

8 January 2015

Other Business Report

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

This report provides reports on other business relevant to the Board.

Recommendation

That the Board note the updates on:

1. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
2. Careers advice to young people
3. Review of Youth Offending Teams (YOTs)
4. Parliamentary debate on the future of youth services
5. Youth participation and youth unemployment
6. Ofsted Annual Report
7. Autumn Statement

Action

LGA officers to action as necessary.

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Other Business Report

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

1. The new legal duties to reform the way support is provided for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in the Children and Families Act came into force on 1 September 2014. New duties on councils for young offenders with SEN in custody don't come into force until April 2015. Regulations and an amended code of practice are expected to be laid before Parliament early in the New Year.
2. A Department for Education (DfE) survey carried out in October 2014 shows that councils have made a good start in implementing the new duties and are involving parents and young people as key partners in local decision making. Making the transition to the new system will be a gradual process and it is recognised that achieving the cultural change through the reforms will take time. Transitional arrangements are in place for gradually transferring SEN statements and Learning Difficulty Assessments to Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans by April 2018. The LGA was successful in arguing for local areas to have discretion about when they transfer other children and young people to EHC plans. Only young people in Year 11 who are moving on to college or an apprenticeship or those in pathfinder areas with non-statutory plans must be transferred this school year. The guidance allows most of the transfers to take place from September 2015 to April 2018.
3. In June additional 'new burdens' funding allocations for 2014/15 of £45.2 million were made to support implementation of the reforms and funding for 2015/16 of £31.7m was confirmed in the Local Government Finance Settlement in December. Councils can choose how to spend these additional funding allocations across the two years to increase their capacity to take on their new duties.
4. From April 2015, the DfE is looking to encourage a peer support and challenge programme to drive quality improvement around the reforms. Total funding of £450,000 is available for this programme in 2015/16, with funding to be split between the regional leads. The deadline for expressions of interest to the DfE is 23 January 2015. This is a new approach – it is not just for pathfinders - and councils should consider how it might be incorporated into their existing peer support arrangements. The DfE is also tendering for delivery support to councils and their partners in implementing the SEN and disability reforms. It is envisaged that the delivery support contractor, once appointed, will be able to offer a range of support to the peer network regional leads.
5. The DfE is also calling for evidence from local areas to help them work out ways in which special educational needs and disability (SEND) funding can be distributed more fairly. A pack of data has been put together about children and young people with SEND, and how they have been funded and are funded now. The deadline is 27 February 2015.
6. The DfE is inviting councils submit an 'Expression of Interest' to take part in a pilot which will extend the powers of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Tribunal to health and social care. The Government made a commitment during the

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final Parliamentary stages of the Children and Families Act to carry out a review and report back by April 2017, following calls from the LGA and other groups for a single complaints process. We argued that it was confusing and time-consuming for parents to go through different processes depending on the nature of the complaint. We argued that councils shouldn't be the only organisations being held to account for the new integrated provision. The DfE is seeking 20 local areas to take part in the review which is due to start in April. The deadline for submissions is 12 January and further information is available from: lauren.kocan@education.gsi.gov.uk

Careers advice to young people

7. The Department for Education has announced the creation of a £20 million national employer-led Careers and Enterprise Company body to encourage greater collaboration between schools, colleges and employers. The LGA was quoted in reply, warning that 'another national agency, tasked with the impossible challenge of matching thousands of local schools with two million employers, is a wasted opportunity and resolve the skills gap'.

Review of Youth Offending Teams (YOTs)

8. The Ministry of Justice has announced a review of Youth Offending Teams (YOT), which is expected to start early in 2015. The CYP Board Chairman has written to the Andrew Selous MP, the justice Minister, to emphasise the success of the YOT model, to ensure the review looks to understand and build on what has underpinned this success, and to call for the range of partners contributing to that success be involved in designing and leading the review – including local government, police, and health.

Parliamentary debate on the future of youth services

9. On 3 December, Parliament held a Westminster Hall debate on the future of youth services following an early day motion, which now has 120 MP signatures, arguing for 'a statutory funded, wide-ranging and universal youth service with ring-fenced funding from central government which is delivered by local authorities'. LGA provided a briefing for MPs at the Westminster Hall debate, highlighting the difficult position councils are in, the risk of further budget reductions, and making the case for wider reform of services to young people.

Youth participation and youth unemployment

10. The LGA Destinations Data project held its first workshop in September and is now working with an identified list of good practice councils to develop a tool for councils wanting to improve how they use data to reduce disengagement and improve outcomes for young people - such as using data to develop shared strategies, building collaborative relationships that support schools and providers to focus on destinations, working with employers, and improving data management and sharing. The final workshop in January will bring together councils, government and Ofsted to shape the final report, the planning tool, and recommendations for the future use of destinations data.
11. The Board worked with the LGA City Regions Board to commission the National Institute for Economic and Social Research to assess a number of council schemes

supporting vulnerable young people and adults towards work. The research, to be published in early January 2015, has many lessons for government, finding that councils are having success by integrating services, valuing 'soft' outcomes, and working with employers. Councils are increasingly supporting a hidden group of vulnerable unemployed people that get no government help, more than half of all unemployed young people do not claim jobseekers allowance meaning they get no official government support to find a job.

Ofsted annual report

12. The Ofsted annual report for schools and further education and skills was launched on 10 December. The headline findings this year are that primary school standards are continuing on an impressive upward trajectory – with more than eight in ten schools now rated at least good, but that the overall rate of improvement in secondary schools has stalled. Teaching in the further education sector has improved but Ofsted is concerned that too many college courses are still not equipping learners with the skills that employers want and the economy needs.
13. The report raised concerns about the supply of teachers; at a time when pupil numbers are rising sharply the number of new entrants to teacher training has fallen by 16% since 2009/10 and was 7% below target in 2014/15. It also expressed concerns that too many academies are isolated – Ofsted analysis of academies that experienced a sharp fall in inspection grade last year shows that most had not made any arrangement for external support and challenge until it was too late and serious decline had set in. Finally, it highlighted the level of confusion in the system over the exact role of local authorities in relation to academies and their pupils.
14. Responding to the report, Cllr Simmonds said “Ofsted is intended to be a key part of the improvement of schools, and in the case of academy schools are the only people councils can call on to intervene when there are signs that standards are slipping. As well as asking questions of schools, Ofsted has questions to answer about whether its regime is bringing about the improvement we need to see. Mums and dads want to know that someone has their finger on the pulse of local schools and that can't be done from Whitehall. It is time for an independent review of Ofsted so that we can all be confident in the quality of judgments which at the moment seem to change at a moment's notice.”

Autumn Statement

15. In the Autumn Statement on 3 December the Chancellor confirmed that local services will not face additional cuts in 2015-16. He announced that the Government would remove employer National Insurance Contributions (NIC) for employers taking on apprentices under 25, with the aim of stimulating demand across employers and young people. For full details, see the LGA's on-the-day briefing:
<http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/5533246/On+the+Day+Briefing+Autumn+Statement+2014.pdf/bc59ad98-25f2-4188-a166-c0511d2d3ba2>