

Children and Young People– report from Cllr Judith Blake CBE (Chair)

Children's Services and Leaving Care

Adoption and Special Guardianship

1. On 15 November, Councillor Susie Charles attended the national Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board. Topics covered included kinship care, the work of virtual school heads, and improving the recruitment of adopters.

Corporate Parenting and Support for Care Leavers Resource Packs

2. The Board have recently updated the [Corporate Parenting](#) and the [Support for Care Leavers](#) resource packs for councillors. These resources packs are aimed at all councillors, not just lead members of children's services. They provide information on key definitions, council responsibilities, updated national legislation/guidance, key lines of enquiry and links to further resources to support local councils with their corporate parenting role.

National Children and Adult Services Conference 2019

3. Nearly 850 delegates attended this year's NCAS Conference in Bournemouth in November, with councillors and lead members from the Board participating in a range of sessions. Despite the programme needing substantial change as a result of the general election, the event still provided opportunities to share local innovation, reflect on current issues in children's social care and education and to identify what the Board's priorities for working with the new government both immediately and in the long term could be. Presentations from the event are available at [here](#).
4. We [published our latest Bright Futures report](#), outlining the areas we'll be focusing on over the next year in our ongoing children's social care campaign. Lobbying for sufficient funding remains our top priority, along with a focus on early help and putting children at the centre of decision-making.
5. Cllr Teresa Heritage chaired the final plenary session on children and young people's mental health at NCASC 2019. Speakers included Cllr Jasmine Ali from the London Borough of Southwark, Andy Bell from the Centre for Mental Health and Jenny Coles, Director of Children's Services from Hertfordshire. The session highlighted the importance of political leadership, partnership and place as part of local government's role in supporting the mental health and emotional wellbeing of our children and young people.

Children and Young People's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Steering Group

6. The Board, alongside the Community Wellbeing and Safer & Stronger Communities Boards have set up a cross-board steering group on children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing, which has now met three times. The group has helped to

shape and develop a strong position for the LGA on how councils can improve the mental health of our younger generations.

7. ISOS Partnerships were commissioned to undertake the research, including carrying out field visits to councils up and down the country. The findings will be launched during Children's Mental Health Week (3 – 9 February 2020).

Home-to-school transport research

8. We have published research looking at the demand and cost pressures that councils are facing in delivering home-to-school transport. The [report](#), commissioned in conjunction with the County Councils Network, found that the cost to councils of providing home-to-school transport has increased by £66 million over four years between 2014/15 and 2017/18 and projects it may rise by a further £127 million to reach £1.2 billion a year by 2024.
9. It also found that:
 - 9.1. Providing transportation for some of the most vulnerable pupils in the country is the most significant driver in the cost increase with pupils with SEND increasingly being sent to specialist schools much further away than their local school.
 - 9.2. As a result, transport for children and young people with SEND now accounts for 69 per cent of all home-to-school transport expenditure.
 - 9.3. Councils have reduced spend on their transport offer by 12 per cent and cut discretionary transport spending by 27 per cent in order to meet rising costs of providing transport for children. This has seen the number of children receiving free home-to-school transport reduce by more than 10,000 in five years.

Youth Services

Statutory Review of Youth Services

10. The Board [responded](#) to the DCMS call for evidence on the statutory review of Youth services statutory guidance. The response welcomes the government's recent £500million investment in youth services and calls for an ambitious national vision for youth services. It also highlights the key roles that councils have to play in co-ordinating services for young people and, emphasises the need for sustainable funding and to ensure that young people's voices are central to services.

NYA Youth Summit

11. On 29th October, Cllr Beckles and Flemming from the CYP Board attended the National Youth Agency (NYA) Youth Work Summit in Parliament. Topics discussed included; sufficiency of youth work and a panel discussion and Q&A on youth work in action and its future in the context of wider youth services reform.

Child Tooth Decay

12. In December we launched the publication [A whole systems approach to tackling childhood tooth decay](#). Tooth decay remains the most common reason for hospital admission in children aged six to 10, with those from deprived areas most likely to suffer problems. This report contains a whole range of examples of the steps that need to be taken to achieve success.

Press Releases

13. Since the last forum, I have commented in the following LGA press releases on behalf of the Board:
- 13.1. [LGA responds to the Education Select Committee report on SEND](#)
 - 13.2. [School transport under threat as bill set to rise to £1.2 billion by 2024](#)
 - 13.3. [Increasing conflict and hardship behind rise in struggling families needing support from councils](#)
 - 13.4. [LGA responds to the children's society's report on mental health](#)
 - 13.5. [30 years of Children's Act: next government needs to invest in children's services](#)
 - 13.6. [LGA responds to Sport England's 'Active Lives Children and Young People' report](#)
 - 13.7. [Queen's Speech: LGA responds to education funding announcement](#)
 - 13.8. [LGA responds to Action for Children report on youth carers](#)
 - 13.9. [LGA responds to Children's Commissioner report on children in care moving out of area](#)
 - 13.10. [Number of children in care reaches 10-year high](#)

Contact officer:
Position:
Phone number:
E-mail:

Ian Keating
Principal Policy Adviser
0207 664 3032
[ian.keating @local.gov.uk](mailto:ian.keating@local.gov.uk)