

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

Early Years

1. The Children and Young People's Board published its research into Early Years funding 'Understanding the Effectiveness of the Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund, Disability Access Fund and Early Years Pupil Premium'. The research shows that there are significant improvements that could be made to improve take-up of each fund, reduce bureaucracy for parents, providers and local authorities and ensure that the funding achieves its aims.
2. On 3 December I wrote to Children's and Families Minister, Vicky Ford, sharing the research. I welcomed a conversation with the Department to explore how the recommendations made in these reports could be taken forward.

Youth Justice

3. On 3 December I wrote to the National Probation Service (NPS), asking them to re-consider their policy of not permitting seconded probation officers from undertaking home visits. We have been concerned that, where seconded probation officers are unable to conduct visits, this is in some cases resulting in children not getting the support they need or is placing additional pressure on other members of the team, who are not employed by the NPS.

Spending Review

4. On 25 November we responded to the Government's Spending Review. We noted that while additional funding for adult's and children's social care was welcome, it would only address some of the pressures, and significant additional funding was still required to ensure children, young people and their families received the help they needed. We also welcomed additional funding for secure children's homes and school places for children with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities, along with the extension of the Troubled Families programme for a further year.
5. We noted that while a small uplift to hourly rates for early years entitlements was helpful, immediate investment was required to support providers whose businesses had struggled due to COVID-19. We were also disappointed that additional funding was not made available to schools to cover exceptional costs incurred as a result of the pandemic.

Child-Centred Recovery

6. On 30 November we hosted a parliamentary briefing on our child-centred recovery policy document. We used this opportunity to brief parliamentarians on the challenges facing councils with regard to supporting children and families, and to emphasise the importance of all government departments working together to create child-friendly policies. The briefing was well received, and we have arranged several follow up conversations with parliamentarians to take this work further.

National Children and Adult Services Conference

7. On 4-6 November, we joined ADCS and ADASS to host NCASC virtually for the first time. The conference was extremely well attended, and we received positive feedback from councils who welcomed the opportunity to 'meet' and consider a broad range of important topics. We were pleased to welcome Vicky Ford MP, Minister for Children and Families, who spoke to delegates about a range of issues including adoption, kinship care, SEND and early help. She also confirmed the Government's intention to proceed with a review of the children's care system, and thanked those working to support children around the country.

Children's Services Funding

8. On 1 December I attended a children's services funding roundtable organised by several charities including The Children's Society and NSPCC. At this roundtable, I emphasised the importance of early help and of putting children at the heart of our pandemic recovery plans.

Education and SEND

9. Deputy Chair of the Children and Young People Board, Cllr Lucy Nethsingha, gave evidence to the Education Committee inquiry on home education that took place on the 24th November. Speaking alongside ADCS President Jenny Coles and representatives from the home education lobby, Cllr Nethsingha highlighted the need to raise the profile of children missing formal full-time education, strengthen the legislative framework around electively home educated children and resource local authorities adequately to fulfil their responsibilities to ensure all children receive a suitable education.
10. On the 2nd December, Vice-Chairman Cllr Teresa Heritage gave evidence to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on SEND. Cllr Heritage emphasised the need for long-term certainty of high needs funding to help councils support children with SEND, as well as the need for the Government's on-going review of SEND to increase levels of mainstream inclusion and give councils the powers to act as leaders of local SEND systems and hold partners to account for their work in supporting children and young people with special needs.

Children's Improvement

11. I chaired the most recent meeting of the LGA/ADCS/Solace/DfE/Ofsted Children's Improvement Board, which took place on the 13th October. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss the Department for Education's work to support councils rated as *requires improvement* by Ofsted, the LGA's work to develop a tool to also support *R/I* councils and the work of the East of England's Regional Improvement & Innovation Alliance.

Youth Employment & Skills Update

12. We have continued to maintain our focus on improving youth participation work, considering that young people's training and employment prospects are being disproportionately affected by COVID-19 restrictions and the economic fallout of the crisis. Engagement with member authorities and stakeholders have continued to shape our views and emerging policy on

what should be an appropriate offer for young people and employers to support economic recovery.

13. We continue to work closely with the LGA Workforce team, as many of the employment and skills measures, for example, Apprenticeships, Traineeships, T Levels, Kickstart Scheme, involve the sector workforce.
14. The youth participation report, culminating our engagement work with the sector and stakeholders, including the impact of COVID-19 crisis on young people was published. The report [Re-thinking youth participation for the present and next generation: education to employment](#) was launched early October 2020 with a [press release](#) calling for COBRA-style action to save the 'lost generation' of young people. The publication received good traction and has reached a broad range of stakeholders.
15. To sustain the momentum on our youth campaign and shine a light on the work more widely, we are publishing a series of First articles from Autumn 2020 to Spring 2021. The introductory feature appeared with a by-line from the Chairs of the three boards (CYP, P&P and CRB), demonstrating the importance of a joined-up education and employment and skills policy. The [feature](#) (p11) highlighted the plight of young people and the job crisis. It set out the reports recommendation, including LGA's calls for a youth, employment and skills taskforce and a youth minister.
16. The LGA Chairman wrote to several Ministers about the report, including Mims Davies, Minister of State for Employment, DWP; Gillian Keegan, Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills, DfE; Luke Hall, Minister of State for Regional Growth and Local Government, MHCLG. The LGA initiated and organised a roundtable session in December 2020 with the Minister for Employment and P&P and CR Lead Members to discuss how local government could support DWP COVID-19 related employment support schemes.
17. Separately, the LGA along with council/combined authority representatives have continued to maintain a dialogue with DfE on young people and those not in education, employment or training (NEET) though regular meetings with officials. Discussions have focussed on raising concerns about appropriate careers advice and guidance, relevance and sufficiency of provision and funding.

Press Releases & Publications

18. There have been a number of Press Releases and Publications put out by the LGA Children and Young People team, you can view them [here](#).

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