

## **Report of the Children and Young People Programme Board**

### **Purpose of report**

For information.

### **Summary**

This report outlines the priorities and work programme of the Children and Young People Programme Board.

### **Recommendation**

This report is intended to inform the debate with the LGA Executive.

### **Action**

Officers to take account of any comments and any actions arising out of the discussion.

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## **Report of the Children and Young People Programme Board**

### **Background**

1. Reflecting the LGA's wider aims to achieve greater devolution to local government and helping councils to tackle their challenges using a sector-led approach, the Children and Young People Programme Board agreed its priorities in January 2011. We have already enjoyed several successes in both our lobbying, policy and improvement activities, including securing funding for a sector-led approach to improvement through the Children's Improvement Board (CIB) and securing a commitment in the Schools White Paper to a "strong, strategic role for councils in education".

### **The priorities**

2. The Children and Young People Programme Board's priorities for the year are to ensure that:
  - 2.1. Councils' retain a strong strategic role in education in a system where schools have more autonomy.
  - 2.2. Children's health is a priority in the planned changes to the health service.
  - 2.3. Social workers are freed up from unnecessary bureaucracy to allow them to spend more time with children and their families through influencing the implementation of the Munro review.
  - 2.4. Children's services are provided with improvement support for safeguarding, through the Children's Safeguarding peer review programme and Lead member induction events.
  - 2.5. Councils have the powers and resources they need to reduce youth offending and the use of custody for young people.
  - 2.6. Councils are able to reconfigure their youth services to respond to the severe financial pressures they are facing. This work is being undertaken in partnership with the National Youth Agency (NYA).
  - 2.7. Improvements in children's services are made through delivery of a new sector-led improvement and support programme (funded through 10.5m DfE grant) under the direction of the Children's Improvement Board (CIB).

**Item 1**

**Work so far...**

3. Since the General Election, a key Children and Young People Programme Board priority has been winning a continuing, strategic role for councils in education as increasing numbers of schools become academies. The LGA has supported a mixed market of schools, including academies, but with councils ensuring fairness and challenging performance as the champions for children and their families. This resonated with the Government and was successful in influencing the Schools White Paper which outlined “a strong strategic role” for councils in education.
4. The focus of our lobbying now is to flesh out what the council role will be in practice. We are jointly funding, with the Department for Education (DfE), action learning research on the council role in education to better understand how local authorities are adapting to an increasingly diverse and autonomous schools system. We will be working with a small representative group of different types of council in a wide range of geographical areas, with different proportions of academies. A steering group has been set up to commission and oversee this work, including local government representatives, with Cllr Stephen Castle representing the LGA, Academies, Academy sponsors and officials from DfE and the Department for Communities and Local Government. An interim report will be produced in January, with the final report in June.
5. Reform of schools funding will be a key issue in the coming months, with the Government committed to producing a ‘fairer funding formula’ for schools. We have been lobbying hard to retain a council role in agreeing local funding formulae with schools; and for a degree of local discretion in any national funding formula. The consultation document issued over the summer accepts the case for some local discretion, so the focus now is on the detail, and the extent of the local role.
6. An announcement on the amounts to be topsliced from revenue support grant to fund academies’ central costs is expected in the next two weeks (“LACSEG”). We have robustly challenged the Government proposals as way out of line with the cost savings to councils as academies convert and we have supported 29 councils in seeking judicial review.
7. The Children’s Improvement Board (CIB) has been established to oversee the delivery of the improvement programme. The CIB is a partnership Board, with a single representative from the LGA, ADCS, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) and the Department for Education (DfE). CIB is leading the way on the development of a sector-led model of local government improvement and its success is crucial for LGA attempts to promote a sector-led approach. However, the high profile nature of children’s issues, particularly safeguarding, also means it is a high-risk project.

**Item 1**

8. The CIB has already achieved some early wins with over 40 councils now working with each other and the CIB to develop mutual peer challenge and support improvement. A programme of support on children's centre services has also been completed. 26 local authorities have signed up to pilot payment by results. Rapid support has been arranged for councils with the most acute improvement needs.
9. However, many more councils need to be actively involved if this is to be a successful sector-led programme, resources need to be effectively devolved to regions to support more sector-led work. A balance needs to be struck between nationally driven policy initiatives and improvement needs identified by councils. Given the scale of the programme it has been under-resourced in terms of support and this needs to be addressed as a priority.
10. A more detailed briefing is attached as **Appendix A**.

**Conclusion and next steps**

11. We will continue to pursue our priorities in the work programme to ensure greater devolution to local government and helping councils to tackle their challenges using a sector-led approach.

**Financial Implications**

12. This programme of work is a key business plan priority for the LGA and will be resourced from within existing budgets.