

Children and Young People Board – report from Cllr Richard Watts (Chair)

Conferences, Meetings and Public Events

1. I jointly chaired the last meeting of the LGA/ADCS/Solace Children's Improvement Board, which took place on the 24 January. Discussions focussed on developing a sector response to the National Audit Office 'Children in Need of Help or Protection' report, and the effectiveness of the Department for Education's 'Partners in Practice' programme. The Board also received a presentation from the Isos partnership on an LGA-commissioned project looking at the role of different delivery models in driving improvement in children's services.
2. Cllr Roy Perry gave a keynote presentation at an Inside Government 'Children's Services Inspections: Raising Standards, Improving Outcomes' conference on 25 January. His speech focussed specifically on how different agencies can integrate and work together to improve outcomes for children.
3. Cllr Gillian Ford attended the London stakeholder event for the new Home Office funded Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse, led by Barnardo's. The Centre aims to help bring about significant and system-wide change in how child sexual abuse is responded to locally and nationally, by identifying, generating and sharing high quality evidence of what works to prevent and tackle CSA and child sexual exploitation. The LGA is a core partner on the Centre's advisory board, and is helping to shape its priorities over the coming years.
4. Cllr Gillian Ford attended the fourth meeting of the Expert Working Group on improving mental health and emotional wellbeing support for children and young people in care. The overall aim of the project is to ensure that the emotional wellbeing and mental health needs of children and young people in care, those adopted from care or under a Special Guardianship Order (SGO), and care leavers are better met. The aspiration is that in the future, children and young people in care will have access to high-quality services, based on a clear assessment of need, from a range of professionals working across agencies.

Special Meeting on Children and Young People's Mental Health

5. I attended a Special Meeting on Children and Young People's Mental Health with Lead members of the Community Wellbeing Board and Children and Young People Board on 23 February to learn more from a number of speakers on key issues for children and young people's mental health. Speakers included The Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP, young people who have experience of mental health and wellbeing services and Pooky Knightsmith, Vice Chair of the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition. Members used the session to determine next steps and activities in relation to children and young people's mental health across both Boards, including an LGA campaign to raise awareness of key issues.

Roundtable discussion with the Schools Minister

6. I participated in a roundtable discussion with the Schools Minister, Nick Gibb, on 19 January on the proposed introduction of a national funding formula for schools.
7. I raised concerns about the proposed timeline for introducing the new national formula, specifically around the one year of the transitional or 'soft' formula in 2018-19, before the introduction of the 'hard' formula in 2019-20, which will be challenging for all schools, but particularly for those facing a reduction in funding. I also questioned the introduction of the proposed 'top-slice' for additional school improvement support in 2018-19 and its effectiveness in freeing up sufficient funding at a local level; we do not believe that schools will be willing to fund council duties from their own budgets.

Publications on Children's Health

8. In February 2017 Cllr Izzi Seccombe (Chair of the Community Wellbeing Board) and I jointly launched a publication on children's health: [Improving outcomes for children and families in the early years: a key role for health visiting services.](#)

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

9. More than 750 children have come to the UK from the Calais camp since 10 October 2016. While the majority of these children were reunited with family under the Dublin Treaty, approximately 200 children were placed in local authority care under the "Dubs Amendment". Approximately 150 children are expected to follow before the end of March, at which point the Government has indicated that it intends to end the Dubs Scheme. Councils continue to demonstrate tremendous leadership at a local, regional and national level in resettling these children, and the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children living in England increased by more than 50 per cent to over 4,000 in the last year. Further information, including the enhanced funding available both for individual children and to build wider capacity, will continue to be placed on the LGA website, and we continue to push for full recovery of costs and for better, more transparent information.

Children and Social Work Bill

10. The Children and Social Work Bill has now reached Report Stage in the House of Commons. The LGA has briefed actively throughout, and we have achieved a number of important concessions. In particular, we argued strongly that applications for powers to test new ways of working should always be council-led, allowing local authorities to make decisions based on the needs of local children and young people that they know best. We are therefore pleased that government has removed provisions that would have allowed the Secretary of State to make these decisions on behalf of local authorities in intervention. We are also pleased that the Government has listened to our concerns and made clear that these powers can only be used where the proposals are clearly demonstrated to be in best interests of children.
11. The LGA has also secured important concessions in relation to social work regulation. The LGA previously raised concerns that the new social work regulator proposed in the Bill would not have the guaranteed independence necessary to balance the needs of the

public, requirements set by government, the interests of the profession, and the organisational requirements of employers who will have overall management responsibilities. We are pleased the Government has addressed these concerns, but much will depend on how the regulator operates in practice.

12. Other important clauses in the Bill concern corporate parenting principles, a local offer for care leavers, care planning and new flexibilities around multi-agency safeguarding partnerships and serious case reviews. All the LGA's briefings on this Bill are available [here](#).

Press Releases and Statements

13. I have recently made public statements on the [Family and Childcare Trust's survey into the Government's 30 hours free childcare offer](#), [the Fostering Network 'State of the Nation's Foster Care 2016' report](#) and [the Government's announcement of a £40 million package to tackle child sexual abuse and trafficking](#).

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