

The Contribution of Museums, Libraries and Archives to Local Area Agreement Priorities

Summary

The Board will hear a presentation from DC Research, commissioned by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, to explore the contribution of the MLA sector to local area agreements.

The research shows there are profound gaps in both the sector's impact on key priorities and its ability to connect what it does to these priorities.

The research suggests that action is needed to both improve the evidence base and the training and development for sector professionals.

Recommendations

The Board is invited to consider whether and how the LGA Group should take action in response to the survey's findings.

Action

Officers will take forward the Board's conclusions.

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Background

1. The Board will hear the results of research undertaken by DC Research. It shows that the MLA sector is not effectively positioning itself in relation to LAA outcomes. This begs a number of questions:
 - does this apply to culture and sport more generally? Sport is seen as leading the way, both in terms of its evidential impact, particularly on health outcomes;
 - should the LGA be concerned? There is evidence from the Place Survey that the MLA services, particularly libraries, are highly regarded by the general public. On the other hand, services that demonstrate a strong contribution to improving educational attainment or health, or reducing crime, for example, are more likely to be protected from budget rigour;
 - there is an improvement programme for the sector led by the IDEA and supported by DCMS and its NDPBs. Does the LGA need to do more to support that programme and ensure that other organisations are lending their weight to its objectives? The recent IDEA consultation document “Setting the pace: developing a framework for sector led help” places weight on the LGA leadership of self-improvement.
2. If the Board agrees that these issues require an LGA response, there are a number of steps that we could take, at either officer or Board level:
 - further examine the role of Lead Members, and the support they receive, in promoting the sector within their authorities;
 - strengthen our engagement with the National Culture Forum (where the professional bodies, such as Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers’ Association (CLOA) come together. For example, lead members could meet them collectively to discuss the issues raised by the research;
 - strengthen our bi-lateral engagement with the professional associations – a two-way dialogue further encouraging professional development programmes focused on shaping services to deliver key outcomes. Also exploring how councils can promote and support professional development;
 - expand our discussions with DCMS on their review of their national indicators to explore how we close the evidence gap.

Financial Implications

3. None arising directly from this report.

Implications for Wales

4. Implications for Wales will be discussed with the WLGA as appropriate.

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