

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

Children's social care

1. On 31 January I chaired the Children's Improvement Board, bringing together colleagues from the LGA, Ofsted, ADCS and Department for Education to consider pressing issues in relation to children's services and where we can work together to drive improvements. This included a discussion around support for care leavers and an update on work taking place in the London region.
2. On 12 February I attended a meeting with Foundations, the What Works Centre for Children and Families, to discuss the use of Family Group Conferencing. This is part of a broader piece of work that Foundations is doing in relation to supporting councils to understand the evidence for different interventions and to make the case for using these more widely where appropriate. Other members of the Board have also met with Foundations to offer their local perspectives.
3. After dedicated lobbying across the sector, it was positive that the Government announced an additional £500 million for adult and children's social care in the final Local Government Finance Settlement. However, while this will help to stave off immediate pressures, councils will still need to raise council tax and many will need to make cuts to local services in order to plug funding gaps.
4. I was pleased to join Josh MacAlister, Chair of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, and Andy Smith, Vice-President of ADCS, on The Local Authority Podcast to discuss the crisis in children's services. This was a good opportunity to get into some of the nuances of the issue, including the respective roles of central and local government in addressing the challenge and considering what good practice was already taking place.
5. It has been very positive to hear feedback from other policy boards which have been considering the issue of support for care leavers. With all councillors having corporate parenting responsibilities, and good support for care leavers going far beyond children's services, these discussions have been an opportunity to bring forward a wide range of ideas and good practice which are now being fed into the LGA's programme of work on this issue.

SEND

6. On the 11 February I spoke at an National Education Union-led fringe event at the Labour local government conference on the challenges councils are facing in meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND, as well as the associated pressures on high needs budgets. Emma Rose, the NEU President and Ellie Costello, the director of Square Peg, a community interest company that

is seeking to reform the education system for children that have been excluded, are too anxious to attend or disengaged from school.

7. On the 13 March 5-7pm I'm chairing a webinar on positive, effective and sustainable SEND systems for leaders of councils, lead members with a SEND portfolio and children's scrutiny chairs. Topics being covered include statutory responsibilities for members, the proposals contained in the government's SEND and Alternative Provision improvement plan and learning from the new Ofsted/CQC SEND area inspection framework. I would like to encourage you to attend and you can book your place [here](#).

Early years

8. In advance of the expansion of funded entitlements, lead members signed off the [resource pack on early years education and childcare](#). This document sets out council responsibilities in relation to early years education and childcare and provides some key questions that councillors could consider in this area.
9. We [submitted a briefing](#) in advance of the debate on Nursery Provision in the South West, highlighting the challenging situation facing early years providers and councils to ensure sufficiency of childcare and support children.

Children's mental health

10. We [submitted a briefing](#) in advance of the debate on the role of schools in caring for mental health and wellbeing of pupils and their development as community and family members, highlight the importance of in and out of school interventions and how councils can support children's mental health.
11. The first meeting of the Children and Young People's Board working group on children's mental health took place, setting out the scope of the work, ensuring a shared understanding of challenges and identifying next steps.

Children's health

12. On 13 February, I co-chaired a webinar called "Measles cases on the rise: Information for local government officers and councillors with Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board. Over 500 delegates attended the webinar. Speakers included Dr Thom Waite, Deputy CMO, Dr Vanessa Saliba, Consultant Epidemiologist, UKHSA, Ruth Tennant, DPH of Solihull Council and Michelle Kane, Vaccine and Immunisation Strategy Lead at NHS England.
13. I also co-authored a new blog titled, "[Time to catch up: A joint call to action on measles and vaccination](#)" with Cllr David Fothergill on the on the importance of

increasing measles vaccination rates.

Board meeting

14. I chaired the Children and Young People Board meeting that took place on the 23 January, where discussions focussed on children's mental health, LGA and CCN-commissioned research on the shape of a reformed SEND system and the development of children's social care and early help practice guides.
15. I also chaired a follow-up SEND focussed workshop for Board members to discuss in greater detail the LGA/CCN-commissioned research, which took place on the 20 February.

Contact details:

Contact officer: Clive Harris

Position: Senior Policy Adviser

Phone no: 02076643207

Email: clive.harris@local.gov.uk