# Children and Young People Board – Report from Cllr Bramble (Chair)

*Children’s Leadership Essentials*

1. On the 23rd and 24th September I led our first in-person Children’s Leadership Essentials course since early 2020. Lead Members for Children’s Services and Children’s Scrutiny leads had the opportunity to discuss topics including the shape of an effective Lead Member/Director of Children’s Services relationship, the evolving council role in education, effective use of data, multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and the SEND review.

*Independent review of children’s social care*

1. We have responded to the “[Case for Change](https://childrenssocialcare.independent-review.uk/case-for-change/)” report published by the Independent Review of Children’s Social Care. In [our response](https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/independent-review-childrens-social-care-case-change), we covered a range of issues that we felt had not been fully considered by the review, including the context in which children’s social care works, the influence of inspection and the role of schools in supporting children. We also made clear our view that separating family help from child protection would not lead to better outcomes for children, emphasising the fact that balancing these functions is a core skill of children’s social workers, with help and protection operating on a continuum according to changing needs.
2. On 1 October, our representative on the review’s Design Group, Baroness Blake of Leeds, attended a meeting with the review team to discuss the ways in which councils support kinship carers and how this can be developed. In the meeting, Baroness Blake drew on her experiences at Leeds City Council as it reformed its approach, and also highlighted challenges faced by councils in meeting the needs of kinship carers, including working with the family court and demands on children’s social care funding.

*Secure children’s homes*

1. On 4 October, I wrote to Will Quince MP, Minister for Children and Families, to outline the Board’s concerns around sufficiency of placements for children in secure children’s homes. We, along with colleagues in ADCS and others in the sector, have been raising this issue for some years and the introduction of a ban on the use of unregulated placements for under 16s, while supported by councils, has exacerbated the challenges. As I made clear in my letter, we must do better by the young people who need this kind of support. I have asked for information on the Government’s work to improve sufficiency and will continue to raise the profile of this issue, which cannot wait for the publication of the Care Review for a resolution.

*Children and Young People Board*

1. I was pleased to welcome Dame Andrea Leadsom MP to our Board meeting on 14 September to provide an update on the Start for Life Review. Dame Andrea gave an update the review’s proposals which members welcomed, alongside the progress that has been made to date with the digitalisation of health information. Members also raised the challenges around funding for the proposals, the need for a partnership response and the importance of social determinants to improve health and wellbeing.
2. We were also joined by Ian Dean, Director of the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse (CSA), and his colleagues. The team provided an important overview of the Centre’s work to improve research and practice in this area, including a discussion on the Centre’s latest “[scale and nature of CSA](https://www.csacentre.org.uk/our-research/the-scale-and-nature-of-csa/)” report and the ways in which the Centre can support councils in their work to protect children and tackle all forms of CSA.

*Contextual Safeguarding*

1. On 4 October, nearly 300 councillors and officers joined me for a [webinar about contextual safeguarding](https://www.local.gov.uk/contextual-safeguarding-making-child-safeguarding-everyones-responsibility-4-october-2021). On the webinar, I was pleased to speak alongside Dr Carlene Firmin who developed the contextual safeguarding approach, Becky Lewis, Strategic Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service Manager at Bristol City Council, and Carly Buchecker, System and Practice Lead at the London Borough of Hackney. We outlined the ways in which the approach focuses on the context in which harm can occur, drawing in partners from across the council and the community to develop safe spaces for teenagers. I was pleased to chair a busy question and answer session after the presentations, with attendees keen to consistently improve the ways our services can keep children and young people safe.

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