

Children and Young People Board: Review of the Year

Our ambition for children and young people

1. As part of the 'rewiring public services campaign launched in July 2013, we published a specific set of proposals for children's services. Since then we have consulted widely with councils, partners and with 300 young people on how to make a reality of the proposals. This result of this work will be launched at LGA annual conference. The report aims to provide a starting point for local discussions about joining up services for children and young people and provide a framework for commissioning of children's services by councils and partners.

Education

2. We have continued to highlight the changing council role in education through events, publications, research and work with the press, MPs and Peers. We launched case study publications on the council role in school improvement in June 2013 and the council role in place planning in March 2014. In a submission to the Education Select Committee in December we argued for restoration of decision-making on the provision of new schools to local level; for councils to be given a greater role in judging and approving free school proposals; and for councils to be given stronger powers to intervene in all underperforming schools, including academies and free schools.
3. Our analysis of the looming shortfall in school places as a result of sharply increasing demand in many areas received widespread press coverage in September 2013 and March 2014. In December 2013 the Government announced additional schools capital funding of £2.35 billion for 2015-17, in addition to the £5 billion allocated over the lifetime of this Parliament. The announcement also provides 3-year allocations for new places, which the LGA had called for to allow councils to plan ahead and provide cost-effective solutions.
4. We lobbied during the passage of the Children and Families Act 2014 to ensure a stronger and clearer role for councils in promoting the interests of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in their areas. We won concessions to make sure that there is a single system for assessment and support from 0 -25 for these children and young people. Support for councils to implement the reforms included a highly successful conference in December and commissioning case studies of the work being done by pathfinder councils.
5. We strongly supported the proposals for a fairer funding system for schools, to reform the current system which is largely based on historic spending patterns and sees wide variations in levels of funding between children in different council areas. Unfortunately, the Government decided to delay the reform until after the General Election, but announced an additional £350 million of funding for the 62 councils that they judged to be the lowest funded.

Post 16 participation

6. We influenced the announcement and development of the Government's review of schemes for 16 to 24 year olds. This led to the devolution of the £50 million Youth Contract underspend to council youth employment through City Deals, and recognition of the council role in developing a UCAS style post-16 system for young people not going to university.

7. We maintained a high profile for councils' ambitions in helping young people into work and learning, including the publication of *Totalling Hidden Talents*, which assessed youth unemployment and underemployment across the country, and *Councils Supporting Youth Transitions*, which showcased innovative council approaches. Both documents were widely covered in national press.
8. We supported councils, in collaboration with Government, to improve how they identify and track young people not in education or work which helped councils reduce the number of young people 'unknown' to them by 25,000 over one year.

Children's social care

9. We have influenced government proposals to allow councils to delegate children's social care functions to third party providers, with the introduction of a specific restriction on profit-making companies delivering these services.
10. We worked with the national Adoption Leadership Board to drive a 15% rise in the number of children adopted and a 34% increase in the number of approved adopters over the past year alone.
11. We successfully lobbied to significantly curtail proposals in the passage of the Children and Families Act 2014 to allow the Secretary of State to remove all local authorities from adopter recruitment. The implementation of the clause will now be delayed until March 2015, and the power can only be used following an active debate and vote in both Houses of Parliament.
12. We secured local government representation on the Home Office's National Group on Sexual Violence, driving policy change and practice improvement on issues such as child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation.

Improvement

13. For 2013/14, we have held one new lead member induction and 3 political leadership academies for lead Members for children's services.
14. Working directly with councils, we have delivered 10 children's services peer reviews, 11 safeguarding practice diagnostics and 4 care practice diagnostics. We have delivered 4 nationally accredited and quality assured courses for practitioners and associates engaging in peer review, challenge or diagnostic activity providing 61 new peers recruited for the delivery programme.

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