

Children and Young People Board – Report from Cllr Louise Gittins (Chair)

Children's social care

1. I have written to the Permanent Secretary at the Department for Education, alongside colleagues in Solace and the Association of Directors of Children's Services, to highlight our significant concerns around the availability and escalating costs of placements for children in care.
2. This letter was followed by the results of the LGA's survey into [high cost placements for children in care](#), which showed a sharp rise in the number of placements costing at least £10,000 per week. Our findings were reported on the Today programme and generated significant discussion in the sector. We are now working with the Government on options to address the challenge in the short and medium term.
3. On 4 October, CYP Board Deputy Chair Councillor Jon Hubbard chaired a webinar for councillors on supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, which was well attended by councillors from across the country.
4. On 25 October we launched the LGA's campaign to improve support for care leavers, [#StepAhead](#) and published a letter in the Daily Express calling on councils and small businesses to sign up to the Care Leaver Covenant.
5. On the same day, I attended a roundtable chaired by Johnny Mercer MP, the cross-government minister for care leavers. I was delighted to be joined by a care leaver from my own authority who was able to share her views on what good support looks like.
6. At the end of October we published the latest update to our work on profit-making and financial risk among the largest independent providers of children's social care placements. This received exclusive coverage in the Observer and continues to be well-used by councils as we work to address the challenges in the 'market'.
7. Ahead of the Autumn Statement in November, we organised a coalition of 29 charities and campaigners to [call on the Chancellor](#) to improve funding for children's social care.
8. In November we submitted a response to the Government's second consultation on the mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse, highlighting significant concerns with the impact assessment for the policy and a lack of support for victims and survivors.

9. We have submitted evidence to the Education Select Committee's inquiry into children's social care.

Mental health

10. We [shared a briefing](#) in advance of the Schools (Mental Health Professionals) Bill, welcoming the focus on the area, supporting our long standing call for counsellors in all state-funded secondary schools. We also highlighted the need for community services outside of the school for children to get the range of support that they need. We also [briefed on a debate](#) on mental health support for children and young people in the House of Lords.
11. Our series of think pieces on children's mental health came to an end, [I wrote a final reflection](#) on behalf of the board, thanking contributors, including the Children's Minister for sharing their thoughts and insight into the challenges and solutions to improve children's mental health.

Education

12. We submitted a response to NAO's inquiry into supporting the attainment of disadvantaged children in educational settings. We outlined the need for a cross-government child centred strategy, backed by concerted action, to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children and young people across all services.

Early years

13. We [submitted a briefing](#) in advance of a debate on the importance of good quality early years education provision and environments since the Covid-19 pandemic, highlighting recent LGA research and highlighting concerns from councils on the challenges facing them in light of the expansion of entitlements.
14. We published a [report into wraparound childcare provision](#), undertaken by Coram Family and Childcare. The report highlights good practice with some councils but the challenges that some areas are seeing with insufficient capacity to focus on this area.

Youth Justice

15. We submitted a response to the HMIP consultation on inspection of youth justice services, welcoming the move to a focus on outcomes rather than process and highlighting the need for a child-focused inspection system.
16. I chaired a webinar on reducing youth violence. Speakers included the Youth Endowment Fund, colleagues from Greenwich Council and Your Choice to

explore evidence-based practice that makes a difference to the lives of children and young people.

National Children and Adult Services Conference

17. The National Children and Adult Services Conference took place in Bournemouth from the 29 November to the 1 December. Children and Young People Board lead members and I chaired a number of sessions, including those featuring the Minister and shadow Minister for Children and Families. Early years, education, special educational needs and children's social care were also discussed in detail across the three days.

Board meeting

18. I chaired an additional meeting of the Children and Young People Board on the 13 December that focussed on the development of the Local Government white paper. Comments covered topics including children's social care, education and SEND and there was agreement that a solutions-focussed approach was necessary that would present councils as equal partners to central government.

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