

Children and Young People Board - End of Year Report

Background

1. The Children and Young People Board provides strategic oversight of the LGA's policy, regulatory and improvement activity in relation to education and schools, children's social care, children's health and early years in line with the LGA priorities as they relate to this activity.

Achievements

2. We have been active participants in the Department for Education's early engagement with the sector on its Fostering Stocktake. We also secured a commitment from the largest fostering company in the UK to end the practice of offering financial incentives to entice foster carers away from local authorities.
3. The LGA was part of the winning bid to run the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse, working with Barnardo's and other partners to bring about system-wide change in how child sexual abuse is responded to locally and nationally.
4. In January the Board's Office Holders wrote to Justine Greening calling for a 'reset' of relationships between councils and the Department for Education, giving councils a clear strategic role in education, with the powers and funding to effectively perform the role.

Education and schools

5. Although the Government announced in May 2016 that it would no longer legislate to force all council maintained schools to become academies, it remained committed to end the statutory council role in school improvement and to cut the Education Services Grant paid to councils by £600 million. The LGA continued to lobby against these proposals and highlighted the excellent track record of councils in school improvement.
6. In October 2016 it was announced that the Government would not proceed with an Education Bill, but would pay councils an annual £50 million grant in recognition of their role in school oversight and improvement. Councils and council-maintained schools would also be able to bid into a £140 million per annum Strategic School Improvement Fund to support struggling schools, which was planned to be available to academies and academy chains only.
7. The LGA response to the second stage consultation on the introduction of a national schools funding formula emphasised the need to retain a degree of local flexibility.

Early Years

8. The LGA hosted a conference, in partnership with Public Health England and the Association of Directors of Children's Services, for councillors and practitioners to consider how to achieve the best outcomes for children in their early years.

Children's Social Care

9. The LGA lobbied extensively around the Children and Social Work Bill as it went through Parliament. We welcomed the legislation's strong focus on support for children in care, though we highlighted the need for adequate new burdens funding for new and extended provisions. We were also pleased that the Government accepted our call for sex and relationships education to be compulsory in all schools, including academies.
10. While we welcomed moves to allow more local flexibility in local children's safeguarding arrangements, we continue to be concerned around the involvement of some non-statutory partners, and continue to work with the Department for Education on guidance. We raised concerns about direct ministerial control of the proposed new social work regulator and were pleased the Government redrafted the Bill to give Social Work England greater statutory independence.
11. The Bill initially contained provisions allowing the Secretary of State to relax or amend children's social care legislation in a local authority in intervention, without proper local consultation or consent. We worked to remove this power, which was eventually withdrawn in its entirety.

Children's Health

12. We produced a number of publications. In December, the [Healthy futures: supporting and promoting the health needs of looked after children](#) publication highlighted that health (especially mental health) outcomes for looked after children are significantly worse than for the child population as a whole.
13. [Working to support positive parenting and relationships. What can councils do?](#) recognised a renewed council focus on initiatives to support parents is a key influencer on the social determinants of health throughout the life course.
14. In March 2017 the government confirmed the five mandated health visitor checks would continue. [The LGA publication Improving outcomes for children and families in the early years: a key role for health visiting services](#) demonstrated councils have used the transfer of commissioning responsibilities for the 0-5 Healthy Child Programme, as an opportunity to translate PHE's six early years high impact areas into local context, focussing commissioning on the health issues that are most relevant for the 0-5 population.
15. In February 2017 lead members of the Community Wellbeing Board and Children and Young People Board hosted a special meeting on children and young people mental health and wellbeing, inviting a range of different stakeholder representatives. Greater local accountability on spend and quality of services and building the capacity and capability of the providers in the system emerged as two key themes.

LGA Asylum, Refugee and Migration Task Group

16. The LGA Asylum, Refugee and Migration Task Group, Chaired by Cllr David Simmonds, reports to both the Community Wellbeing and Children and Young People Board. Task

and Finish Group work included a meeting and an event with the Immigration Minister in November and February respectively, and resources and information to support councils as outlined on the LGA [website](#).

Programme of work and priorities 2017/18

1. A draft work programme for 2017/18 will be presented at the Board's next meeting. In proposing the programme a number of factors will need to be taken into account including:
 - 1.1. To lobby government to close the £2 billion funding gap in children's social care.
 - 1.2. To lobby government to commit to devolve a proportion of DfE's £300 million budget for improvement and innovation in children's services to councils.
 - 1.3. Government policy should be changed to allow councils and maintained schools to set up Multi Academy Trusts and take over failing maintained schools and academies if they have an good track record in school improvement.
 - 1.4. Councils must be given the same powers to direct academies to admit vulnerable pupils as they currently hold for maintained schools.
 - 1.5. Councils should have the lead role in commissioning new free schools to make sure they provide places where they are most needed and do not destabilise existing good and outstanding schools.
 - 1.6. Councils should have the same power to direct academies to expand to meet increasing local demand for school places if local agreement cannot be reached as they currently have for maintained schools.
 - 1.7. The system for allocating schools capital should be urgently reviewed to allow schools and councils to work together to join up fragmented funding streams locally in a single local capital pot and provide best value for money in the spending of limited capital resources for schools.
 - 1.8. An element of local flexibility must be retained in the implementation of a new national school funding formula.
 - 1.9. Councils must be adequately funded to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND in their communities.
 - 1.10. Continuing to work to ensure that councils are adequately resourced to support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
 - 1.11. Promote and highlight the role of Councils in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.

Financial Implications

All work programmes are met from existing budgets and resources.