

Note of decisions taken and actions required

Title: Children and Young People
Date: Tuesday 10 September 2013
Venue: Westminster Room, Local Government House, Smith Square, London SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

Position	Councillor	Council / Representing
Chairman	David Simmonds	Hillingdon LB
Vice-Chair	Nick Forbes	Newcastle City
Deputy-Chair	Liz Green	Kingston upon Thames RB
Deputy-Chair	Apu Bagchi	Bedford BC
Members	Paul Carter	Kent CC
	Roy Perry	Hampshire CC
	Paul McLain	Gloucestershire CC
	Liz Hackett Pain	Monmouthshire CC
	John Osman	Somerset CC
	Rita Krishna	Hackney LB
	John Merry	Salford City
	Nicky Williams	Plymouth City
	David Bellotti	Bath & NE Somerset Council
	Helen Powell	Lincolnshire CC/South Kesteven DC
Substitutes	Ivan Ould	Leicestershire CC
	Tom Garrod – as an observer	Norfolk CC
Apologies	Patricia Bradwell	Lincolnshire CC
	Paul Lakin	Rotherham MBC

Officers: Helen Johnston, Cassi Harrison, Verity Sinclair

Guests: Sir Michael Wilshaw, Mike Cladingbowl, Thomas Cattermole, David Clark, James Cathcart, Jan Fishwick, Mark Owers,

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Cllr David Simmonds welcomed everybody to the first meeting of the new Children and Young People Board and asked all councillors and officers to introduce themselves. As the guest speaker Sir Michael Wilshaw Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Children's Services was already in attendance it was agreed item 2 would be taken first.

1. Recent Ofsted Developments

Cllr Simmonds introduced guest speaker Sir Michael Wilshaw.

Sir Michael Wilshaw thanked the Board for inviting him and explained his desire for a successful dialogue between local government and Ofsted. He emphasised how the changes made by Ofsted, alongside better school leadership and teaching quality had led to a 9% increase in schools achieving either a good or outstanding rating. However, regional variations and the attainment gap between children from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds were still of concern. Ofsted had performed focused inspections on two local authorities, to assess how they were working to improve standards.

Sir Michael Wilshaw told the Board that he saw local government as the middle tier and while they were not expected to have big school improvement teams with the current budget restraints, they should be proactive in employing the resources and powers they currently have. He explained he saw the current situation as the last chance saloon for councils to demonstrate they could play an effective role in school improvement. With Ofsted's new improvement role he explained that whilst inspection would be their first priority they would also work with local authorities to improve standards.

A number of issues were raised during the subsequent discussion.

Members sought assurance that there would be some consistency of inspection frameworks in future given the many recent changes and that inspectors would be of a high quality. Sir Michael Wilshaw replied saying that inspections would be continuing under this framework for at least the next couple of years and he would be doing everything possible to make sure they were not in any way bureaucratic. If authorities had a problem with the way they had been inspected or the specific inspector they could make a complaint to Ofsted and it would be investigated.

Some members raised concerns over the perceived bias towards academic attainment over pupil progress. Sir Michael emphasised that progress of pupils was the benchmark of a good school rather than comparison with national attainment averages.

Problems with obtaining information on academy schools were raised with Sir Michael saying that alongside finding the information on the ground through local channels, they could access 'Raiseonline' which held data on school and pupil performance.

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The challenge of recruiting and retaining social workers and senior managers in light of increasingly tough inspections which do not seem to celebrate success was raised. It was agreed by Sir Michael Wilshaw that this was a concern and that he would raise the issue in his speech when the Ofsted annual report is published in October; however he felt that councils who nurtured a good relationship with their social work teams should be able to retain staff.

Concerns were raised about how multi-agency working fits alongside the single point of contact policy promoted by the Troubled Families Programme. Sir Michael Wilshaw assured members that the introduction of multi-agency inspections for child protection had been deferred in order to make sure it was implemented correctly and issues relating to how different agencies would be held accountable were resolved.

Councillor Simmonds thanked Sir Michael Wilshaw for attending the meeting.

Decision

Members noted the report

Action

Officers to take forward this work in light of Members' comments.

LGA Officers

2. Introduction and Overview of the LGA's Children and Young People Board

The Board had a short discussion on the priorities for the year ahead. Some members noted that troubled families could have a more prominent place in the report, but members broadly agreed with the proposals.

Decision

Members agreed the report

Action

Officers to take forward this work in light of Members' comments.

LGA Officers

3. British Youth Council

David Clark, Deputy CEO of the British Youth Council (BYC) gave a presentation which explained the role of the BYC, focusing on the good practice and successes as well as the challenges they were currently facing.

Members raised questions on the best avenues for youth engagement, budgetary constraints and the importance of educating people about democracy from a young age.

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Decision

Members noted the report

Action

Officers to take forward this work in light of Members' comments.

Nick Porter

4. Adopter Recruitment

Mark Owers and Jan Fishwick from the Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies presented a report to the Board on the CVAA's role, explaining they were a registered charity with 31 voluntary adoption agencies as members, 23 of which were in England.

Both spoke of their willingness to work with partners including the LGA, as well as working with local authorities to expedite those children who had been waiting longest for adoption. However concerns about sequential decision making leading to delays were raised and they outlined the reasons why local authorities had been asked to equalise the fee to the level charged by voluntary agencies. They also gave an overview of proposals to work more closely with local government in order to sustain growth in adopter recruitment across the system. .

A question and answer session was held, with members discussing a range of issues including increasing access to training for adopters in order to reduce placement breakdown; the need to look at other permanency solutions such as fostering; the difficulties of finding adopters for harder to place children; and how to market adoption opportunities.

Decision

Members noted the report

Action

Officers to take forward this work in light of Members' comments

Cassi
Harrison

5. Other Business Report

Cllr Bellotti mentioned the Education Services Grant and discussed the possibility of setting up a DfE working group on finances.

Cllr Krishna raised concerns about the children's health update and sought assurance that the LGA would be more robust in representing local government's interests to NHS England. Other members mentioned issues with capacity of Health and Wellbeing Boards and it was decided that this

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would be discussed at a future meeting.

Decision

Members noted the report

Action

Officers to take forward this work in light of Members' comments

LGA Officers

6. Notes of the last meeting and actions arising

The Board **agreed** the note of the last meeting