

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

### **Child Sexual Exploitation**

1. On Tuesday 20 January, Cllr Ann Lucas and I jointly chaired a high-level child sexual exploitation summit in Westminster, held by the LGA, the Association of Directors of Children's Services and the Society of Local Government Chief Executives. The summit brought together over 100 council leaders, chief executives, lead members and directors of children's services, to consider the latest work taking place to tackle CSE across the country and to consider what more was needed to fully safeguard children from this awful crime.
2. Following a day of discussion and debate, it was agreed that there was a clear need for stronger leadership from local government on these issues, particularly in light of a perceived failure of central government to deliver a robust and coordinated response. A report outlining the key themes and actions from the summit can be found at [www.local.gov.uk/cse](http://www.local.gov.uk/cse)
3. I wrote in both the Guardian and the Municipal Journal on the role of the LGA and local authorities in tackling child sexual exploitation.

### **Children's Improvement Board**

4. I attended a meeting of the children's improvement board which took place on 3 February with colleagues from Solace, ADCS and the Association of LSCB Chairs. Discussions focussed on the current inspection regime and sector-led improvement model, before moving on to debate how the inspection of children's services should be undertaken in the future. It was agreed that the LGA, ADCS and Solace would work together to draft the principles to would underpin a new approach, for launch before the election.

### **Joint Inquiry into Parenting Support**

5. On 9 February, Cllr Richard Watts gave oral evidence to the joint inquiry by the APPGs on Social Mobility and Parenting into parenting support. The Inquiry was set up to examine the link between parenting and social mobility outcomes, and explore the role of parenting support schemes. Cllr Watts was on a panel with Barnardo's and Family Lives in a session focusing on good practice in implementing parenting support. He spoke about the evidence from the Troubled Families programme which showed that councils working together with partners to support families to address the root causes of problems, rather than the symptoms, saved the public purse an estimated £9 billion a year.

### **APPG on Sure Start Children's Centres**

6. I spoke at a meeting of the APPG on Sure Start Children's Centres on 10 February, providing an LGA perspective on children's centres and the issues surrounding quality and accountability. The key message was that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' model for children's centres across the country. Councils provide a range of 'early help' services locally and 'whole-family' support from early years onwards but cost pressures mean that this is becoming increasingly difficult. There has been a sharp increase in demand for children's social care by 11 per cent in the past year alone.

7. Councils have been responding to financial pressures by restructuring their children's centre provision and finding new ways to deliver services. The meeting discussed the need for councils to be able to organise their children's centres to meet the needs of local families, which would inevitably vary from place to place and between urban and rural areas.

### **School Places**

8. I was interviewed on both television and radio about the LGA's calls for all school places to be fully funded by central government and for councils to be able to create school places on time and in the right locations. This fed into the LGA's 100 Days campaign work on councils being able to provide a place for every child at a good, local school, ahead of the deadline for primary school applications.

### **Careers Advice Services**

9. My comments on the need for nationally-run skills and careers advice services to be devolved to local areas to help tackle dropout rates were widely covered in the media following the release of our analysis, carried out for the LGA by the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion. It showed that that 178,100 16- to 18-year-olds failed to complete post-16 qualifications they had embarked upon in 2012/13

### **Leadership Essentials**

10. I chaired the Leadership Essentials programme for lead members for children's services on 29 and 30 January. Delegates from a range of councils attended and were keen to discuss the challenges of children's social care, particularly the improvement journey for those councils whose children's services have been assessed as 'requires improvement' under Ofsted's Single Inspection Framework (SIF).
11. During the programme we heard from Essex County Council and Staffordshire about their improvement journeys. Debbie Jones, Ofsted Social Care Director, gave an update on the SIF, explained what the future of the inspection framework looked like, and made some helpful suggestions for lead members about their role in the inspection process. Steve Ashley, Chair of the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Board, discussed the role of the Local Safeguarding Children Board and we also discussed the importance of scrutiny.

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