

Children & Young People Board – report from Cllr David Simmonds (Chairman)

Leadership Essentials: Political Leadership in Children's Services

1. I chaired the Leadership Essentials programme for lead members for children's services at Warwick Conference Centre on 7 and 8 December. Delegates from a range of councils attended including Rotherham, Waltham Forest, Portsmouth and Shropshire. The group were keen to discuss the council role in education, including the role of academies. During the programme we heard from Mark Rogers, Chief Executive of Birmingham City Council; as well as Louise Bamfield of the RSA and Cllr Paul Watling of Telford and Wrekin council. The presentations were thought provoking and led to interesting debates and discussions.

National Adoption Leadership Board

2. I represented the LGA at the December meeting of the national Adoption Leadership Board, chaired by Sir Martin Narey. Local authorities and voluntary adoption agencies have made considerable progress in this area over recent years, and a record number of children were placed with loving adoptive families over the past 12 months. It is important that we maintain this momentum, and the Board recently published two pieces of myth busting guidance to clarify the implications of recent high court judgements - further details at <http://www.first4adoption.org.uk/news/adoption-leadership-board-publishes-addendum-myth-buster-new-guide-social-workers/>

Our ambition for children

3. I was interviewed for a film to accompany the LGA's 'Our ambitions for children and young people' report that has been commissioned by the British Youth Council on behalf of the LGA. The film includes examples of the good work being carried out across the UK to prioritise children and young people.

Youth Offending Team review

4. The Ministry of Justice has announced a review of YOTs. I wrote to Andrew Selous MP, the Justice Minister, to emphasise the success of the YOT model and to call for partners involved in contributing to that success to be involved in designing and leading the review – including local government, police and health. In his response, the Minister made it clear that the role of councils and other local agencies will be a key element of the review and we will ensure that LGA is closely involved.

Youth engagement

5. I responded to a report criticising councils for the levels of young people whose participation status is 'not known' to them. The response emphasised the 14 per cent reduction in young people whose participation status is 'not known' in the last two years and called for legal powers for councils to ensure partners share information so that they can build on this success. The CYP Board is running a good practice project with 40 councils and government to help improve how partners can collectively identify and track the destinations of vulnerable young people.

Local authority schemes supporting young people towards work

6. The Children and Young People Board has worked with the City Regions Board to jointly develop a report looking at successful schemes helping vulnerable young people and adults towards employment. The report found local schemes were successful in reaching people national programmes struggled to support because they brought together interventions and partners around vulnerable young people, valued soft outcomes, and engaged employers.

Children and Young People and Community Wellbeing joint meeting

7. I chaired a joint meeting between lead members of the CYP and CWB Boards to establish how both Boards can support work together on children's health policy. We discussed the transfer of responsibility for commissioning health services for 0-5 year olds to local government. We are clear that this is moving in the right direction but are aware that some councils still face challenges. We also discussed how schools need to work closely with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to support young people with mental health problems and the role of Health and Wellbeing Boards in this process.

Council visits

8. I attended the Rotherham Improvement Board on 9 January.

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