

## **Children and Young People Board: Annual Review of the Year**

### **Education**

1. The year saw continued progress on clarifying and fleshing out the council role in an education system with greater school autonomy and increasing numbers of academies. The Department for Education (DfE) and LGA action research on the council role in education was launched at Annual Conference last year and has strongly influenced debate about the need for a continuing strong, strategic council role in education.
2. We held expert seminars on the council role in school place planning, admissions and school improvement. Case study reports on council support for school improvement and supporting early intervention through children's centres were published for this year's Annual Conference. We are providing sector-led support for 24 councils to improve their tracking and recording of young people in post-16 learning, in preparation for the raising of the age of participation in education this year.
3. Our work on the unfair 'academies top slice' from councils to fund over-generous payments to academies for central services resulted in a £94 million refund in 2012/13, shared by 101 authorities. This is on top of a £58 million refund for 2011/12. LGA lobbying to ensure that councils did not face a financial shortfall due to significant changes to funding for high needs students resulted in £46 million additional DfE funding for councils for 2013/14.
4. Significant reform to school funding continued, with the LGA response to the review of last years' funding changes highlighting the volatility they had caused and their effect on small rural schools. In response, the DfE agreed to introduce a new sparsity factor and changes to the 'lump sum' for primary and secondary schools to help address these concerns.
5. We continued to lobby for additional capital resources to meet sharply increasing demand for school places and to fix the growing backlog of school repairs. An additional £1 billion of capital for school places was announced in this year's Budget, bringing the total commitment over this Spending Review period to £5 billion. The recent Spending Review announced investment of more than £21 billion of capital for schools over the next Parliament, including a promise to rebuild 150 schools two years earlier than planned by 2017, as part of the Priority School Building Programme. Following LGA lobbying, DfE announced £100 million capital funding for early years places in September 2012.
6. The Spending Review also announced that the Education Services Grant, which pays for central services to schools, will be cut by 20 per cent and that a fair national funding formula for schools will be introduced in 2015-16, following a consultation period in the autumn. Lobbying on these two issues is likely to be the focus of LGA work on Education in the coming year.

### **Children's Services**

7. Child sexual exploitation has become increasingly high profile in the last year. The LGA held a successful conference on tackling child sexual exploitation in February, at which we launched a 'National Conversation' consultation exercise, which was supported by major national charities. This informed the development of resources to help councils to

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raise awareness of this abuse, including briefings: training materials; case studies; and communications advice. Assessing its impact and providing further support to councils, along with influencing the policy, political and media debate on this issue will be a continued priority into next year.

8. The LGA influenced the DfE's proposals for reform of residential children's homes, including a greater council role in decisions about where new homes can be located. We also began an action research project with 10 councils to help improve strategic commissioning of children's homes. Feedback from councils has been very positive and a final report sharing learning and recommendations with the wider sector and stakeholders will be published at an event in September.
9. Adoption has remained a key focus and the LGA produced a sector-led plan for improving adopter recruitment in partnership with Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) and Society of Local Authority Chief Executive's (SOLACE). We have lobbied strongly in partnership with the voluntary sector against provisions in the Children and Families Bill which would enable councils to be removed from adopter recruitment and assessment. Our concerns have been referenced during the Parliamentary process to date and securing amendments will be a priority in the next year as the Bill moves into the House of Lords.
10. Other work has included: securing as part of a consortium £3.5 million to establish an Early Intervention Foundation to provide support to councils; running a Corporate Parenting Week, highlighting how councils help children in care; and helping set up a Children and Young People's Health and Wellbeing Partnership and ran a series of conferences to support councils to make sure that children's health is given a high priority in the new public health duties transferred to councils this year.

**Children's Improvement Board**

11. The Children's Improvement Board (CIB) and the programme provided support of some kind to all children's services authorities. Leadership academies for Lead Members got high satisfaction ratings; timely support to councils at risk had a positive impact on inspection findings and prevented them falling into formal intervention; and evaluation of sector-led improvement by the LGA showed high levels of confidence among Directors of Children's Services and lead members.
12. The DfE announced in April that it would cease to fund CIB and its £9 million allocation to the programme was withdrawn. A transitional allocation of one quarter's funding was agreed following LGA lobbying and the CIB is now consulting on a legacy programme, to be financed by LGA in future years.

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