

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

New Reports

1. We have launched three new reports since the last meeting:
 - 1.1 [‘I Want to do Well’](#) collates evidence around the experiences of children and young people in the first lockdown so that we can incorporate children’s views into our ongoing decision-making around the pandemic and our recovery
 - 1.2 The second report considers the [barriers that councils and small providers face when trying to establish new children’s homes](#). Officers have already had discussions about the report contents with the relevant team in the Department for Education to consider how to use its recommendations to improve capacity in the sector.
 - 1.3 And finally, we have updated our [research on profit making and financial risk](#) in independent providers of children’s social care placements. The report highlighted the extent of profit making by the largest providers, in particular of children’s homes, and the significant levels of debt many of these providers hold.

Independent Review of Children’s social care

2. I have written to the Chair of the Independent Review of Children’s Social Care, Josh MacAlister, to welcome him to his post and outline the role of the LGA, as well as to offer our support for the review. I am pleased that Josh also accepted my invitation to attend the March meeting of the Children and Young People Board to give councillors an opportunity to outline their ambitions for the review and the challenges facing children’s social care
3. The Board has also responded to the Call for Advice for the Independent Review, highlighting key questions to ask, suggested stakeholders to speak with and existing evidence that should be considered. I have accepted an invitation to join an advisory group for the review, to represent councillors and ensure the role of the Lead Member and other councillors as corporate parents is considered through the review.

Children’s services

4. I met with David Simmonds MP on 21 January to discuss opportunities to provide positive childhoods for children and young people. We discussed the important role of culture, play, sport and work experience, amongst other issues, in supporting children’s development and ambitions. This work fits well with our ambitions for a child-centred recovery, which not only considers children’s basic needs but asks all areas of government and councils to consider how they can support children and young people as we recover from the pandemic.

Early Years

5. On 8 January I wrote to Children’s and Families Minister, Vicky Ford, raising the LGA’s concerns regarding the national lockdown and the impact on Early Years providers. Of particular concern was funding and sustainability for providers, and testing arrangements. I welcomed a conversation with the Department to further discuss our concerns.

Youth services

6. On 24 February, Cllr Teresa Heritage, Vice-Chair, chaired an online conference looking at the impact of Covid-19 on youth services and hearing from a range of partners. This included, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, the National Youth Agency, National Citizen Service, and a young person who spoke of their experience using services.
7. The Children and Young People's Board submitted a response to the DCMS review of youth services. We highlighted the need for a strong government vision that is flexible and enables local services to be responsive to local need. We also called for sustainable funding and investment into a skilled workforce.

Mental Health

8. The Children and Young People's Board submitted a response to the Health and Social Care Select Committee's inquiry into Children's Mental Health. We called for greater investment into early intervention and prevention, and highlighted the need for a faster roll out of the Mental Health Support Teams in Schools. This is particularly important given the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on children and young people's wellbeing.
9. I, together with the chair of the Community Wellbeing Board, wrote a letter to the cross-governmental Covid-19 mental health and wellbeing group. In this letter, we called for councils to have a central role in coordinating mental health support and outlined the unique role councils have in promoting good emotional health and wellbeing. In particular, we asked for the £500m announced in the spending review be invested in preventative mental health services, with councils at the forefront.

Youth Employment & Skills Update

10. We have continued to maintain our focus on improving youth participation work. As part of a series of First articles on youth employment and skills we published a [case study feature](#) in the January edition. The article shone a spotlight on Derbyshire Council Council's 'I-Step up Re-engagement Programme' that provides transition support for young people identified at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET) at age 16 or 18. A second case study on Hampshire County Council's Employment and Skills Hub will feature in the March edition. I emphasised that local authorities need to be recognised nationally as a key partner to supporting young people and inclusive economic recovery.

Press Releases & Publications

11. There have been a number of Press Released and Publications, you can view them [here](#).

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