

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

### **Corporate Parenting**

1. In early June I spoke at a joint meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for children and the APPG for children in care and care leavers. I was part of a panel alongside the Children's Minister, Edward Timpson MP, Councillor Andrew Harper, lead member in Barnet and a number of young people in care, talking about councils' important role in corporate parenting. I was pleased to see that a large number of looked after children attended the session and were able to ask questions and raise issues important to them.

### **Children's centres**

2. This month I wrote an article for First magazine about early years education and used the opportunity to launch our publication 'Bright futures: Local children, local approaches'. This report includes a plethora of good practice case studies which show how councils up and down the country are using children's centres to help deliver early intervention through integrated health provision and getting children school-ready, along with delivering wider community outcomes such as helping parents back into work and tackling domestic violence.

### **Prosecution of child abuse cases**

3. I met this month with the Crown Prosecution Service to discuss how to improve the prosecution of child abuse cases, including how to encourage more effective working between the different parts of the system and improve the process for vulnerable victims. I highlighted the importance of looking at the whole experience for victims, not just the court part of the process. This is related to the LGA's wider work on tackling child sexual exploitation.

### **LGA helps councils claw back £94 million from Department for Education**

4. On 5 June the Government announced the return of £94 million in schools funding which was incorrectly taken from them in 2012/13. 101 authorities will get to share a £94.16m refund from the Department for Education in recognition of unfair cuts made to the money councils received in 2012/13 to deliver school support services. The LACSEG (Local Authority Central Services Equivalent Grant) refunds for 12-13 are the final payment which follows the legal action taken by 31 authorities. This means that of the original £265m top-slice around 35% will have been repaid – that follows repayment of £58m of the top slice of £148m for 11-12 – around 39%. This is a great victory for mums, dads and their school-age children and I am proud that the LGA was able to lend a helping hand in getting this money returned.

### **Housing support for teenagers**

5. On 21<sup>st</sup> June I appeared on BBC Breakfast and BBC Radio 5 Live to discuss a report by Homeless Link on housing support for 16 to 17-year-olds. I defended councils over the report which claimed teenagers are being placed in unsuitable accommodation by their councils. The report was wrong to suggest that young adults are being failed by their

council unless they receive an immediate social services referral. Teenagers request housing for a variety of reasons whether this be family breakdown, young people already in the care system who are now seeking greater independence or teenagers coming in with their mums and dads to find out what housing support may be available to them. The council will quite rightly assess the situations and seek the solution that best fits their needs, which includes working with them and their parents to resolve any issues before making a formal social services assessment.

### **Overhaul of children's residential care**

6. This month the Government announced an overhaul of children's residential care. These reforms it is claimed will lead to higher quality in children's homes with a focus on transparency. I spoke to the press to discuss the LGA's response to the reforms. Councils want to see a range of high-quality residential homes as part of a package of opportunities to give children a fresh start when things have gone wrong at home. The biggest concern for councils is the welfare of the children they care for, and the flexibility to place children away from the area where abuse or neglect has brought them into the care system can give them a new beginning away from these problems. It is vital that these care home providers are more transparent and Councils have confidence that the care homes in which they place children will provide the best quality of care for them.

### **Hidden Talents Conference**

7. On 5 June I chaired the Hidden Talents conference at Local Government House. The conference brought councillors from across the country together to discuss the LGA campaign for a more devolved approach to tackling youth disengagement from work and learning.

### **Meeting with Baroness Steadman-Scott**

8. Engaging with marginalised young people is a becoming an increasing issue. Young people outside of employment or training risk complete alienation from society. Therefore I held meeting with Baroness Steadman-Scott to take forward discussions on how to engage these young people in work.

### **National Children's Bureau**

9. Met with NCB to discuss future working with the Department for Education voluntary sector partners

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