

Safer & Stronger Communities Board – report from Councillor Ann Lucas OBE (Chair)

National Group on Sexual Violence

1. The Board's Deputy Chair, Cllr Lisa Brett, represented the LGA in late March at the meeting of the national group on sexual violence against children and vulnerable adults, which was chaired by the Minister for Crime Prevention, Norman Baker MP. The main item for discussion at the national group was the update of the action plan for tackling sexual violence. The group was presented with a draft of the new action plan, which set out the areas the Home Office will be looking to work on over the next year. There were a number of proposed actions related to local implementation such as improving information sharing and the commissioning of services at a local level. The issue of information sharing between partners was also discussed in the context of improving safeguarding outcomes using multi-agency safeguarding hubs.

Domestic abuse

2. Cllr Ann Lucas, the Board's Chair appeared on Radio Five Live in March to talk about the funding of specialist services for children affected by domestic violence. Charities working in this area had highlighted that there had been a reduction in funding for these services. Cllr Lucas explained the difficult financial position facing councils and that services were being commissioned in a different way than previously. As a result there had been a slight increase in the number of staff working in specialist children and young people roles between 2012 and 2013. The joint funding of services by a range of partners through community budgets was also raised by Cllr Lucas as an area of increasing importance going forward.

FGM working group

- 3 The next meeting of the FGM working group will be held on 11 April. The working group will be inviting key stakeholders from local authorities, who have successfully engaged with their local communities to share best practice with the group. The working group will be setting out its work programme for the coming months.

Year Ahead conference

4. Cllr Nick Worth, the Board's regulatory services champion, gave a well-received keynote address at the Year Ahead in regulatory services conference in Stratford-upon-Avon on 13 February. The conference, jointly hosted by CIEH and TSI, attracts from 250 senior professionals from regulatory services. Cllr Worth's speech recognised the challenging circumstances regulatory services are in, but urged delegates to use reduced resources as an opportunity to think about how regulatory services can be delivered differently and linked to councils' public health and economic growth objectives.

Betting Commission

5. The LGA has convened a Betting Commission bringing together representatives from councils / the LGA with representatives from the five largest betting shop companies and the Association of British Bookmakers, as well as government departments and independent experts. As you'll be aware, since the turn of the year, there has been significant media coverage relating to councils' concerns about betting shop clustering and FOBTs. While a number of reviews and research projects are underway, the LGA was keen to ensure direct engagement between councils and the industry, in order to establish whether there is any common ground and / or scope for voluntary agreements on these issues. The first meeting takes place on Tuesday 1 April, and it is intended the Commission will operate over a period of six months. For further information, please contact ellie.greenwood@local.gov.uk

Leadership Academy

6. The most recent in a series of Fire Leadership Academies took place on 12-13 February. The event was led by Cllr Kay Hammond, Chairman of the Fire Services Management Committee who set out the leadership challenges and opportunities facing the sector. There were also discussions around creating good member/officer relations, dealing with the media and leadership styles. The Leadership Academy was attended by a range of councillors with responsibility for fire and rescue services, drawn from county, metropolitan and combined authorities and feedback received from the event was very positive. The next Leadership Academy will take place in September.

LGA's Annual Fire Conference

7. Cllr Kay Hammond chaired a very successful Fire Conference at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff on 11 and 12 March. The conference attracted around 320 delegates drawn from all of the fire and rescue services in England and Wales. In an opening speech Cllr Hammond praised the sector and its work in the recent floods, before setting out the financial challenges and flagging the need for greater collaboration and innovation across the blue light services. Although the Government's response to the Knight review has not yet been published, the Minister, Brandon Lewis MP, in the keynote speech, reiterated the government's preferred direction of travel which includes greater use of on-call staff. Lyn Brown MP, Shadow Minister for Communities and Fire also addressed delegates at the conference and welcomed the opportunity to hear the views of all fire and rescue authorities who were in attendance.

Contact officer:

Helen Murray

Position:

Head of Programme

Phone no:

020 7664 3266

E-mail:

helen.murray@local.gov.uk