



Meeting: Children and Young People Board

Date: 3 November 2022

Board Work Programme and Priorities Report for 2022/23

Purpose of report

For discussion and direction.

Summary

This paper sets out the Local Government Association's Children and Young People Board's (CYP) priorities and work programme for 2022/23, as agreed at its meeting on 29 September 2022. Members at the National Children and Adult Services conference are asked to comment on the priorities and share key issues from their own areas to ensure these are fed into the LGA's lobbying and improvement work for 2022/23.

Recommendation

Members are asked to discuss the Board's priorities and work programme for 2022/23.

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Board Work Programme and Priorities Report for the 2022/23 meeting cycle

Background

1. The Children and Young People Board met on 29 September 2022 to agree its priorities for 2022/23. The Board considered priorities identified in the 2021/22 Board Cycle, along with recent developments in Government policy and issues raised by member councils. Members also emphasised issues being faced by their own councils and councils in their regions.
2. The following were agreed as immediate priorities, with the remaining work outlined in this paper taking place over the 2022/23 Board year:
 - 2.1.1. Cost-of-living crisis, including impact on organisations and widening inequalities (Board to link with cross-LGA work on this)
 - 2.1.2. Independent review of children's social care
 - 2.1.3. SEND Green paper
 - 2.1.4. Healthy development review
 - 2.1.5. Funding
3. Members at the National Children and Adult Services Conference are asked to comment on the priorities identified by the Children and Young People Board and share their own key issues to inform the Board's lobbying and improvement work for 2022/23.

Education and SEND

4. Our work in response to proposals set out in the SEND Green paper will continue to be based on three broad themes; structures, including clarity on responsibility for delivering various aspects of SEND support; levers, specifically ensuring that councils, as leaders of local SEND systems, have the powers to hold partners to account for the work and; sufficiency of funding to meet the needs of children with SEND. Given that implementing the high-level proposals set out in the Green paper will take a number of years, we will continue to call for additional high needs funding in the interim and for the Department for Education (DfE) to bring forward proposals to manage down and eliminate Dedicated Schools Grant deficits. We will continue to work with a broad range of partners, including central government departments, third sector and parent-carer groups to ensure there is a shared understanding of and confidence in detailed proposals as they are developed.

5. The Schools White paper acknowledged that the existing education system is fragmented and councils have a continued role at the centre of local education systems with powers to match their duties around place-planning and ensuring pupils out of school return to the classroom as soon as possible. In our work on the Schools Bill we will focus on ensuring that powers to direct all schools to admit pupils without a place are given to councils quickly, reflecting the fact that in many areas the majority of schools are already academies. We will also work to ensure that all councils will have the opportunity to set up their own Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) and that the proposed register for home-educated children is supported by powers for councils to check that those children are receiving a suitable education.
6. We will support the DfE to ensure that the proposals set out in the SEND Green paper compliment those set out in the Schools Bill and vice-versa, as well as making the linkages with wider reforms including the Independent review of children's social care. In particular, any revised regulatory framework for MATs (replacing the proposed framework that has been removed from the Schools Bill) must support the SEND Green paper's ambition to increase levels of mainstream inclusion.

Children's social care

7. The Independent Review of Children's Social Care was published in May 2022. The Government has committed to publishing an implementation plan by the end of 2022 to deliver the review's ambitions to transform the children's social care system and ensure children grow up with loving, safe and stable families. The LGA is engaged in discussions with the Department for Education around the key recommendations and the Board will continue to influence emerging policy.
8. Councils continue to report significant challenges with placement sufficiency for children in care, particularly in relation to placements for children with complex and challenging needs, and the significant and increasing costs of placements. 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, including looking at how to engage the NHS more fully in the delivery of these homes, seeking more involvement by the Government in the delivery of secure children's homes placements and working with the DfE on foster carer recruitment and retention. The Board has agreed to establish a cross-party working group to more closely consider issues around placement cost and capacity, to identify potential solutions and to share good practice.

9. Workforce challenges are posing a significant risk to the delivery of children's social care services in many councils, both in relation to ensuring posts are staffed and in relation to budgets. In particular, councils are reporting that the changing behaviour of agencies is proving exceptionally difficult, while the cost-of-living crisis is anecdotally driving in-house staff to join agencies where pay rates are higher. The LGA is working with the DfE in relation to the children's social care workforce in particular, and with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on wider workforce pressures in local government.
10. Asylum and immigration issues are increasingly placing pressure on children's services, including rapidly rising numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children arriving in the UK and related changes to the National Transfer Scheme; the introduction of the Homes for Ukraine scheme and the family visa scheme for those fleeing the war in Ukraine; and the challenge of Afghan families continuing to live in hotels due to housing shortages. The LGA is engaged in regular discussions with the Home Office and the DfE about these issues and will work with the Board to develop solutions to try to ensure that all children seeking safety in the UK can receive the help they need. This will include seeking full funding to support children, speeding up asylum claims, ensuring access to support including health and education, and improving placement sufficiency.
11. The rising cost-of-living is an issue of significant concern for children's services, with well-established links between deprivation, poverty and involvement with children's social care. The LGA has already established a range of workstreams in relation to the cost-of-living crisis and will work with the Board to monitor the impact of the crisis on children and families.
12. The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse published its final report on 20 October 2022. The LGA is considering the findings of the review and how to support councils to implement its recommendations.
13. Families of, and organisations representing, disabled children have highlighted concerns around the limited recognition in either the SEND Green Paper or the Independent Review of Children's Social Care of the challenges in accessing social care. Councils have also highlighted that there are challenges in supporting young people as they transition to adult social care services, while we know there are wider difficulties around accessing ongoing support. To improve our understanding of these issues, the LGA has commissioned Alma Economics to work with disabled people, the families of disabled children and social workers to identify the main barriers to accessing such services, for those who have lifelong disabilities and will therefore require ongoing support from both children's and adult's social care. This work will form the basis for further work identifying

solutions to these challenges to enable the LGA to seek the funding, levers or legislation that councils need to provide disabled people with the changing support that they need over the course of their lives.

14. In 2016, the LGA commissioned the Isos Partnership to develop a [report looking at the enablers of improvement in children's services](#). This report continues to be well-used and well-respected by children's services departments across the country. Recognising that there have been significant changes since 2016, including the impact of the pandemic, rising demand and increasing financial challenges, we have commissioned an update to this report to ensure that it is as relevant as possible for councils.

Early years

15. High quality early years provision will help to support the Levelling Up agenda and close the attainment gap, which widened during the pandemic. We commissioned research to understand '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). We will share the outcomes of this research with the Government to show the importance of a sufficiently funded system that supports highly qualified staff and access to education and care for all children.
16. Long term challenges within the early years system due to underfunding of the system has been exacerbated by the pandemic and the current cost of living crisis. Recruitment and retention of high quality staff has always been challenging for the sector but is now heightened with staff leaving the sector completely for better paying roles elsewhere. The Government has put in place a workforce team and we are feeding into their review. The impact of staff challenges along with rising costs is leading to reported closures of early years settings. We will commission work to explore the impact of closures of early years settings, particularly in more deprived areas.

Children and young people's mental health and wellbeing

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

17. 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.

18. 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.
19. 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.
20. The government is consulting on a 10 year cross departmental strategy on mental health for all ages. We have worked closely with the government to show that councils are a core part of ensuring a preventative mental health offer and supporting children and young people when they have mental health needs. We have called for this strategy to have the resources it needs to ensure there is change for children, young people and their families.
21. Building on previous commissioned research such as whole household approaches to mental health, transitions from children's to adults mental health services, and the evidence around early intervention and prevention, further case studies will be collated around supporting children in care and care leavers with their mental health.

Youth Services

22. The Government announced a Youth Review in February 2022 that highlighted the priority areas for the youth investment fund (YIF), reforming the National Citizen Service (NCS) and reducing waiting lists for non-military Uniformed Youth Groups. Although we welcomed the focus on youth services, it was disappointing that the YIF was predominantly focused on capital spend when the sector needs greater investment into staff and training. We continue to lobby for long term direction and funding from the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) on youth services. 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.
23. We are working with councils to explore good practice in commissioning, developing or delivering youth service provision. This includes holding a webinar on partnership working in youth services and drawing together good practice case studies. 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

24. 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. In 2022, we produced research that explored the impact criminalisation at an early age on young people and the wider community and held a webinar exploring local authority experiences.
25. The Ministry of Justice has announced £300m to prevent youth crime. This is a positive investment into the system and will help to deliver changes in the system. We developed a youth justice policy statement and will continue to lobby on the wider structural changes needed to improve the justice system.
26. A priority continues to be over representation of black and ethnic minority children in the youth justice system therefore we are working closely with the YJB on a disparity protocol. We are also engaged in the government's review of youth remand following a report in 2021 and will ensure the recommendations are actionable for councils.

Supporting disadvantaged families and children

27. The Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme has gone live with 75 local authorities able to apply to be part of the programme and to receive part of £302m funding. The LGA has worked closely with the Government from the initiation of the programme.
28. We will continue to work with DHSC, DfE and partners to ensure "Start for Life" is a collaborative and strength-based programme which empowers councils to improve services and ensure local flexibility and leadership rather than a one-size fits all approach. We will work with DfE and the Centre for Family Hubs to ensure sector input into the roll out of Family Hubs.
29. We are developing a Must Know guide for Councillors to explain the process for the 75 local authorities that will be receiving the funding and for those that will not in this round. We are also working with the Government to show the importance of long-term funding available for the programme and for councils to have certainty after 2025.
30. 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' Household Support Fund 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 we have pushed for increasing the eligibility criteria and introducing automatic-enrolment for Free School Meals, 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 and partnerships, food security and resilience, local food economies and the environment.

31. 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.
32. 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.
33. 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.

Children's Health

30. Covid-19 and now the rising cost of living will undoubtedly have an impact on the health, wellbeing and development of children and young people. We will continue to work with Government to ensure that children's health is prioritised.
31. We will continue to work with government to ensure that the views and concerns of local government are addressed in the developing policy agenda for childhood obesity, the Healthy Child Programme and any proposals identified in the Health Disparities White Paper.
32. We will continue to make the case that funding and capacity are mission critical issues affecting local public health teams' ability to deliver essential health promoting services for children and young people in their local areas.
33. We will refresh our policy lines on child obesity, healthy weight, planning, oral health, the vision for the refreshed Healthy Child Programme and with a new system, cost of living, inequalities and Covid-19 recovery lens.

34. We will continue to work with partners across the system to strengthen the position of children's health and public health in Integrated Care Boards/Partnerships.
35. Workforce challenges within the children's health workforce, and the wider public health workforce in general. We will continue to lobby to rebuild the Healthy Child Programme workforce to ensure children and families are supported, unmet need is identified and work begins to address the adverse impact COVID-19 and the cost of living crisis will have on child health inequalities.

Financial implications

36. The priorities will be delivered within existing resources.