

Children and Young People Board – report from Cllr David Simmonds (Chair)

Schools

1. I was interviewed on *Sky News* and my response ran in *the Independent*, *the Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Telegraph*, *The Mirror* and *the Daily Mail* in relation to councils being forced to divert funding to pay for the Government's flagship **Free school meals programme**. An LGA survey revealed a shortfall of £25,866,133 in paying for the scheme – with one council, Kent, facing a deficit of £4.3m. The actual shortfall in funding is likely to be higher as not every council responded to their survey. "There's no doubt that dishing up a nutritious lunch for every young pupil will improve the experience of school and help them concentrate in lessons. But it cannot be right that for some councils money set aside for maintenance has instead had to be spent plugging the shortfall in money which the Government should have provided for meals. The research makes it clear central government has not provided schools with enough money to do the essential work necessary to give 1.5 million children a free meal at lunchtime."
2. New LGA research has revealed Council budgets are plugging a national 'black hole' of at least £1 billion in school places funding. Councils have abandoned building projects, cut back on school maintenance and borrowed money in order to pay for a school place for every child. I was interviewed on **BBC Radio 4's Today programme**, [BBC Radio 5 Live](#), [BBC Breakfast](#), [Sky News](#), [ITV News](#), [Good Morning Britain](#), [BBC News Channel](#) and [BBC One O'clock News](#). "Mums and dads expect their child to be able to get a place at a good local school and this research shows councils are delivering, but at a cost. Since the pressure on places first emerged, councils have been getting on with the job of creating more, and welcome though Government funding is; it is nothing like the full cost. This research lays bare the financial impact on councils of providing school places, which stands at more than £1 billion over a five-year period."

Children's mental health services

3. I was quoted in an LGA press release calling for a complete overhaul of children's mental health services. The story ran in the *Guardian* and *i paper*.
I said: "Local authorities have serious concerns about mental health funding for children and want a complete overhaul of the fragmented and complex system that they currently face each day when trying to access services delivered by the NHS and other partners. Local authorities need the resourcing and flexibility to be able to invest in prevention and universal services in order to tackle mental health problems. Councils are committed to change and are already playing their part, but there are vital changes to the system that need to be made. It is absolutely crucial that the whole system is properly funded, resourced and joined up to ensure young people receive the very best services available. As many as one in ten young people aged between five and 16 suffer with a diagnosable mental health condition and this is an issue that is rising each year. The current complex system can mean that young people and their families are struggling to deal with a number of practitioners and agencies to try and access help for mental health services and understand how services work together, making it more complicated to get help." The story also ran on *BBC Radio 5 Live*.

Funding for Youth Services

4. I appeared on Sky News to discuss the UNISON report highlighting £60 million in funding for youth services being cut since 2012. "There are a lot of national schemes for young people and they are not delivering the right bang for the buck. This is a time of national austerity and the government is cutting funding to councils by about 40 per cent. Our big concern is that cash being spent on national programmes is not delivering."

ESG Funding

5. In July, The LGA and SOLACE issued a joint response to the DfE consultation on savings to the Education Services Grant for 2015/16. I said "With 'Outstanding' and 'Good' schools fast-tracked to academy status, councils have a growing task turning around the 25 per cent of schools in England that need to be better." The story ran in the *Guardian*.

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