

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

Meeting with the British Youth Council

1. I recently held a meeting with the Chief executive and Deputy Chief executive of the British Youth Council (BYC). The BYC is a youth-led charity that helps to get young people influencing decisions that matter to them, through involvement in democracy locally, nationally and internationally as well as helping in their communities and volunteering. We had a good discussion about how together we can improve engagement between councils and youth organisations such as the UK Youth Parliament and make sure young people get their voices heard.

Meeting with the National Careers Council

2. On 2nd April I met with representatives from the National Careers Council (NCC) and officers from the LGA to discuss the role of Local Government in careers support services. The NCC was set up to advise the skills Minister Matthew Hancock on issues related to careers policy and the recently established National Careers Service (NCS). Currently there are a wide range of organisations delivering and/or commissioning careers guidance including schools, colleges, careers professionals, councils, NCS, and national agencies. It is important that the careers guidance does not become disjointed especially with councils taking on the responsibility of Raising the Participation Age (RPA). We discussed the long-established tradition of councils providing support to young people and focused on how local authorities through their economic engagement with the local community are in a good position to act as a counterweight to the interests of individual learning providers and help young people engage with large, medium and small employers. Click [here](#) for the LGA submission to the National Careers Council. The NCC will in May report to the Skills Minister on current careers policy which may also carry with it some recommendations.

LGA/ADCS support to improve councils post-16 tracking and recording

3. Last month, the LGA and ADCS developed two days of sector-led support to councils wishing to improve the way they track and record young people's progress, and reduce their 'not known' rates. Open to all councils, a total of 24 council officers participated over the days, which was based around action learning sets, with councils supporting one another with ideas of what works locally. Tracking and recording is fundamental to establishing where young people are at any given time in the system, and underpins all subsequent support a young person receives. However, the job is complex and time-consuming, requiring timely and accurate data from a range of local learning providers, and councils' ability to fulfill this duty is significantly affected by reductions in resources. Material and learning will be shared widely with all councils to spread learning when the support concludes later in the year.

Conference on School self-evaluation

4. Over the 8th and 9th April I attended a conference in Cyprus on School self-evaluation. The conference considered the conditions for creating an evaluation culture at school level that could promote school development and quality including both evaluation of individual teachers and students, co-responsibility for a positive learning environment,

and evaluation of the whole school. It was interesting to listen to examples from other areas such as Cyprus and take back ideas for schools in the UK.

Debate on modern childhood hosted by the National Children's Bureau (NCB).

5. I recently attended a very interesting debate on modern Childhood hosted by the NCB. The panel made up of BBC's Mark Easton, Claire Fox Director of the Institute of Ideas, and the Children's Commissioner Dr Maggie Atkinson, considered how modern childhood had been transformed in Britain and asked the question: do today's children enjoy better rights and opportunities than ever before? Or for those growing up below the bread-line, is poverty, poor health and inequality as entrenched as it was 50 years ago? The debate gave people a chance to voice their concerns about how the lack of freedom and opportunities for some children were leading to frustrated and disadvantaged teenagers. People also discussed what lay ahead for children and how best to encourage the disadvantaged to engage.

Children's Improvement Board funding removed

6. Following the decision by the Department for Education to end funding for the Children's Improvement Board. I have been involved in discussions within the LGA and with external partners about how we can maintain the most valued parts of the offer to councils. These discussions are still on going and we will continue to update members on the progress.

Cllr David Bellotti speaks at LGA Smith Square Debates on Youth Unemployment

7. Cllr David Bellotti spoke on behalf of the LGA in the first in the spring series of Smith Square Debates. The debate was on youth unemployment entitled 'Together in the national interest? Reaching the most disengaged'. Over 100 people attended the debate, held in partnership with the Work Foundation and chaired by Owen Jones.
8. Speaking to a packed room Cllr David Bellotti said that the LGA's answer to youth unemployment was to work at a local level, with local partnerships and make sure these young people are seen as individuals with individual needs. Other speakers included Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP, Shadow Employment Minister and Baroness Stedman-Scott, Chief Executive of Tomorrow's people. A number of topics were raised including the need to reach the most disengaged and how to prevent people becoming disengaged as well as the need for one-to-one support. Owen Jones asked the panellists a number of questions submitted in advance about the Educational Maintenance Allowance and local authority control of schools. Attendees also asked questions on a number of topics including the possible 'postcode lottery' when it comes to support for young people, the role of recruiters in tackling unemployment and how careers advice in schools could be more effective.

Teenage Pregnancy Conference

9. On 23rd April the LGA held a very successful Teenage Pregnancy Conference in London, with over 70 people in attendance. The conference focused on local authorities' responsibility in reducing teenage pregnancy, through a series of interactive discussions and workshops which brought together key stakeholders from across health, education, local government and other key partners. Lively discussion

and debate was had with many great ideas and best practice examples being taken back to the attendee's councils.

Children and Families bill Impact on Adoption

10. I was interviewed on BBC Radio 4's Women's Hour to discuss the impact the children and families bill will have on adoption. I explained that it is important to recognise speed of adoption is not necessarily the best measure of success, Councils have twice the success rate of adoption agencies, and the we feel that taking the time to make sure the placement is right for the child should be prioritised above speed of the system.

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