

Group elections for the posts of Leader, Deputy Leader and Treasurer saw us printing and posting some 2,000 sets of ballot papers to group members in June.

The support to our group members has picked up apace following elections on 2nd May through the offices of Jon Huish, Graham Brown, Stuart Drummond and Tony Clarke in their roles as lead group peers.

We are putting in place induction sessions for Independent Group members who were elected for the first time on 2nd May.

We welcome visits in person from Independent Group members to the Group Office, and will happily give you a guided tour to the facilities available in Local Government House. Do, please, get in touch with us with your queries and concerns. Even if we don't know the answer to a question ourselves, the Local Government Group enjoys a collective expertise which is always available to you. We can generally find a colleague who will be able to resolve any queries you have. If you want to visit the office please give us some notice so that we can re-arrange diaries accordingly. Thank you.

Vanessa Chagas went on maternity leave at the end of May and expects to return to work in January 2014 – my thanks to Vanessa for her outstanding support and all best wishes to Vanessa and Brian, her partner. Leanna Hay is now the Political Assistant for the group covering Vanessa's maternity leave and has made a terrific start in the post.

My appreciation for the support that many group members have given us in the office over the past year and our best wishes to you all for an equally successful 2013 / 2014 political year.

With kind regards,

Maggie, Vanessa and Leanna



*Jamie Davis, our work experience student in 2013
With Marianne and Maggie in the group office*

Independent Group Representative Reports

The Independent Group appoints representatives to all Local Government Group Member Structures, to outside organisations and to European and International Bodies. Reports from our representatives follow below:

Programme Boards

Children and Young People (CYP)



Councillor Apu Bagchi, Bedford Borough Council Deputy Chair

Like many other Programme Boards, it has been a busy year for the CYP Board. The Board has had to deal with some difficult issues. I would like to highlight here some of the areas where CYP Board members have been actively engaged:

- The new OFSTED role in the inspection of council school improvement services. There has been a debate about the council's role in education since the General Election. With the advent of "free schools" and sharply increasing number of academies the supposedly strong strategic role for councils has been weakened. It is quite clear that Ofsted is continuing to move into the realm of improvement of councils' safeguarding and care, with the recruitment of regional inspectors. Ofsted is currently consulting on raising expectations of quality and driving improvement in early year's education and childcare by more frequent re-inspection and monitoring of childcare and early years providers and replacing the "satisfactory" judgment with "requires improvement" category.
- The LGA has a longstanding commitment to sector led improvement in children's services and in this context the demise of the Children's Improvement Board (CIB) by the DfE has been seen as harsh and unwelcome. The CYP Board has rightly recommended that support for CIB should continue to be provided by the LGA. It has to be acknowledged that the CIB was supported by a grant from the DfE and was due to receive £8.5m for its work in 2013-14. It is hoped that the co-ordinated work between LGA,

SOLACE and ADCS will be carried out in order to provide sector led improvement.

- A Children's Partnership has been set up to replace several Department of Health Programme Boards for children and young people. The core purpose of the Children's Partnership will be to bring together key national organisations accountable to policy, commissioning and delivery to improve children and young people's health outcomes.
- Child Poverty remains a critical reminder to the CYP Board that every local authority has the duty to prepare and publish child poverty needs assessment. The LGA welfare reform programme has commissioned a research project which will look at impact and typologies for those most affected including troubled families, and positive local responses.
- The Children and Families Bill has completed its commons Report Stage and the Bill is expected to progress through the House of Lords in July. The CYP Board is keen to see the Bill secures the best possible outcomes for all our children and young people.
- Last January the Government published "Further Action on Adopters: Finding more loving homes". The LGA, in partnership with SOLACE and ADCS, developed a set of actions to remove disincentives in the system and support councils to improve adopter recruitment. The recent indication points to the fact that the number of children placed for adoption has nearly doubled in the last year, demonstrating the progress being made by local authorities.
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) remains a high profile issue. The LGA has provided support to the sector and launched a "National Conversation" last February in order to raise awareness of CSE. The annual conference in July will provide online resource materials including training packs and case studies.



Community Health and Wellbeing (CHW)



Councillor Gillian Ford, London Borough of Havering Deputy Chair

The Community Health and Wellbeing Board have had a frenetic year with the Health and Care Support Act and the transference of Public Health back under the control of local authorities.

External events and attendance on behalf of the LGA have included round-table discussions on 'Tackling illicit Tobacco for better Health', Public Health 'Toolkit for Engaging Local Business' and 'Health and Human Rights'.

In relation to Dementia, events attended were, 'Dementia Action Alliance', 'Making London a Dementia friendly city' and a workshop with the BSI on the development of Dementia standards.

Lead members met with the Nuffield Trust carrying out a review of aggregate assessment of providers of health and social care in England with the intention of developing a Rating System.

Additional invitations to represent the LGA came from Action on Hearing Loss at the launch of 'Case for tackling hearing loss in care homes' and the launch of 'Hearing Screening for Life' Campaign, aimed at introducing a national screening test at the age of sixty five.

A plethora of LGA and co-signed, publications and reports have been amended and agreed by lead members including School Nurses, Hospital to Home, Fluoridation and Death Certification Reforms.

The big question being asked after the publication of Dilnot was; would the recommendations be implemented? Ministers confirmed at the National Children & Adult Services Conference that they would be; although the outcome was not at the recommended level.

The board has considered the financial implications of the Governments proposals for adult social care funding reform along with sector-led improvement for Adult Services and Health Reform, efficiency savings in Adult Social Care and Public Health funding.

Local Authorities Public Health responsibilities have been examined, including the significance of Health and Wellbeing Boards, NHS Health Check Assessment, Healthwatch, Health Protection and Health Reconfiguration.

Dignity in care has been at the heart of all work, which became more poignant when lead members agreed the joint Winterbourne concordat with key partners. Consideration was also given to the implications for Local Authorities, as a result of the Francis Report of the Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust Public Inquiry.

The necessity to implement integrated care has grown in pace. Board discussions and the LGA conference on 'Commissioning for Integrated Health and Care' were the precursor to Minister Norman Lamb's Integrated Care pioneer programme. The programme has resulted in fortnightly meetings in Whitehall with key partners, working in collaboration to make integration work.

A Health and Wellbeing System Improvement Steering Group has been established with key stakeholders, including Lead Members, Department of Health, Department of Education, NHS England, Public Health England, and the Care Quality Commission. What has been made very clear is that **all** parties are in agreement that we need to work collaboratively for the health and wellbeing of residents and the reduction of budgets; we now need to see the implementation.

Culture, Tourism and Sport (CTS)



**Councillor Geoff Knight, Lancaster
Deputy Chair**

Spending Review

The LGA's submission to the Treasury makes the case for giving councils the powers to maximise the contribution of cultural services to enable local growth. This includes:

- Insisting on a new approach to lottery funding,
- DCMS to recognise that libraries will be a key for accessing Universal Credit.
- Suggesting a partnership approach to keeping the broadband roll-out on track
- Investment in physical activity to tackle obesity and improve public health.

committees, at conferences and in the press. Whenever your voices were needed, you have given us the support that makes us effective.

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A student from De Montfort University gives his views on local government to delegates during the Speaker's Corner slot at the Independent Group Annual Conference in October 2012

***we look forward
to hearing from you***