

Note of last Children & Young People Board meeting

Title: Children & Young People Board
Date: Tuesday 16 March 2021
Venue: Online via Teams

Attendance

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

Item	Decisions and actions
------	-----------------------

1 Welcome, Apologies & Declarations of Interest

The Chair welcomed members and stated that this was her last meeting before moving on to take up a seat in the House of Lords. She thanked members for their support and contributions over the last year. Members in turn, thanked the Chair for her work with the Board and wished her well for the future.

Apologies were received from Cllr Warren Whyte, Cllr Lucy Nethsinga and Dr Phil Norrey.

Cllr Mark Cory declared an interest in item 3 as a member of the National Education Union.

2 Presentation from Chair of the Independent Children's Social Care Review

The Chair welcomed Josh MacAlister, Chair of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, to the meeting and invited him to present to the Board.

Josh outlined the work that had been taking place in the early stages of the review and said that whilst he wanted to take the time to carry out a broad piece of work that was able to examine some of the fundamental questions, there were also some urgent issues that needed addressing more quickly. The aim was therefore to complete the review within 12-15 months.

Josh reported that the fundamental question that the Review would seek to address had now been agreed: *"How do we ensure children grow up in loving, stable and safe families and, where that is not possible, care provides the same foundations?"*

The first 3 months of the review would be a problem analysis of the current system and the remainder would be forward looking to identify possible solutions. The underlying philosophy behind the Review would be to listen deeply to those who had received social care and to think boldly

about how social care could be delivered more effectively in the future.

The Chair then invited members to comment on the Review and for Josh to respond in turn:

- Early intervention, particularly by voluntary sector organisations, had in some instances been effective in slowing down the flow of young people entering the system. However, the 0-5 age group in particular was identified as a gap in provision. Josh said that early intervention would be a key part of the Review and that he would be looking for examples of where organisations had worked effectively with families.
- The focus for social workers was generally on the child rather than the needs of the whole family. How could this be addressed? Josh said that this was a very complex area but would be addressed in the Review.
- Would the review look at the needs of children and young people in custody and also those taken into care for their own safety? Josh said that these instances reflected a wider longer-term trend in this country of services not knowing how to effectively help teenagers and their families. This certainly needed to be looked at again.
- Members considered that it was vital to involve the wider workforce in the Review as there were fundamental issues with pay, training, staff turnover and job recognition that impacted on the quality of service provision. Josh agreed that this was crucial and said that plans to involve professionals in the Review would be shared in the next couple of weeks.
- Was the Troubled Families Programme within the scope of the Review? Josh confirmed that it was.
- How would the Government's commitment to expand family hubs tie in with the Review? The example of Bristol was given where family hubs had been very successful, and had proved to be a lifeline for some families during the pandemic. Josh said that there were key links here and he was working closely with the Government to ensure alignment.
- Members were very supportive of including the word 'love' in the Review's overarching question.
- Proper funding of the system was considered to be vital in moving away from a crisis management approach. Josh agreed that funding was always important but that in order to convince the Treasury, the Review would need to provide hard evidence of the effectiveness of investment in early intervention.
- Members felt that health services should be more involved in children's social care, particularly in the 0-5 age group.
- Community mentoring schemes were considered important for reaching BAME children and young people as they could be more reluctant to engage with statutory services.
- The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) review into the market for children's social care provision was welcomed.
- The role of the family courts was considered to be very important. Josh confirmed that this was part of the Review and he had already started discussions with stakeholders.
- The binary nature of either being in care or with the family was considered to be too simplistic. Finland was cited as an example of

a country using a more nuanced approach. The Family Links programme was also praised for the good work it did. Josh agreed that it was vital to maintain family links as much as possible and said he was keen to explore this further.

- Members felt that the practice of out of area placements needed to be examined as part of the review as children were often placed in unsuitable areas. Josh confirmed that this was definitely in scope and would also form part of the CMA review.
- The Croydon Vulnerable Adolescent Review was highlighted as an important piece of work which should be taken into account.
- How could the authorities work better with families who had a long-term involvement in the system? Josh said that agencies often needed to think and plan longer-term rather than addressing the symptoms of problems in the short-term.
- The issue of transitioning into adulthood was raised and there was often a cliff-edge of support when young people reached 18. Josh said that extending the age range for CAMHS services to 25 was positive and could open up possibilities for other services to do similar.
- Recruitment of quality foster carers was considered to be important and the transformative effect that they often had on life chances should be emphasised as a positive option for young people. Josh agreed that care could be a good option for young people but there were also concerns concerning long-term negative health trends associated with separating children from their families.
- Would the Review be learning from European and wider international good practice? Josh said that there were lots of differences in the systems across Europe and they were very keen to hear from members of any specific examples of good practice that they could look into.
- The needs of different sized local authorities should be included as part of the Review. Josh agreed that implementation of any reforms would need to work for local authorities of all sizes.

The Chair thanked Josh for his time and for answering all the points raised by members. She raised the possibility of him returning to a future Board meeting as the Review progressed.

Decision:

Children & Young People Board **noted** the presentation.

3 Education Recovery Programme

The Chair welcomed Sir Alan Wood, adviser to the Government's Education Recovery Programme, to the meeting and invited him to present to the Board.

Sir Alan ran through the background to the programme and explained that Sir Kevan Collins, the Education Recovery Commissioner, reported weekly to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State to advise them on the effectiveness of the Department for Education's (DfE) plans. The Programme had 3 objectives: (i) to ensure that children were supported to raise their attainment; (ii) to close the gap between the highest and lowest performing pupils; and (iii) to support the services that support children's

learning. In order to achieve these objectives, the following areas of focus (the 3 'T's') were being pursued: (i) access to teacher time; (ii) ensuring the quality of teaching through professional development and training; and (iii) a targeted tutoring programme.

Sir Alan said that the Programme aimed to build an education system that was stronger and fairer than pre-covid. Schools would clearly be the main driver of change but they were also looking at how local authorities could work with wider groups of partners to achieve the desired objectives. They would also be looking at how best to reach children not in school settings, including pre-school.

Sir Alan advised members that the Programme would have significant resource implications and they were talking to the Prime Minister and Secretary of State about this. For example, it was clear that the current targets in the National Tutoring Programme would not be achieved with current resource levels.

Following the introduction, the Chair invited members to comment:

- Members raised concerns about various aspects of the National Tutoring Programme (NTP) – for example around levels of take up and quality of tutoring. Members felt that locally-determined approaches could often be more effective and the LGA could feed in some best practice examples of these. Sir Alan acknowledged that there were challenges with the NTP and that it was hoped to address some of these as it moved to phase 3. He agreed that there needed to be less prescription and more local flexibility and they would be talking to local authorities and school groupings to determine their needs. Sir Alan said they were open to new ideas and offered to talk to headteachers in Board members' local areas to discuss how the NTP could be improved
- Would the Programme be looking at whether Ofsted could be reformed to better support education recovery? Sir Alan said that this was outside the scope of the Programme but, given that it would not be possible to inspect all schools individually in the timeframe, there may be scope for undertaking thematic reviews.
- What was being done on career-related learning to address growing anxiety amongst teenagers? Sir Alan said that they weren't taking any specific steps at this stage but DfE were working on it at both 16-19 and under 16 level.
- Members felt that there was too much emphasis on academic catch-up in the current plans which would put too much pressure on many young people. There needed to be greater emphasis on their mental and emotional wellbeing and on giving them opportunities to socialise with their peers again. Play Streets and Forest Schools were suggested as examples of how this could be achieved. Sir Alan agreed that the approach needed to strike a balance and said that any additional summer activities needed to be a broad academic/cultural/recreational experience.
- Improving the physical and mental health of young people was considered to be key and this would need to involve training professionals to recognise these issues and to address them. Links should be made into Higher Education, Further Education and employers.
- How could parents be more effectively engaged in the catch-up

process – this would be crucial to its success, particularly for more vulnerable children.

- It was felt that now would be a good time to assess the things that had dropped off the curriculum, and services that had been lost in recent years, and to consider reinstating some of them.
- It was considered important to listen to what young people themselves were saying. There may be a number of positive aspects of lockdown for children that could be built into future learning.
- Teaching staff had been under a lot of pressure during the last year and so members felt it was important that catch up programmes took account of that and didn't lead to burn out. School governors could also have an important role to play.

Sir Alan said that an announcement on further funding was expected from the Government in the next couple of weeks, when further details of the Programme would also be revealed.

The Chair thanked Sir Alan for his time and urged him to continue to use Board members as a resource and sounding board for the Programme's work.

Decision

Children & Young People Board **noted** the update.

4 Children's Food and Wellbeing in the Context of the Social and Economic Recovery.

The Chair invited Rose Doran, Senior Adviser LGA, to introduce the report.

Rose updated members on Government initiatives to improve access to affordable and nutritious food for disadvantaged children during the course of the pandemic. She also highlighted good local practice and the LGA's work in this area. In particular, she highlighted the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme which the Government had now extended to cover Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays in 2021. Links to the Reshaping Financial Support programme, being led by the Resources Board, were also flagged up.

She invited members' views on the suggestion that the CYP Board lead on a cross-cutting programme of work in the LGA to explore the role of food in improving outcomes for disadvantaged children, with particular reference to the Covid recovery.

In the subsequent discussion, members raised the following points:

- Members agreed that the Board should lead on a new piece of work across the LGA focussing on how addressing the structural issues that caused food poverty could contribute to the economic and social recovery from Covid. Covid had exposed deep inequalities in society and lack of resilience in more deprived communities.
- Members gave examples of how their councils were engaging with the HAF programme and concern was expressed about a potential

funding cliff edge at the end of 2021 and the fact that money couldn't be used during school half-terms. Rose reassured members that talks were taking place with Government about using the money more flexibly.

- The current focus on food was considered to be an ideal opportunity to think about it more holistically, in particular through education in growing and cookery.

Decision

Children & Young People Board **noted** the report and **agreed** that officers should scope a wider piece of work on the issues raised and bring it back to the next Board meeting.

5 Note of the Previous Meeting on 12th January 2021

Members sought clarification and further information on the next steps following the vote at the previous meeting on raising the age of criminal responsibility. In view of the time, officers agreed to e-mail Board members with an update.

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2021 were then **agreed** as an accurate record.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chair	Cllr Judith Blake CBE	Leeds City Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Teresa Heritage	Hertfordshire County Council
Deputy-Chair	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	Cllr Lucy Nethsingha	Cambridgeshire County Council
	Dr Phil Norrey	Devon County Council
In Attendance	Cllr Helen Godwin	Bristol City Council
	Cllr Mili Patel	Brent Council
	Cllr Charlie Hull	South Somerset District Council
	Josh MacAlister	For item 2

Sir Alan Wood
Jessica Hill

For item 3
Local Government Chronicle