

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

Education White Paper

1. Children and Young People Lead Members met with the Minister for the School System, Baroness Barran on the 19th January to discuss the forthcoming Education White Paper. We stressed the value of a continued council role in education and the need for sufficient powers to fulfil our remaining statutory duties, as well as allowing councils to set up and lead their own Multi-Academy Trusts.

Leadership in Children's Services

2. I met with Nadhim Zahawi, Secretary of State for Education, and Will Quince, Minister for Children and Families, on 24 January along with colleagues from ADCS and Solace to discuss leadership in children's services. We discussed the importance of close working between, and strong leadership by, Lead Members for Children's Services, Leaders, Directors of Children's Services and Chief Executives in order to deliver high quality children's services. I also emphasised the importance of a whole systems approach to supporting children and families, the need for strong partnership working on multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, and the importance of emphasising children's needs as we move towards Integrated Care Systems. Finally, I noted the need for us all to work together to improve the perception of children's social care to help tackle workforce challenges; children are far safer now than they have been in the past, however this is rarely acknowledged and we must ensure the dedication and hard work of our children's services teams are recognised and rewarded.

Independent Review of Children's Social Care

3. The Design Group for the Independent Review of Children's Social Care met on 25 January. Our representative on the group, Baroness Blake of Leeds, attended this meeting where the review team discussed potential recommendations arising from the review. Baroness Blake highlighted the importance of keeping children at the centre of all decision-making, ensuring cooperation across the public sector and the need to improve the narrative around children's social care.

Children's Improvement Board

4. I chaired the most recent meeting of the LGA/ADCS/DfE/Solace/Ofsted Children's Improvement Board that took place on the 26th January. Discussions focussed on the work of the London regional improvement and innovation alliance, as well the development of a support package to help chief executives gain a better understanding of children's services and their role in ensuring effective delivery.

Youth Services

5. In February, I wrote to Nigel Huddleston MP, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Sport, Tourism, Heritage and Civil Society), regarding the announcements made as part of the Youth Review. Although I welcomed the announcement of the development of a youth strategy, I am concerned regarding the reduction in funding available for the Youth Investment Fund and the focus on capital investment, rather than much needed revenue.

Early Years

6. In February, I wrote to Will Quince MP, Minister for Children and Families, to draw attention to research conducted by the LGA prior to the pandemic that looked at the opportunities surrounding the Special Education Needs Inclusion Fund, Disability Access Fund, Early Years Pupil Premium and the checks related to the 30 hours free childcare. I also welcomed the Departments focus on early years, the intention to develop a long term approach for Maintained Nurseries and welcomed ongoing support in this matter from the LGA.

Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board (ASGLB)

7. The Children and Young People Board representative on the ASGLB, Councillor Mark Sutton, attended the ASGLB meeting on 3 February. At this meeting a wide range of issues were discussed including the welcome extension of the Adoption Support Fund, adoption data, work by the Regional Adoption Agency Leaders group, and issues around special guardianship, adopter support and matching.

LGA Asylum, Refugee and Migration Task Group

8. The [LGA Asylum, Refugee and Migration Task Group](#), which reports to the Community Wellbeing and Children and Young Peoples Board and is chaired by the Cllr James Jamieson met with Victoria Atkins MP, Minister for Afghan Resettlement, on 8 February. Members across the UK stressed the need for further engagement with local leaders, better data and joint work to support families move from hotels into permanent homes. The meeting was followed by a well-attended webinar for local leaders on 24 February on the Afghan schemes chaired by Cllr Nick Forbes with both the Minister and Eddie Hughes MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Rough Sleeping and Housing, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

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