

## Note of last Children & Young People Board meeting

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<b>Title:</b>	Children & Young People Board
<b>Date:</b>	Wednesday 29 June 2016
<b>Venue:</b>	Smith Square 3&4, Ground Floor, Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

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### Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A** to this note

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
1	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
	The chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted apologies.	
2	<b>Confidential item - Action Research into Improvement in Local Children's Services</b>	
	<p>The chair introduced Simon Rea and Ben Bryant from the ISOS Partnership, who had worked with LGA officers on the Action Research into Improvement in Local Children's Services Project. They advised members that the interim report had been published in February and that the final report would be published today (29<sup>th</sup> June). They gave an overview of the findings, advising members that it had looked at two key questions: 'what are the key enablers of (and barriers to) improvement in local children's services?' and 'how can the system as a whole facilitate and support improvement in local children's services?' They had worked with 9 local areas and had supplemented this by speaking to a further 6. The research would now be shared with Ofsted and DfE.</p> <p>Key questions noted for further research included approaches to improvement such as: developing the capacity for self-assessment, driving consistent practice across a service and being open to working with others in the local area to spread effective practice. A coherent approach on gathering intelligence to create a clear, specific evidence base on interventions would also assist improvement.</p> <p>Time scale for improvement depended on the depth of failings in a service and recognition of this. It took around 6 to 12 months to strengthen core systems and around 2 years to improve a service on the whole.</p> <p>In the discussion which followed, the following points were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Members welcomed the report and the outcome. They highlighted that improvement was a difficult area and that it would take time. Denial of failings in a service needed to be avoided.</li></ul>	

- Members asked how the LGA would ensure the findings of the report were taken forward. It would be important to continue working with chief executives and political leaders in this area.
- Members felt that many councils needed to prioritise Children's Services work and asked if this could be emphasised in public relations work. The LGA's peer learning and peer support work was highlighted as important for service improvement in this respect.
- Members discussed the increasing pressure on children's services, and emphasised they would like to see this acknowledged.

**Response:**

- On political leadership, members were advised that the report included a section describing the recommended focus of leaders in an improvement journey.
- Members were advised that the report also discussed peer review in detail, including opportunities to bring organisations together to work to improve a failing service.
- It was suggested that the board could approach DfE and Ofsted to discuss working together.
- Regional seminars could be used as a tool to ensure the findings of the report were acted upon.
- LGA officers advised members that a workshop on political leadership had been organised for the following week. This would be a good opportunity for lead members to disseminate the research.

**Decision:**

1. Members **noted** the paper and endorsed its key recommendations.

**Actions:**

1. Members requested that the report was sent out to all local authorities.
2. Officers to send members a link to the published report.

### **3 The Queen's Speech**

Ian Keating, Principal Policy Adviser, introduced the report, advising members that three bills of relevance to the board had been announced in the Queen's Speech in May: the Children and Social Work Bill, the Education for All Bill and the National Citizen Service Bill. The report set out the main purpose of each bill and the LGA's work on them to date.

In the discussion which followed, members made the following points:

- It was important for all authorities to continue engaging with the LGA in this area, since the organisation worked as a mediating body between councils and the Secretary of State for Education.
- There were concerns raised on the regulatory system for social workers. This needed improvement but should avoid becoming politicised.
- Members highlighted that it would be useful if local authorities worked with Youth Engagement Projects.
- Members highlighted concerns with the Education for All Bill, in particular with the proposal to end the statutory role of councils in school improvement and cut the Education Services Grant by £600 million.

**Decision:**

The board **noted** the report.

**Action:**

Officers to take forward work as directed by members.

#### **4 Term-time Absences from School**

The chair introduced the report. He informed members that he had written to the government, advising them that this issue was unclear from a head teacher's point of view and there was a lack of clarity in the guidance on this. Head teachers would need further support in this area.

In the discussion which followed, members made the following points:

- Schools were in a difficult position after the Isle of Wright ruling and were having to enforce a set of rules that did not have legal justification. Members welcomed the chair's request for clarity on this. They would also welcome a strengthening of the law.
- Members also highlighted there was an inconsistency with the Ofsted framework on this. 90% attendance was marked as inadequate in this, but legislation differed on this point.

**Decision:**

1. Members **noted** the report.

**Action:**

1. The chair to advise members when a reply is received from the Schools Minister.

## 5 Home Education and Illegal Schools

The chair introduced the item and asked for members' views on the increase in cases of home schooling children.

In the discussion which followed, members made the following points:

- There were concerns that local authorities were sometimes unaware of children living in an area when they were being home schooled. It was difficult to enforce a legal duty to protect a child if local authorities were unaware of their presence.
- Planning legislation on establishing schools was lax. Schools could be established in buildings without reference to local authorities.
- The loophole in home-schooling meant that local authorities were unable to go and see what a child was being taught. The rules did not require parents/tutors to follow the national curriculum. This was a community safety issue and members felt it was positive that Ofsted had picked this up.
- Members asked what the scale of home schooling currently was. There was concern that numbers in illegal schools was currently unknown.
- Members advised that the 2009 report on home education had identified the lack of powers local authorities had in this area, but the actions from it had not been implemented. Members felt it would be useful to have a cross party discussion on this issue to ensure there was a political will to see it through.
- Dave Hill, ADCS President said that ADCS would welcome input on this and would work alongside the board on the issue.

### **Decision:**

1. The board **noted** the report.

### **Action:**

1. Officers to take forward work as directed by members.

## 6 JNC Youth and Community Workers - Staff Side Claim on Campaign to Defend Youth Services

The chair introduced the item and spoke about the board's work on youth campaigns. Encouraging councils to support youth work was important, as financial savings could be made by working with young people early on.

In the discussion which followed, the following points were made:

- The National Youth Agency was discussed and members suggested they could be invited to present at a board meeting.
- The Birmingham University Passport Programme was highlighted as a successful training programme for young people and a way of involving them in a project which increased their confidence. It was felt that the project had been underrated and should be introduced elsewhere.

**Decision:**

1. The board **noted** the report

**Action:**

2. Officers to take forward work as directed by members

## **7 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children**

The chair introduced the item, highlighting the increasing challenges faced by councils as asylum seekers arrived across the country.

In the discussion which followed, members made the following points:

- Members felt that there had to be an obligation on some councils to take asylum seekers. The scheme would not work on a voluntary basis. Many authorities were struggling to accommodate people, as they did not have the budget to support them.
- There were instances of problems finding suitable foster placements for children. Even if a local area had facilities, sometimes children had to be placed elsewhere, though local residents were still paying for their care. The funding mechanisms for this needed to be considered.
- The board needed to feed these issues to the member led LGA Asylum and Migration Group. There had been much progress over the past year and the dialogue needed to continue. The board agreed to send thoughts to Cllr David Simmonds (chair of the group).

**Decision:**

1. The board **noted** the report.

**Actions:**

1. Officers to take forward work as directed by members.

## **8 Annual Review of the Year 2016**

Members discussed the end of year report. This summarised the board's work over the past year and looked forward to key issues which the board would consider during next year's cycle. The report would be submitted to the LGA Executive in July.

- The board thanked LGA officers for their work over the past year.

### Decision

1. The board **agreed** the report.

## 9 Note of the Previous Meeting

### Decision:

1. The board **agreed** the notes as an accurate summary of the discussion.

### Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Roy Perry	Hampshire County Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Richard Watts	Islington Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Helen Powell	Lincolnshire County Council
Members	Cllr Laura Mayes	Wiltshire Council
	Cllr Dick Madden	Essex County Council
	Cllr Liz Hackett Pain	Monmouthshire County Council
	Cllr Anne Burns	Cumbria County Council
	Cllr Bob Cook	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
	Cllr John Kent	Thurrock Council
	Cllr David Mellen	Nottingham City Council
	Cllr John Merry CBE	Salford City Council
	Cllr Paul Cullen	Richmondshire District Council
	Alison Michalska	
Apologies	Cllr Paul McLain	Gloucestershire County Council
	Cllr Ivan Ould	Leicestershire County Council
	Cllr Ian Parry	Staffordshire County Council
	Cllr Anntoinette Bramble	Hackney London Borough Council
	Cllr Liz Green	Kingston upon Thames Royal Borough Council
	Cllr Christopher Coleman	Cheltenham Borough Council
	Dave Hill	ADCS
	Dr Phil Norrey	Devon County Council