

Draft LGA Business Plan 15/16

Sector-led support, improvement and innovation – our core services

We will support councils with improving performance, effectiveness and efficiency.

Our approach is based on four key principles:

- councils are responsible for their own performance
- councils are primarily accountable to their local communities
- stronger local accountability and increased transparency drive improvement
- councils have collective responsibility for the performance of local government as a whole.

Our role is to provide and coordinate the necessary tools and support to help councils improve their performance, efficiency and effectiveness. We also maintain an overview of local government's performance offering direct support for councils at risk, so that the number of councils the Government has to intervene with is kept to a minimum.

Councils are making good use of the support we offer and a sector-led approach is proving effective in driving improvement, as well as identifying potential performance challenges and opportunities.

Strong political leadership: effective political leadership is at the heart of local democracy and an essential pre-condition for continuous improvement. In 2015/16 we will:

- provide development for at least 500 councillors with leadership roles in their councils – including those in opposition – through our newly refreshed suite of leadership programmes
- support at least 50 ambitious and talented councillors with the potential to progress in their political careers through our **Next Generation** programme
- support at least 50 leaders and chief executives through our **Leading Edge** programme giving them the opportunity to work together on developing their leadership roles and exploring new models of delivery in the light of the financial challenges facing the public sector
- help councils, political groups and the national parties attract new talent to get involved in civic life through our '**Be a Councillor**' programme
- provide member peer support for councils where there has been a change of political control and provide new e-learning opportunities for all councillors particularly in relation to induction and community leadership skills

- recruit at least 100 high calibre graduates in to local government, working with councils to secure interesting and challenging placements, as part of a two year **National Graduate Development Programme**, building links with other public sector graduate programmes.

Peer challenge and support: challenge and support from one's peers lies at the heart of the sector's approach to improvement. In 2015/16 we will:

- deliver at least 100 **peer challenges** involving councillor and senior officer peers from: the sector, other organisations including the voluntary and business sectors, and from government departments, spending between three and five days in an authority challenging what the authority is doing, identifying good practice and areas for improvement
- provide **direct support** to at least 50 councils and groups of councils, tailored to their particular challenges, but especially councils with the most severe performance challenges and where support would be helpful to resolve issues between the political and managerial leadership
- develop our programme associated with **sharing best practice** so that councils who are finding new and effective ways of working to secure outcomes for their communities at significantly less cost share and support others to do likewise
- provide direct support to at least 20 councils, through our partnership with the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), in developing **scrutiny skills and expertise**, holding local government and other parts of the public sector to account as democratically elected local representatives
- through our partnership with Local Partnerships, provide direct support to councils to help them make savings, for example through Private Finance Initiative contracts, and disseminate best practice and develop new programmes in key areas of council activity.

Efficiency and productivity: helping councils to continue to be the most efficient part of the public sector. In 2015/16 we will:

- deliver a programme of projects to help councils deliver savings and improve productivity, including work on **commercialisation, commissioning, digitisation and service integration in health and social care**. This will include providing practical support to at least 60 councils helping them realise efficiency savings through our productivity expert programme
- provide bespoke political and officer support for at least 25 councils to help them address issues around **financial sustainability**, integrated budgets, and managing the risk of new delivery models
- provide a matchmaking service for councils that wish to share **services/management teams** and promote good practice in shared services through our web-based interactive shared services map
- provide practical guidance and support to help councils better identify the causes and triggers of demand and to use this insight to **better manage demand** across key services in the future

- develop more opportunities for councils to enter collaborative improvement arrangements – including the establishment of an independent body to oversee national **procurement of external audit**.

Open data and transparency: access to comparable information is a key driver for improvement and productivity, and strengthens local accountability, engagement and service transformation. In 2015/16 we will:

- continue to provide free access to authorities, and also to the public, to transparent and **comparable information** through LG Inform. This online data benchmarking service enables the comparison and analysis of performance, financial and contextual information about authority areas to support the monitoring and scrutiny of performance, and inform decision-making, increasing authorities' accountability to local voters and taxpayers. LG Inform Plus will provide authorities with access to small area data reports and tools, and give support and guidance to authorities to drive improvements
- develop a **transparency strategy** for the sector, helping councils to be open and make the best use of data and data services so that they continue to be the most transparent and efficient part of the public sector. The strategy will build on the good practice developed in local authorities and the support we give to councils to make data comparable and reusable. Being open and making better use of data will drive local engagement and support effective public services transformation and the digitisation of services.

Innovation: supporting councils that are taking risks and are trying out innovative ways of dealing with the challenges they face. In 2015/16 we will:

- build on the lessons from the LGA/NESTA Creative Councils programme and continue to work with councils and national innovation partners to support councils with developing, implementing and sharing innovative approaches to the medium - and long-term challenges facing local communities and services. Our particular focus will be to share lessons through the Innovation Zone at the LGA annual conference.

In addition to the direct support funded through Revenue Support Grant topslice, we will provide sector-led improvement programmes in specific service areas, for which additional funding is being provided by sponsor bodies, including:

- the Planning Advisory Service
- culture services in partnership with Arts Council England and Sport England
- the Department of Health funded Integrated Sector Led Improvement Programme for Health and Care covering: Towards Excellence in Adult Social Care (TEASC), adult safeguarding, support for Integration and Better Care Fund
- support to Health and Wellbeing Boards, implementation of the Care Act and the Winterbourne View Joint Improvement programme, delivered with partners such as the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services
- our Highways Maintenance Improvement and Efficiency programme.