

Sector-led improvement in adult social services - Decisions and Actions Required

Decisions

1. *Members are asked to discuss the proposed approach and agree any feedback to the Improvement Board and identify further action for officers.*

Actions Required

2. *As directed by the Board*

Action by: *LGA Secretariat*

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Sector-led improvement in adult social services

Summary

1. In order to enable effective cross-Board LGA working on sector-led intervention, this paper sets out a suggested co-ordinated approach to tackling underperformance in service areas which members are asked to discuss and agree any feedback to the Improvement Board and further action for officers.

Background

2. In March the Board considered its contribution to the performance and improvement challenges facing the sector, and specifically, how underperformance in relevant service/outcome area could be monitored and addressed. Members asked that a plan be developed to take forward the work and taking into account their comments.

3. In March the LGA published a protocol on sector-led intervention (circulated previously) which states that 'there will be no tolerance of poor performance within the sector, whether of a political, corporate or service-specific nature'. It committed the sector to intervening to strengthen the capacity and self-awareness of councils to drive their own improvement. Internally, the Improvement Board provides strategic oversight, co-ordination and steer to the LGA and Central Bodies' work in supporting councils to improve or with those at risk of underperforming. An approach to taking this forward is proposed below; it has been discussed by Group Leaders of the Improvement Board who would welcome the views of other Boards on the suggested approach.

Objectives of the co-ordinated approach

4. The suggested objectives are:

- To react swiftly to early signs of underperformance within service/outcome areas
- To initiate appropriate sector-led action to support councils to drive service improvements
- To focus on particular problem areas for improvement, even in those councils that are overall high performers
- To ensure sector-led actions are co-ordinated in order to maximise effectiveness and capacity and reduce burdens on councils
- To expand the role of the sector in supporting improvement across service areas and interface with regulators
- To demonstrate connected LGA leadership on tackling under-performance in the sector

Key roles and responsibilities

5. LGA Boards with service area responsibilities would take the lead in monitoring performance levels in the key service/outcome areas within their remit. They will:

- gather the evidence of where underperformance exists, using both 'hard' and 'soft' intelligence
- analyse the causes of service weaknesses, forming a picture of common features, patterns and triggers, in particular 'early warning' signs

- develop an understanding of the most effective tools and packages of support to address service weaknesses, particularly where preventive action can be taken
- advise the Improvement Board on where the sector should intervene with preventative or remedial support, either in individual cases or through sector capacity building activity

6. The LGA Improvement Board would consider and act on the advice of LGA Boards to mobilise the sector to address service underperformance. In partnership with individual Boards the Improvement Board will:

- steer the work of the Performance Partnership bodies in providing service/outcome specific support
- co-ordinate cross-sector based engagement activity with individual councils
- undertake lobbying activities on performance issues on behalf of the sector
- develop, with Board input, an LGA 'toolkit' for Boards to use in monitoring service performance, drawing on Improvement Board experience and covering issues such as creating a risk register, dealing with confidentiality issues and sources of intelligence.

Current improvement activity in adult social services

7. There are currently no zero star authorities. There are 30 one star authorities in CSCI's performance ratings for 2006, of which 21 have been identified for further attention as they have remained one star rated since 2002. The Joint Improvement Partnership (JIP), of which LGA and IDeA are members, is involved in this process and its members are committed to provide resources to the current and ongoing programme.

8. The 21 authorities have been asked to produce improvement plans and some resource from DH, match funded by the authority, has been made available to help the council to, for example, backfill posts when staff are moved to develop and implement improvement plans or commission external support such as project management and facilitation. Another option being explored is to arrange and support secondments between councils at different ends of the performance spectrum.

9. LGA officers are currently drawing together a range of intelligence about the 21 councils' performance to assess whether, when and what form of sector-led engagement would be most effective. The IDeA has a range of improvement activity aimed at members and officers that could be harnessed to complement this approach, including:

- For members: leadership academy on adult services and community well-being, national and regional networks for lead members
- For officers: communities of practice, in person and online, for 2nd and 3rd tier officers as well as Directors, a social care leadership development programme for black managers
- cross-cutting strands of work across adults and children's services on outcomes, strategic commissioning, communities and workforce
- a new product in the form of a challenge event to be delivered for individual local authorities and their partners

Implications for Wales

10. None

Financial/Resource Implications

11. There are no additional resource implications arising from this report.

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