

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

Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant (LACSEG) consultation response

1. The Children and Young People Board has submitted its final response to the local authority central spend equivalent grant (LACSEG) consultation jointly with Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) and the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS). The response highlighted our serious concerns with the methodology the Government proposes to adopt; which is not in accordance with its own New Burdens Doctrine.
2. In writing its response, the LGA worked with over 30 member authorities, with different numbers of academies, in estimating the real savings as well as the additional costs to authorities of setting up academies.
3. The LGA's response can be found on the website: www.local.gov.uk/children-and-young-people

Residential children's homes

4. Through September I have continued to represent the LGA on the Department for Education-convened working groups on out-of-area placements and quality of residential children's homes. The criticism of children's homes earlier in the year made clear the need for all parts of the system to work together to improve it. The groups bring together a range of stakeholders to inform the Government's plans for reform and the work has made plain the sheer complexity of the way the current system and market operate. The groups will report by the end of the year and in parallel the LGA is developing support for councils, with a particular focus on commissioning.

Deputy Children's Commissioner

5. I met with the Deputy Children's Commissioner, Sue Berelowitz, to discuss the current inquiry into child sexual exploitation in gangs and groups. Following an interim report published in July at the request of the Minister after the Rochdale case, the full report's findings are due to be published in November this year. Whereas the interim report was more focused on the prevalence of this problem, the second year has been focused around what the solution to the problem is.
6. The Deputy Commissioner updated me on the findings to date of the report which includes the need for awareness raising and making those who work in other agencies, who are not social workers, aware of what signs to look for in identifying children and young people who may be at risk. As both members and Police Crime Commissioners play a key role in local safeguarding and joint working on child sexual exploitation between councils and the police, I suggested that the LGA produced an on the day

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briefing for members and Police Crime Commissioners on the main messages of the report.

Political Leadership in Children's Services Leadership Academy

7. I led and facilitated the first 'Political Leadership in Children's Services Leadership Academy' between 09 – 10 October. This development event is funded by the Children's Improvement Board as part of the sector-led improvement programme and aims to support lead members with the key challenges they face in the changing policy landscape and to develop leadership capacity, share learning and provide a valuable networking opportunity.

Media

8. On Friday 5 October I was interviewed by BBC World at One following claims by parents and charities that councils are cutting back on some services for children with special educational needs, such as speech therapy sessions and transport to schools. The new draft legislation should make it easier for councils to conduct assessments and should make it less burdensome for parents and their children and also reconfirm council commitments to provide SEN statements during this transitional period.

Visits to councils

9. I recently participated in a week long peer review. I have also continued to visit councils to discuss their work, including a recent visit to Suffolk County Council and to Kent County Council.

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