed.
3. Board members also identified several key activities for the coming months including; promoting growth and prosperity, with a focus on child poverty, ensuring children's health is seen as an important part of the transfer of public health to local government, the importance of children's social care, ensuring that councils are fully supported to address any issues that come out of public sector reform and supporting councils' role in education. The Board papers are available on the LGA's website:
www.local.gov.uk/children-and-young-people-board

House of Lords Select Committee on adoption legislation

4. In July, I gave oral evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on adoption legislation. There has been a lot of focus on this issue in the last six months with the Government introducing measures aimed at speeding up the process. The upcoming Children and Families Bill is also expected to contain measures relevant to adoption and the family courts. At the session, I outlined some of the challenges faced by councils in finding adoptive homes for children and reiterated the LGA's position on reform, including our opposition to local authority scorecards and the need to widen the debate from only adoption to include other forms of permanence.

Residential Children's Homes

5. During the summer I have been involved in the Government's review of residential children's homes, including taking part in working groups looking into the issues of out-of-area placements and quality. This work follows the concerns raised about the use of children's homes by reports into children missing from care and child sexual exploitation. The groups are seeking a much better understanding of how the current complex system is operating and will make recommendations for reform later in the year.

Joint Children and Young People and Community Wellbeing Board for Children and Young People's Health

6. I chaired a meeting between Lead Members from the Children and Young People Board and Community Wellbeing Board. We met on 24 July to discuss and agree the children health priorities and work programme for 2012-13. Alan Bell from the Department of Health gave an update on safeguarding issues, members raised their concerns about the levels of involvement by local authorities in the authorisation process of Clinical Commissioning Groups.
7. The Joint Board agreed the support offer for local authorities which includes a series of conferences focusing on local authorities' public health responsibilities for children, young people and adults and a set of toolkits to help Health and Wellbeing Boards identify key success factors. Key priorities were agreed these included continuing to engage with Government and stakeholders to ensure the Children and Young People's Health Outcomes Strategy optimises the impact that local government can make. Continuing to press Government for clarity on safeguarding arrangements, working with Government to ensure a robust transitional plan is in place for the safe transfer of commissioning responsibilities for 0-5 year olds from NHS Commissioning Boards to local authorities in 2015.

LGA response to the Children and Young People's Health Outcomes Forum Report

8. Following the publication of the report by the Children and Young People's Health Outcomes Forum on 26 July the Children and Young People Board and Community Wellbeing Board responded to the report. We welcome the Forum's report and are committed to working with Government and stakeholders to explore the impact of the recommendations for member authorities. In particular we share the Forum's concerns about safeguarding arrangements in the new health system. We were pleased to see member's concerns fed into the proposed recommendations and that there was a stronger focus on integration, a life course approach, addressing health inequalities and listening to the views of children, young people and their families.

Visits to councils

9. Over the Summer I also enjoyed visits to a number of councils including the Isle of Wight and Lancashire County Council

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