

Minutes of last Children & Young People Board meeting

Children & Young People Board

Tuesday, 27 June 2023

Hybrid Meeting - 18 Smith Square and Online

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as [Appendix A](#)

Item	Decisions and actions
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1 Welcome, Apologies and Substitutes, Declarations of Interest

The Chair welcomed members of the Children and Young People Board to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllr Judy Jennings, Cllr Adrian Hardman and Cllr Imran Khan, substituted by Cllr Edward Maxfield, Cllr Robert Flatley and Cllr Garry Bridges respectively.

There were no declarations of Interest.

2 Note of the Previous Meeting

Members agreed the minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 March.

3 Domestic Abuse Commissioner, Nicole Jacobs

The Chair introduced Nicole Jacobs, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, who is an independent statutory office holder appointed to provide public leadership on tackling domestic abuse and oversee and monitor the provision of services to victims of domestic abuse in England and Wales. Nicole Jacobs outlined her current priorities in relation to children and families experiencing domestic abuse, and her current and future work.

Members comments:

- The Chair highlighted the disappointing statistic that only 29% of families think children and young people are getting the support they need. The Chair also thanked the DA Commissioner for her acknowledgement of the funding and staffing issues councils face, and the limitations to progress as a result.
- Concern was raised around services not being continually funded and instead being subject to a bidding system with the Home Office, emphasising the need to provide a continuous service to protect the victim.
- Members requested sharing of good practice across the country.

- A member expanded on the need for wider collaboration between partners, as agencies had collaborated with a specific brief to achieve a specific outcome –there is a need to look at the wider landscape, to review root causes and patterns.
- Information was requested on how the DA Commissioner and the Children’s Commissioner work together.

Nicole Jacobs responded:

- The patchwork nature of funding for DA services needed to be more joined up and longer term, with greater communication from Government on the intention with funds. The DA commissioner’s office had gathered some evidence on which funding worked well which would help inform these conversations.
- This linked to the need for a greater focus on strategic long-term planning and prevention, rather than crisis intervention. A forum at local level between partners was suggested to address root causes outside of silos.
- Duties that were imposed on areas need to be funded.
- The DA commissioner’s office would continue to raise the profile of good practice, whilst attempting to address some of the systemic funding issues, with plans over the next quarter of the year to delve into the issues at the local level. The [Festival of Practice](#) which took place at the end of March demonstrates the work being done, where local strategic leads had come together to collaborate and share information.
- The Home Office had recently commissioned Police and Crime Commissioners with the aim to address perpetrators and root causes - £75 million of funding over 3 years. This would inform what the local pathway should look like to prevent perpetrators harming.
- Nicole Jacobs described her collaboration with the [Children’s Commissioner](#), Rachel de Souza, as working towards shared priorities whilst ensuring no replication of work. Traditionally, the DA Commissioner also worked with the Victim’s Commissioner, however there is not one in post.

Decision

The Board considered the presentation by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner and offered perspectives from their own authorities and views on the Commissioner’s current and future work.

Actions

- Members to reach out to the DA Commissioner’s Regional Commissioners to begin to support work of discovering and sharing good practice across the country – particularly how councils collaborate with partners such as community and voluntary groups.
- DA Commissioner’s Office to send examples of good practice between partners.

The Chair invited Flora Wilkie, Adviser, to introduce the item to outline the Government's 2023 Spring Budget announcement of reforms to the early years education and childcare system and the LGA's policy approach for early years. Officers had been refreshing the LGA's policy approach for early years education and childcare following a discussion at the March CYP Board.

Members comments:

- Providers of early years education and childcare had fed back that 'funded places' are not fully funded. Providers had to reduce the number of funded places available, or cross-subsidise places from fee-paying parents – which would not happen in deprived areas, leaving the most disadvantaged unsupported. Additionally, as more families had been working from home more often, fewer fees are being paid and nurseries would not be receiving this additional income. It was requested that this be emphasised in the policy position.
- Greater emphasis on the chronic recruitment and retention issues was needed in the policy position, as additional funded places could not be delivered without adequate staffing levels. Providers had given feedback that wages are the main barrier to recruitment and retention.
- A member raised the point that there is a feminist issue around the perception of early years work, as the workforce is almost entirely women and perceived as low status and low pay - until this is resolved the crisis would continue.
- Concern was raised around the lack of clarity on which qualifications are needed to work in the sector. Another member pointed out a lack of suitably qualified staff from early career level to educational psychologists.
- The funding shortage for the maintained nursery sector needed to be emphasised in the policy position, as the expectation is for maintained nurseries to run as schools with a headteacher. Also, it was raised that maintained nurseries are isolated, not able to academise or join trusts.
- Foster carers and kinship carers should have additional hours made available to them without meeting the work criteria of early years funded entitlements. Emphasis should be placed on the money kinship and foster carers save the Government and the extension to this cohort would further aid this.
- It was suggested that the LGA has a role in sector led improvement and good practice is shared.
- A member called for the removal of childminder agencies from the report due to its failure.
- A member commented that placing the sufficiency team within the commissioning team helped address the conflict between quality, quantity and sufficiency of local provision detailed in paragraph 74 of the report.
- Early identification of SEND children and children with more complex needs, such as speech and language needs was highlighted in combination with the need for additional help to follow the child throughout their life.
- There was a consensus view that information sharing on good practice between local authorities was needed.

The Chair invited Richard Cooke, Head of Children's Services Improvement to speak. Richard Cooke explained that the Department for Education had recently provided a small grant over the next couple of years around early years, specifically speech and language development. Richard Cooke acknowledged it would not address all the issues discussed, however it would be something councils could tap into.

Decision

The Board endorsed the draft early years policy paper subject to comments made during the discussion and agreed that Lead members sign of the final papers in July.

Action

- Officers to circulate final papers with the Board following sign off.
- Officers to share details of the funding provided from the DfE to the LGA.

5 Children's Placements Working Group Final Report

The Chair invited Cllr Fiona Venner to introduce the item which outlined the final report and recommendations of the Children's Placements Working Group which was established on 29 September 2022 by the Children and Young People Board, to consider the issue of placement insufficiency for children in care.

Members comments:

- A member highlighted issues that had arisen with the regulator Ofsted, which had caused barriers and challenges to providing children with the right placements. For instance, being overly prescriptive when matching children with homes and unaware of the effect this has on the wider system, such as resorting to the use of unregistered provision.
- Children's Placements was the most problematic issue facing councils' children's social care departments and overall, was posing considerable reputational risk and financial burdens. The LGA should lobby Government and raise this up the agenda.
- It was helpful to consider the specific needs of children aged 15 and up, as outlined in the report, and to recognise that the needs of resident and asylum-seeking children could be very different, for example resident children may have specific issues in their school or locality.

Decision

The Board agreed the recommendations of the Placements Working Group, as set out in paragraph 9 of the report.

Actions

- Officers to consider methods to take the recommendations of the Children's Placements Working Group forward.
- Officers to explore the creation of an LGA resource to provide information on how to set up a thriving fostering community and how to set up residential homes.

- Members to share specific feedback of experiences to share with Ofsted as requested by Matthew Brazier.
- Good practice should be shared with councils with consideration of how to publicise these more widely.
- Officers to write to Ofsted:
 - Issue of multi-site registration
 - Potential to feedback to Ofsted or incorporate in the policy position the need to be more understanding when matching placements, as they may not be ideal, but there are limited options.
 - Inform Ofsted of the emergency measures local authorities must take as a consequence of Ofsted's decisions.

6 Proposed Ofsted Regional Adoption Agency inspection

The Chair invited Matthew Brazier, Ofsted's Special Adviser (Children in Care) and Project Director for Supported Accommodation (Children in Care and Care Leavers), to discuss plans for the inspection of Regional Adoption Agencies.

The Chair requested information on how regular the inspections would be and encouraged Ofsted to return to the Board with the learnings from the inspections in future.

Matthew Brazier responded:

- The set of inspections of 6 RAAs due to take place in November were the only set scheduled thus far, however following future discussions with the DfE and other stakeholders – it could be decided to do a regular thematic inspection or a cycle of inspections.
- Matthew Brazier ensured that Ofsted did not want to increase the burden on local authorities, but instead, identify and encourage where resources could be used better.

Decision

The Board noted the contents of the presentation.

Action

- Members to contact Ofsted with any further comments on the plans (emails were shared in the meeting chat).

7 Review of RIIA Effectiveness from CIB Working Group

The Chair invited Amy Brace, LGA Programme Manager in the Children's Improvement Team, to give an update on an evaluation exercise undertaken on behalf of the Children's Improvement Board to identify opportunities for further supporting the RIIAs to drive improvement across the sector. Amy Brace presented her slides (available in the agenda pack).

Members comments:

- A member that was interviewed as part of the review thanked Amy Brace and her team for the work being done and highlighted the value of the work of the RIAs. The member requested examples of good practice to be shared. The member would welcome more opportunities for RIAs to share good practice.

The Chair invited Amy back in future to report back on the progress of the action plan.

Decision

The Board noted the contents of the presentation.

Action

- Amy Brace to progress the action plan, including developing opportunities for good practice to be shared across RIAs.

8 CYP Board activity at LGA Annual Conference

The Chair invited Clive Harris, Senior Adviser to introduce the report that provided information on the children and young people-focussed sessions that are taking place as part of the LGA annual conference from the 4 – 6 July 2023.

Decision

The Board noted the contents of the report.

The Chair thanked Cllr Lucy Nethsingha for her time and valuable contributions over her 6 years on the Children and Young People Board and wished her good luck for her future and new position at the LGA.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Louise Gittins	Cheshire West and Chester Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Patricia Bradwell OBE	Lincolnshire County Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Lucy Nethsingha	Cambridgeshire County Council
Members	Cllr Roger Gough	Kent County Council
	Cllr Kam Kaur	Warwickshire County Council
	Cllr Laura Mayes	Wiltshire Council
	Cllr Antony Mullen	Sunderland City
	Cllr Mark Sutton	Staffordshire County Council
	Cllr Fiona Venner	Leeds City Council
	Cllr Mili Patel	Brent Council
	Cllr Tim Roca	Westminster City Council
Apologies		Epping Forest District Council Worcestershire County Council

Bradford Metropolitan District Council

In Attendance

Domestic Abuse Commissioner
Manchester City Council
Somerset County Council
Norfolk County Council
ADCS President