

Note of last Children & Young People Board meeting

Title: Children & Young People Board
Date: Tuesday 12 January 2021
Venue: Online via MS Teams

Attendance

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

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
1	Welcome, Apologies & Declarations of Interest Cllr Teresa Heritage (Vice-Chairman) welcomed members to the meeting and gave a reminder of etiquette and best practice in remote meetings. Apologies were received from Dr Philip Norrey (Observer). The following Declarations of Interest were made: - Item 6: Cllr Mark Cory (Liberal Democrats)	
2	Business Plan 2019-22 - 2020 Review & Update The Chair asked Ian Keating (Principal Policy Adviser) to introduce the item and give an overview of the Business Plan. Ian explained that the Business Plan has been updated in line with priorities arising from the COVID pandemic as presented to the Board at the meeting in September 2020. Asked that members provide comments and note the update. In the subsequent discussion the following points were made: - It was suggested that greater emphasis should be placed on the importance of early intervention in children's services. - A view was expressed that the section on inequalities should refer to reducing inequalities rather than narrowing them. - Members noted that greater reference should be given in the Education section on closing attainment gaps. Decision The members of the Children & Young People Board noted the 2020/21 update of the Business Plan 2019-2022. Action The updated plan to be published on the LGA website	
3	Understanding & Learning from Responses to the COVID-19 Lockdown in Schools and Children's Social Care	

The Chair welcomed Ben Bryant and Natalie Parish (Isos Partnership) to present on the progression of the research since the previous meeting in November 2020.

In the presentation that followed, Ben and Natalie made the following points:

- Respondents reflected on the changing relationships between local authorities and schools. Furthermore, on the central role that both have played in community response.
- Clear themes were highlighted as being core to an effective response; Strong Shared Values, Strong Relationships and Capacity to Deliver. It was noted by respondents that having such in place enabled an evolution of working methods rather than starting from scratch.
- Four key challenges were highlighted in: national-local tensions, balancing learning and care, decision making processes and systems. More emergent issues included financial implications for schools and families as well long-term support.
- A range of opportunities arose including using greater virtual working to engage certain groups of pupils and improve working with children's services. The pandemic also strengthened communications between schools, families and communities.
- The implications for both education & children's services and local authorities were outlined. This included increases in demand for social care, home education and early intervention as well exposing deprivation. Authorities came to the fore in commissioning services, protecting children and facilitating partnerships.

The Chair thanked Ben and Natalie and requested an overview of the next steps of the research. Ben explained that the final stages of fieldwork were being conducted which would be followed by a workshop session. In the subsequent discussion the following points were raised:

- Concerns were noted on the quality of national leadership and decision making displayed by the Government. An emphasis was placed on learning lessons to inform the approach to future crises.
- Members emphasised the importance of recording and highlighting the instances of leadership displayed by local authorities and the LGA in providing support to schools throughout the COVID pandemic. The flexibility and resilience of local government to adapt and respond to challenges was noted as a key strength.
- Members discussed further analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on schools and children's social care. It was felt that the full impact of the pandemic, including in relation to the exacerbation of inequalities, would only be evident in the long term and would require regular monitoring.
- There was discussion of the provision of food parcels to children and families in receipt of Free School Meals, which were seen to be highly inadequate in some cases. It was requested that LGA officers and Lead Members produce a statement on this matter. Ian noted that officers would discuss such a press release with the Chair.
- Comments were made on funding to provide specific support for vulnerable children outside of school settings and the need for longer term funding to facilitate long term solutions.

The Chair encouraged members to submit further written comments and asked officers to bring the research back to a future meeting.

Decision

That the members of the Children & Young People Board note the report and comment on the next steps.

Action

- Officers to proceed in line with Members comments.
- Officers to evaluate claims on FSM and produce statement as appropriate.

4 Youth Participation & Skills Update

The Chair invited Bushra Jamil (Adviser) to introduce the report and discuss recent youth participation work. In her update, Bushra raised the following points;

- The Youth Report was launched in October 2020 with Cllr James Jamieson (LGA Chairman) writing to a number of Ministers on it.
- Youth participation work has continued through the engagement with a range of local authorities and partner organisations on issues facing young people and those Not in Education, Employment or Training.
- Noted the T Levels discussion paper .
- A report on Post-16 SEND provision was published in December 2020 which outlined a range of recommendations on planning, transition and the role of local authorities moving forward.

In the subsequent discussion members raised the following points:

- Members stressed the need for a dedicated Minister for Young People given the range of Government departments that currently have an input on this area of work. Ian noted that such reflected existing LGA policy as presented in the Child Centred Recovery report and Comprehensive Spending Review submission.

The Chair requested the members provide written comments to Bushra.

Decision

The members of the Children & Young People Board noted the report with further comments to be submitted in writing.

Action

Officers to progress in line with Members' comments.

5 Out of Area Placements Housing Protocol

The Chair invited Priya Thethi (Adviser) to introduce the report. In her update, Priya noted the following points:

- The housing protocol was developed in light of the circa 4000 long distance housing placements made per year. The majority of these originate from London Borough authorities. There are a range of

concerns on the suitability of such placements and the impact on receiving authorities services.

- The protocol is intended to improve overall practice, reduce disputes between authorities and provide a means for resolution.
- Priya noted that the protocol had been compiled through consultation with a working group of council officers, industry bodies, and stakeholders. Recommendations were compiled into a consultation paper, with LGA management considering publication.

In the subsequent discussion members raised the following points;

- Members noted concerns with securing engagement from local authorities. It was felt that placing authorities were far more likely to join the protocol than receiving ones. Members broadly supported the protocol being a voluntary process but also outlined possible engagement challenges. Priya explained that this issue was being examined with a series of frameworks being examined to promote and secure engagement, including a dispute resolution mechanism which will also be consulted on.
- Regional clusters were proposed as a means of allowing a group of authorities to cooperate on providing suitable housing. Priya agreed to take this point for further consideration.
- It was suggested that greater consideration was needed on financial support, continuing education and any additional needs of a vulnerable child/family in the placement process. Priya agreed to take this point for further consideration.

Decision

The members of the Children & Young People noted the report.

Action

Officers to proceed in line with members comments.

6 School Closures, Early Years & School Testing

The Chair invited Ian Keating to provide a verbal update. Ian noted the following points:

- The LGA had issued several statements on schools and education.
 - o For a suspension of OFSTED inspections during the COVID pandemic
 - o On the importance of children physically attending classes
 - o Around proper support for Early Years settings and the consideration of nursery closures
- An announcement on primary school testing was expected shortly after the time of the meeting.
- Publication of the replacement grade moderation process for GCSE and A-Level pupils following the suspension of examinations in Summer 2021. Ian noted that the LGA is advocating for a model based on regional result moderation.

In the subsequent discussion members raised the following points:

- A view was expressed in support of the current LGA position on grade

moderation. However, it was felt that the LGA should make a public announcement of this position ahead of any Government announcement in an effort to influence policy.

- Concerns were raised with the confused approach taken on school closures, even down to a borough level. A member stressed that a coordination approach agreed by government, unions and local authorities was urgently needed.

Decision

Members noted the verbal update.

7 Raising the Age of Criminal Responsibility

The Chair invited Flora Wilkie (Adviser) to introduce the report. Flora raised the following points:

- Noted that this policy was previously presented to the Board in December 2019 and the policy has been developed in line with members comments and input from practitioners and experts in the field.
- Provided a brief overview of the policy context with England having one of the lowest Age of Criminal Responsibility (ACR) in the world.

Flora requested that members consider the recommendations presented and provide comments on future direction.

The Chair asked for clarification on the next steps for any decision taken on the policy. Louise Smith (Senior Adviser) explained that any decision would form the basis for LGA policy moving forward. In the subsequent discussion members raised the following points;

- Members expressed a strong preference for raising ACR, with a preference for an increase to the age of 14.
- A number of points were noted in support of this increase
 - o Improved outcomes for children
 - o Current law disproportionately impacts children from disadvantaged backgrounds, vulnerable families and young men from BAME backgrounds.
 - o Evidence around brain development in children and young people.
- Members requested further information on the early and practical interventions outlined in paragraph 29. This included more detail on the role of local authorities and any additional financial burden they might accrue.
- It was recommended that the report should be amended to account for the role of Pupil Referral Units, and the impact this has on the likelihood of being drawn into criminality.

The Chair summarised the discussion, noting that there was clear support from members for increasing ACR, with a preference for the new age to be 14. Suggested that the Board should forward the decision to the Executive Advisory Board with a strong recommendation on increasing ACR to 14. A counter proposal was put forward by Cllr Imran Khan that the Board should take a decision at the meeting, which was seconded by Cllr Lucy Nethsingha and Cllr Sara Rowbotham.

The Chair moved to a vote on the recommendations presented in the report and on whether the issue should be remitted to the EAB. In the subsequent vote:

- In favour of not remitting the decision to the EAB: Agreed by majority (12:5)
- In favour of increasing the Age of Criminal Responsibility: Agreed Unan.
- In favour of increasing ACR to 14: Agreed Unan.

Decision

Members of the Children & Young People Board agreed that:

- LGA policy should call for the ACR to be increased.
- LGA policy should call for ACR to increase to 14, in line with the European average and the recommendations from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Action

Officers were to;

- undertake further research to know more about the children who are committing crime
- continue to build up an understanding of best practice in this area to share with both Government and local authorities
- use the LGA's agreed position in future work with the Government provide further information on practical and early interventions as requested and the financial burden of such on local authorities.

8 Children's Homes Research

The Chair invited Louise Smith (Senior Adviser) to introduce the item. Louise noted that the full research has been shared with Members and requested for written comments

Decision

That the Board agreed the recommendations outlined at Paragraph 16 and submit written comments.

Action

Officers will take forward recommendations as agreed by the Board.

9 Note of the Previous Meeting on 4th November 2020

The Chair asked member to approve the note of the previous meeting as an accurate record.

Decision

Members of the Children and Young People Board approved the note of previous meeting on Wednesday 4th November 2020 as an accurate record.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Judith Blake CBE	Leeds City Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Teresa Heritage	Hertfordshire County Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Lucy Nethsingha	Cambridgeshire County Council
	Cllr Julie Fallon	Conwy County Borough Council
Members	Cllr Patricia Bradwell OBE	Lincolnshire County Council
	Cllr Susie Charles	Lancashire County Council
	Cllr Matthew Golby	Northamptonshire County Council
	Cllr Roger Gough	Kent County Council
	Cllr Dick Madden	Essex County Council
	Cllr Laura Mayes	Wiltshire Council
	Cllr Rachel Eden	Reading Borough Council
	Cllr Alisa Flemming	Croydon Council
	Cllr Sara Rowbotham	Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr James Beckles	Newham London Borough Council
	Cllr Imran Khan	Bradford Metropolitan District Council
	Cllr Lesley Williams MBE	Gloucestershire County Council
	Cllr Mark Cory	Colchester Borough Council
Cllr Judy Jennings	Epping Forest District Council	
Apologies	Dr Phil Norrey	Devon County Council