

## **Board Work Programme and Priorities Report for 2021/22**

### **Purpose of report**

For discussion and direction.

### **Summary**

This paper sets out proposals for the Children and Young People Board's (CYP) priorities and work programme for 2021/22. Subject to the Board's views, officers will develop a work programme to deliver these priorities.

### **Recommendation**

Members are asked to discuss and agree the Board's priorities and work programme for 2021/22.

### **Action**

Officers to take action as directed by members.

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## **Board Work Programme and Priorities Report for the 2020/21 meeting cycle**

### **Background**

1. LGA Boards are asked to consider their priorities for the coming year at their first meeting of the new cycle. Set out below are a list of priorities for discussion, based on the priorities identified last year, and adapted to reflect work that has been completed, recent developments in Government policy and issues raised by member councils.
2. The following are recommended as immediate priorities, with the rest of the work outlined in this paper taking place over the rest of the year:
  - 2.1. Comprehensive Spending Review
  - 2.2. Independent review of children's social care
  - 2.3. Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) review
  - 2.4. Healthy development review

### **Education and SEND**

3. It is clear that the Government's education recovery must be a long-term endeavour and go beyond academic achievement to include measures to support children and young people's socialisation, communication and mental health and well-being. While recovery support should be made available to all children and young people, it is vital that vulnerable children, who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, are the focus of this programme of work. Councils are ideally placed to act as convenors of local education systems, bringing education providers and other partners together to implement a national education recovery programme.
4. Our work on SEND should focus both on lobbying for sufficiency of high needs funding to support children and young people with SEND, including the writing off of high needs block deficits and using the Government's on-going review of SEND to secure long-term reform of the system.
5. The SEND review must ensure that councils have the powers and funding to act as local leaders of SEND systems, allowing them to hold partners to account for the support they provide to children and young people with SEND. This should include the opportunity to consider new ways of working that have been emerged as a result of the lockdown and that have benefited children and young people with special needs.

### **Children's social care**

6. The Government has commissioned an independent review of children's social care. The LGA is represented on the Design Group which is advising the review, and will continue to influence through that group and responses to calls for evidence. We will commission research as appropriate to support our ongoing input to the review.

7. Councils continue to report significant challenges with placement sufficiency for children in care, while a national focus on this also remains including the Competition and Markets Authority market study, the independent review, and changes to unregulated provision. The LGA will continue to work with the Government and the wider sector to consider how we can ensure sufficient, high quality homes for children in care that fully meet their needs.
8. The independent review has highlighted the importance of early help in children's social care – an issue that local government has been highlighting for some years. Lobbying for adequate funding to ensure effective early help is available to all children and families when they need it will continue to be a priority for the LGA, along with building the evidence base for this.
9. Recognising that the independent review is likely to lead to change in children's services, along with the ongoing local government reorganisation programme and increasing numbers of alternative delivery models being implemented, we will commission research to update earlier work by the Isos Partnership ([improvement in children's services](#) and [improvement support in children's services](#)) to identify the key issues that councils must consider to ensure strong children's services through any change process, including links with the wider council and partners, and the role of the lead member in all arrangements.
10. The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse is expected to conclude this year. The LGA will consider closely the findings of the review and how to support councils to implement its recommendations. This will include publication of a code of practice for council responding to civil claims of non-recent child sexual abuse, as previously recommended by IICSA.

### **Child-centred recovery**

11. We will develop work in the coming year to support councils to put children and young people at the heart of recovery, in particular through sharing existing good practice where councils are already taking child-centred approaches and ensuring the voice of children and young people features in local policy development and decision-making.
12. We will continue to lobby for a cross-government strategy for children and young people. We will also seek to identify opportunities for working across the LGA policy team to ensure that the needs of children and young people are considered holistically in the LGA's work.

### **Early years**

13. High quality early years provision will help to support the Levelling Up agenda and close the attainment gap, which has widened during the pandemic. To develop our arguments for additional funding for early years provision, we will work to consider 'what works' in the delivery of high quality provision and the cost of extending such provision to all children for their early entitlements (2, 3 and 4 year old offers). This will include consideration of the

future of maintained nursery schools.

14. We will respond to and work closely on the plans for implementation on the Early Years Healthy Development Review led by Andrea Leadsom, understanding and joining up the approach between different aspects of the local system, including family hubs.

### **Children and young people's mental health and wellbeing**

#### **(activities sit across both this Board and the Community Wellbeing Board)**

15. Covid-19 has had a significant impact on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people. We will continue to work with government to prioritise the wellbeing of children and young people.
16. The roll out of mental health support teams in schools (MHSTs), as set out in the 2017 Green Paper, has been progressed with an intention to reach more of the country within the next few years. Although this is a positive step forward, there is still more that can be done.
17. We are looking at the support that could be available in the community, such as through early support hubs, and will continue to work with government to ensure that they recognise the role that councils can play in ensuring early intervention and prevention in mental health and the specialist roles that are required in children's services to support vulnerable children's mental health.
18. We are working closely with government on the implementation of training for senior leads for mental health in schools.
19. There has been a range of commissioned research over the past year, looking at whole household approaches to mental health, transitions from children's to adults mental health services, and the evidence around early intervention and prevention. We will continue to **share this good practice** with councils and understand what it would be useful for councils to know.

### **Youth Services**

20. We continue to lobby for long term direction from the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) on youth services, following the youth services review. We will continue to champion the importance of youth services, particularly given the evidence around the importance of these services during the pandemic and to support recovery. We continue to lobby for the immediate release of the youth investment fund (YIF) to provide some much needed support to the sector.
21. We are anticipating the refresh of the consultation on statutory guidance on youth service provision and will work with partners to respond to this.

### **Youth justice**

22. The Board supported a position on an increase to the minimum age of criminal responsibility and we will continue to lobby for this, in particular through the Police, Crime, Policing and Courts Bill. We will commission research to understand further the impact criminalisation at an early age on young people and the wider community.
23. We will also continue to look into effective practice in the youth justice system and continue to lobby for the protection of the Youth Justice Grant. We will work with colleagues across the system to develop a position statement on youth justice with clear recommendations for what needs to change across the system, and highlighting the impact of disproportionality within the youth justice system.

### **Supporting disadvantaged families and children**

24. The Board has agreed to review and inform the national and local approach to children's food and nutrition, including the Holiday Activities and Food Fund, Healthy Start Vouchers, the Department for Work and Pensions' Covid Local Support Grant and local welfare funding more widely. There was a focus on children's food throughout the pandemic, and this is also reflected in Part One and Part Two of the national food strategy (NFS). Many organisations are calling for a review of school food and Free School Meals and we will continue to bring relevant proposals to the Board's attention and develop an LGA position as appropriate. The Board will also work jointly with the Community Wellbeing Board on cross-cutting issues such as childhood obesity, nutrition and maternity support. We are also engaging with councils and partners on the wider recommendations of the NFS on local food strategies, food security and resilience, local economies and the environment.
25. We will continue to consider the impact of national and local welfare policy and support on families with children, and will work jointly with the Resources Board to ensure that the role of councils in supporting low income and disadvantaged households is both properly recognised and adequately resourced. Our Reshaping Financial Support programme is directly addressing the ways in which councils are supporting low income families to alleviate financial hardship and promote financial inclusion and resilience.
26. The current and future impact of the pandemic on children's health, social and economic wellbeing - particularly those from the most affected places, groups and communities - will be a core strand within the LGA's strengthened cross-cutting approach to equality, diversity and inclusion.
27. We will continue to make the case for early intervention and prevention across services for socially and / or economically vulnerable families. The Board will lead the LGA's work with Government and the sector on the implementation and future funding of Supporting Families (formerly Troubled Families) and the development of Family Hubs, as well as targeted support such the Department for Work and Pensions' Reducing Parental Conflict programme.

**Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and refugees**

28. We will continue to work with the Home Office and the Department for Education to inform the implementation and development of the new National Transfer Scheme. This includes lobbying for sufficient funding, in particular for care leavers aged 21-25, and support to ensure sufficient placements.
29. We will advocate for the needs of children arriving as part of the Afghan resettlement programme, and to ensure councils have the resources they need to provide support to children and families.

**Financial implications**

30. The priorities will be delivered within existing resources.