

Note of the last Children & Young People Board

Title:	Children & Young People Board
Date and time:	Tuesday 15 March 2022
Location:	Hybrid, 18 Smith Square and videoconference via Microsoft Teams

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A** to this note.

Item Decisions and actions

1 Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest

The Vice-Chair welcomed members to the Children and Young People Board meeting on behalf of the Chair (Cllr Antoinette Bramble) as she was running late to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllr Laura Mayes with Cllr Ryan Brent in substitution, Cllr Patricia Bradwell OBE with Cllr Damien White in substitution, Cllr Antony Mullen, Cllr Janet Sanderson, Cllr Sara Rowbotham and Cllr Julie Fallon.

2 Notes of the previous meeting

Members of the Children and Young People Board agreed the notes of the last Board meeting, held on Tuesday 11 January 2022.

The Vice-Chair informed the board that due to last minute changes with speaker availability, items of the meeting would be rearranged, with item 6 being taken next.

3 Competition and Markets Authority Market Study - Children's Social Care Placements, final report (verbal update) – (Item 6)

The Vice-Chair introduced the item and invited Louise Smith, Senior adviser to discuss the Competition and Markets Authority Market (CMA) Study - Children's Social Care Placements, final report to the board.

Louise informed the board that the CMA launched an investigation into the Children's Social Care market last year, in response to concerns over availability and prices paid for placements. The final report confirmed a number of concerns that both the LGA and local authorities had raised over a period of time, which included the following:

- significant issues with how the market was functioning
- clear issues in relation to the availability of placements, particularly for older children and those with more complex needs

- profits for largest individual providers were higher than the CMA would have expected in a well-functioning market
- private equity backed providers held particularly high levels of debt, which increased the risk of disorderly exit from the market.

Louise concluded the item by outlining the recommendations from the review, on which she sought comments from the Board.

Following the discussion, the following comments were made:

- Members welcomed removing planning distinctions as this would help local authorities set up small children's homes. As well as, ensuring responsibilities and powers which should not be taken away from local authorities, but rather focused on empowering them to work better.
- Members felt that there was scope for local authorities to collaborate more on a sub-regional or regional level. Supported by some national intervention on more complex cases, which were more of a challenge and often more expensive.
- The children's social care sector had increasingly faced significant challenges with recruitment and retention of good quality staff, with high levels of staff turnover.
- Members raised that the involvement of health was omitted from the final report and should be considered.
- A national recruitment drive for foster care workers may be beneficial as this was currently localised. Louise replied that this was something that they had been campaigning for a while along ADCS and have yet to receive agreement from the Department of Education. Given that there was a recommendation in the CMA report that central government should do more to support councils, this may help support lobbying on this.

The Vice-Chair informed the board that item 7 would be taken next.

Direction:

Members of the Board noted the update.

4 Update paper (Item 7)

The Vice-Chair introduced the report which outlined issues of interest to the Board not covered under the other items on the agenda.

Following the brief introduction. Members made no comments.

The Vice-Chair informed the board that item 4 being taken next.

Direction:

Members of the Board noted the report.

5 Recommendation 4 of the National Food Strategy: extending eligibility for Free School Meals (Item – 4)

The Vice-Chair introduced the item which considered recommendation 4 of the National Food Strategy (NFS), to extend eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM) in England and move to the automatic enrolment of pupils eligible for FSM, rather than relying on applications from families.

The Vice-Chair invited Charlotte Maguire, Adviser, who informed the Board that the strategy was a government commissioned independent review of the NFS, led by Henry Dimbleby. Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) were due to respond to the water paper in the coming weeks, which the LGA planned to respond to. The purpose of the NFS was to lay out the negative health and environmental impact that the current food system caused. Findings showed that within children's health, children in lower income households were more than twice as likely to be obese than those in higher income households. This was partially due to health food being considerably more expensive than unhealthy food and was often less accessible in deprived areas.

The NFS recommendations included the following:

- Raising the current earning threshold from £7,400 per year to £20,000 per year after tax and benefits.
- Making temporary extension of free school meals to households with no recourse to public funds permanent.
- Using existing government data to automatically enrol all children eligible for free school meals.

Following the discussion, Members made the following comments:

- All children should have access to free school meals which would go beyond the £20,000 threshold per household. Additionally, children being enrolled automatically had always been an issue that had been raised previously when pupil premium was introduced. Charlotte replied that free school meals automatic enrolment used existing housing benefit data to capture children that were eligible. Since then, universal credit was introduced in which all data was held by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and not by local authorities.
- Free school meal vouchers should be extended to cover all school holidays and half terms. Charlotte answered that this was something she could look into as she was aware that free school meal vouchers weren't available during half terms.
- Members commented if additional cost of auto-enrolment would mean more children would be entitled to free school meals, as well as if data of children who were entitled free school meals would be available to local authorities. Charlotte replied that the automatic enrolment project was already underway with Department for Education (DfE). Additionally, the LGA would like local authorities to have access to data held by DWP and work together to ensure councils can retain data.
- Language had changed from food poverty to food insecurity, which seemed to take away from the fact the lack of money led to issues such as not being

able to afford food. Furthermore, housing costs superseded food costs and disadvantaged London children far greater than elsewhere in the UK. Charlotte replied that by raising eligibility she hoped this would enable more parents to save money and stressed that obviously this wouldn't be enough to fill the current income gap. Also, the household threshold did not take into account the regional variation of income.

- The government needed to do more to reduce child poverty, by giving people more money to have the dignity to choose more healthy meals and reinstating the minimum nutrition level.
- Members raised that the pupil premium could impact the decision and recommendations as it seemed to give with hand and take with the other, as schools were heavily reliant on pupil premium funding Charlotte replied that she would get in contact with DfE. In terms of automatic enrolment for free school meals, nothing would change as funding had been agreed. As for pupil premium funding there was potential that the government could say free school meals for all children could not be matched.
- Members highlighted that many children were not claiming free school meals and fully supported the automatic enrolment.

The Vice-Chair suggested a vote and the board agreed that work on free school meals should continue before publication of the white paper.

The Vice-Chair informed the board that item 3 would be taken next.

Direction:

Members of the Board noted the report.

Actions:

- Officers to obtain figures of maximum number of children eligible for free school meals and inform Board.
- Officers to contact DfE to get figures on pupil premium funding.

6 Moving beyond the foodbank: the local partnership approach to tackling food insecurity (Item 3)

The Vice-Chair introduced the report in which the government commissioned National Food Strategy Part 2 contains a recommendation to obligate all councils to have a local food partnership or strategy.

Charlotte invited Tom Andrews, Soil Association and Ben Reynolds, Sustain, who would be presenting sustainable food places, which was the largest network local food partnerships in the UK.

Ben highlighted six key issues which were as followed:

- Food governance and strategy
- Good food movement
- Healthy food for all
- Sustainable food economy

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- Catering and procurement
- Food for the plant

Ben then went on to explain how these would work in local authorities which were as followed:

- Establish a cross-sector food partnership involving local authority and public sector bodies, third sector organisations, businesses and academic institutions.
- Develop a vision, strategy and action plan for making healthy and sustainable food a defining characteristic of where they live.
- Work together to realise that vision through concerted and coordinated action across a wide range of food issues.

Ben said that over the last 20 years 69 partnerships had been set up, with the biggest growth happening in the last 5 years. Tom added that in the last 12 months, 25 partnerships had been established.

Tom explained that within the NFS there was a recommendation for each local authority to have an integrated food strategy. But, without a food partnership in place they felt that this would not work, as they were fundamental to food system change and brought together cross-sector partners to develop and deliver change.

Following the brief discussion, Members made the comments:

- Members commented how would local authorities connect through schools, particularly academies as they were spread across country which made it increasingly difficult to deliver outcomes addressed by food partnerships. Ben replied that a joint approach to calling for changes nationally and also caterers understanding the needs locally would address changes needed in both schools and academies.
- Members asked whether there were any examples of how planning issues were addressed with food partnerships and if there were any issues promoting food partnerships. Ben replied that they worked with a planner who provided support and advice for partnerships on how to engage with the planning system on food.
- Sugar tax incentivised companies to reduce amount of sugar in their food and drinks, with the money raised going back to public health teams to do work on childhood obesity. But this was shortly ended by the Treasury. Ben responded that public health along with many national organisations wanted to work on sugar, but a lot of demand and action on sugar came from local authorities through food partnerships.
- Given that the public health grant was cut, central government need to do more to fund health care and prevention work in local government.

Charlotte concluded that the LGA were looking to showcase and demonstrate examples of work that councils were doing.

The Vice-Chair thanked Ben and Tom for attending the meeting to share their insightful presentation.

The Vice-Chair informed the board that item 5 would be taken next.

Direction:

Members of the Board noted the report.

7 Family Hubs and Start for Life – CONFIDENTIAL (Item 5)

The discussion for this item is confidential and has been distributed to members of the Board separately.

8 SEND dispute resolution research

The Vice- Chair introduced the report in which the LGA commissioned the Isos Partnership, an independent consultancy, to undertake research on the effectiveness of the current Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) dispute resolution arrangements.

The Vice-Chair introduced Natalie Parish, Partner - Isos Partnership, informed the Board that the research was recently published and looked at arrangements for avoiding disagreements and resolving disputes in the SEND system.

Key findings from the research showed that:

- The number of appeals to tribunal were going up, in line with the number of statements in EHCP.
- The rate of appeals was also going up, both an increase in the likelihood as well as actual number.
- Almost 50% of cases that went to the tribunal by primary need for children and young people with autism, went by in the last six years by 47%. Which mirrored the growing number of children with autism in the SEND system.
- The number of tribunal cases were withdrawn or conceded before going to tribunal were going down.
- High proportion of tribunal decisions favoured parents, 96% in 2021.

Following the brief discussion, Members made no comments.

Decision:

Members of the Board noted the report.

9 AOB

Cllr Patel and Cllr O'Brien raised that as members of the Children and Young People Board that they think about safeguarding around children of Ukraine and the housing scheme, as they were mainly children and women. Sally Burlington, Head of Policy (People) responded that this was a key issue being raised in conversations with the Government.

The Chair brought the meeting to a close.

Action:

- Officers to report back to the Board.

Date of the next meeting: Tuesday, 7 June 2022, 11.00 am.

Appendix A – Attendance

Position	Authority	
Chair	Cllr Antoinette Bramble	Hackney London Borough Council
Vice Chairman	Cllr Teresa Heritage	Hertfordshire County Council
Deputy Chair	Cllr Lucy Nethsingha	Cambridgeshire County Council
Committee Member	Cllr Patricia Bradwell OBE	Lincolnshire County Council
	Cllr Roger Gough	Kent County Council
	Cllr Mark Sutton	Staffordshire County Council
	Cllr Eamonn O'Brien	Bury Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Fiona Venner	Leeds City Council
	Cllr Imran Khan	Bradford Metropolitan District Council
	Cllr Mili Patel	Brent Council
	Cllr Denise Scott-McDonald	Royal Borough of Greenwich
	Cllr Mark Cory	Colchester Borough Council
	Cllr Judy Jennings	Epping Forest District Council
Apologies	Cllr Julie Fallon	
	Cllr Laura Mayes	
	Cllr Patricia Bradwell OBE	
	Cllr Anthony Mullen	
	Cllr Sara Rowbotham	
	Cllr Janet Sanderson	
Substitutes	Cllr Ryan Brent	
	Cllr Damien White	
	Cllr Dine Romero	
	Cllr Adam Ellison	
	Cllr Edward Davie	
	Cllr Tessa Hodgson	
LGA Officers	Ian Keating	
	Flora Wilke	
	Clive Harris	
	Louise Smith	
	Charlotte Maguire	
	Emily Hackett	

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Sally Burlington
David Mills
Bushra Jamil
Amelia Sutton
Tahmina Akther

In attendance

Tom Andrews
Ben Reynolds
Charlotte Hollom
Charlotte Dring
Natalie Parish

Soil Association
Sustain
Department for Education
Department for Health and Social Care
Isos Partnership

Press

Jessica Hill

LGC