

Note of last Children & Young People Board meeting

Title: Children & Young People Board
Date: Friday 15 January 2016
Venue: Smith Square 3&4, Ground Floor, Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A** to this note.

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
1	Welcome and Declarations of Interest The Chairman welcomed Board members to the first full-length board meeting of the cycle and thanked Cllrs Richard Watts and David Simmonds for their work representing the Board to the press and media. Cllr Watts congratulated the Chairman on being appointed to his position for 2015/16. There were no declarations of interest.	
2	Spending Review announcements on education The Chair introduced a report providing further details about the announcements in the Spending Review about the ending of the council role in school improvement and the introduction of a national funding formula for schools. He asked officers whether the Government's intention is to convert all schools into academies, or just secondary schools. Ian Keating, Principal Policy Advisor, clarified that the Government want all secondary schools to become academies by the end of the Parliament, and all schools to become academies but with no time limit on this aspiration. The Chair asked board members for their initial views on the report, noting that local government is still awaiting further information on school spending. Members discussed: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The importance of taking a pragmatic approach to the Government's proposals, with some members welcoming the clarity they were likely to provide.• The need for further clarity on the future role of local authorities regarding school placements planning and the maintenance and repair of school buildings.	

- The practical problems of all schools becoming academies, such as the costs to councils of taking on school deficits when they convert, and the general principle of a massive transfer of school assets away from council and community ownership.
- The need for greater powers for local authorities so they can continue with their current roles, such as powers to get academies to expand to enable school placement planning, and powers to require academies to change their provision for Special Educational Needs pupils to ensure support for children with high needs.
- The successful role that local authorities have played in school improvement work, and the risk of shifting improvement work to Regional Schools Commissioners who may lack resources and local knowledge.
- The problems that several councils have experienced in contacting and communicating with their regional schools commissioner, and the consequent need to retain direct channels of communication between local authorities and academies.
- The risks of holding one organisation responsible for education and standards and another responsible for tackling extremism and safeguarding, when the issues are so closely intertwined.
- The LGA's recent polling, which shows that the LGA has an important role in continuing to highlight the good track record of most councils in driving up school standards in their areas.
- The unhelpful rhetoric of "council-controlled schools" when in reality schools are operationally autonomous.

Action

The Chair will report the outcome of the Board's discussion to the LGA Executive on 21 January 2016.

Officers to take action as directed by members.

3 Children's services improvement and intervention

The Chair introduced a report that summarises and proposes a response to the Prime Minister's announcement of new measures to formalise the process for removing failing children's services from local authority control, and asked members for their comments.

Members discussed:

- The importance of local authorities working together with Ofsted to support councils whose children's services are currently in intervention or at risk of being judged inadequate by Ofsted.
- The need to financially compensate local authorities who supply staff to help other local authorities with children's improvement work, and the possibility of creating a Taskforce of top staff to do improvement work around the country to ensure that individual authorities' resources do not become overstretched.

- The risks of drawing up a blueprint for all children's improvement and intervention work when different authorities operate under very different circumstances.
- The concern that the new measures announced by the Prime Minister will replace, rather than complement, the effective work that the LGA does in supporting councils.
- The impracticality of the short timescale in which local authorities are expected to make improvements following an inadequate Ofsted rating.
- The problems currently facing councils engaged in improvement work, such as the difficulty of objectively assessing whether they are improving, and the issue of wealthier councils placing large numbers of children in less affluent areas and thereby exhausting their staffing capacity.
- The potential value of commissioning research on the outputs that councils have experienced from trying different approaches to children's services improvement.
- The value of councils sharing with one another common reasons for failure and success, so that lessons can be learnt for best practice.
- The important role that the LGA plays, and should continue to play, in complementing council-to-council help in the area of children's services improvement.

Decisions

The Board welcomed the Prime Minister's announcement, subject to the caveats outlined above.

The Board **agreed** to propose to the Improvement and Innovation Board and to the LGA Executive that:

- Support for children's services should have a high priority within the LGA's sector-led improvement offer, given the number of councils currently in intervention and at risk of being judged inadequate by Ofsted.
- The children's services support offer should prioritise councils that have not yet been inspected under the Ofsted Single Inspection Framework and are at potential risk of an inadequate judgement.
- The LGA's political and professional networks should be used to encourage these councils to have a full Safeguarding Peer Review or Safeguarding Practice/Care Practice Diagnostic.
- An enhanced support offer to councils should be developed to deal with any issues identified following a peer review or diagnostic that put a council at risk of an inadequate judgement at their next inspection.
- For councils judged inadequate, the existing support offer should be retained and enhanced, with a focus on supporting them to produce a credible improvement plan and maintain sufficient progress to avoid full-scale Department for Education (DfE) intervention in line with the new proposals.

Actions

Officers to report the Board's views to the Improvement and Innovation Board meeting on Tuesday 19 January and the LGA Executive meeting on Thursday 21 January.

4 Mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse

The Chair introduced a report assessing the mandatory reporting of child abuse and the alternative option of introducing new sanctions for failure to act. He asked members to advise on the LGA's future position in this policy area, ahead of a Department for Education (DfE) on the matter, which is expected shortly.

Members discussed:

- The importance of ensuring that the reporting of child abuse is seen as a council-wide responsibility, and in particular the importance of ensuring that housing officers are trained to spot early warning signs.
- The risk that, in the absence of greater resources for local authorities, mandatory reporting will cause a much higher quantity of referrals coupled with a lower quality of investigations, as seen in some countries that experimented with mandatory reporting.
- The risk of punitive sanctions making it harder to recruit to social care and school governor roles.
- The question of whether mandatory reporting would have helped to prevent past cases where professionals have failed to report child abuse.
- The possible advantages of focussing new legislation more narrowly on preventing institutional cover-ups of failures to report, rather than the less focussed aim of mandatory reporting.
- The need for the Government to complement any legislation on mandatory reporting or failure to act with new powers for local authorities to access children who are kept at home unseen, which is associated with child trafficking.
- The risk that mandatory reporting will lead to professionals reporting too early, without sufficient investigation, and thereby harming relationships with innocent parents.
- The possibility of hearing from those involved in specific past failings at a future board meeting in order to learn identify mistakes.

Action

Officers to integrate the Board's views into the LGA's response to the expected DfE consultation on mandatory reporting.

5 Other Business Report

The Chairman introduced a report containing information on other

business relevant to the Board, such as the Spending Review announcement about extending free childcare from 15 to 30 hours, the Education and Adoption Bill, the Child Obesity Strategy, the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), the 0 – 5 transfer and Child Health Information Services (CHIS), the Family Nurse Partnership and Sir Martin Narey’s Residential Care Review.

Members:

- welcomed the funding for CAMHS but noted that recruitment is still a problem in this service;
- highlighted the importance of teaching children how to prepare healthy meals as part of the child obesity strategy;
- asked for copies of LGA submissions to reviews to be sent out to board members in the future.

Action

Officers will send copies of LGA submissions to reviews that are relevant to the Board’s remit to board members.

6 Note of the Previous Meeting

Members **agreed** the minutes of the previous meeting on 15 October 2015.

7 Inquiry into the purpose and quality of education in England

The Chairman introduced the LGA’ s draft submission to the Education Select Committee’ s inquiry into the purpose and quality of education in England and asked members to comment on the draft and give their approval to a final version subject to their comments.

Decision

The Board **approved** the draft submission, subject to their comments.

Action

Officers to take forward the submission in line with members’ views, and look into publicising the inquiry to other organisations.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Roy Perry	Hampshire County Council
Vice-Chair	Cllr Richard Watts	Islington Council
Deputy-Chair	Cllr Helen Powell	Lincolnshire County Council
Deputy-Chair	Cllr Liz Green	Kingston upon Thames Royal Borough Council
Members	Cllr Laura Mayes	Wiltshire Council
	Cllr Paul McLain	Gloucestershire County Council
	Cllr Dick Madden	Essex County Council
	Cllr Ivan Ould	Leicestershire County Council
	Cllr Liz Hackett Pain	Monmouthshire County Council
	Cllr Ian Parry	Staffordshire County Council
	Cllr Anntoinette Bramble	Hackney London Borough Council
	Cllr Anne Burns	Cumbria County Council
	Cllr Bob Cook	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
	Cllr John Kent	Thurrock Council
	Cllr David Mellen	Nottingham City Council
	Cllr John Merry CBE	Salford City Council
	Cllr Paul Cullen	Richmondshire District Council
	Cllr Christopher Coleman	Cheltenham Borough Council
Apologies	Edwina Grant	Children's Improvement Adviser
	Dr Phil Norrey	Chief Executive, Devon County Council
	Alison O'Sullivan	President, Association of Directors of Children's Services
LGA Officers	Ian Keating	
	Ian Dean	
	Clive Harris	
	John Wilesmith	