

Update on Support Offer

Self Evaluation and Peer Challenge

As reported at previous meetings of the Improvement Board, we have been trialling a sector led approach to self evaluation. The second round of trials is now coming to a close. The following areas tested a revised approach to self evaluation:

*Hambleton – across the two tiers
Malvern Hills – across the two tiers
Buckinghamshire
Salford
Sunderland
Wirral
Richmond upon Thames*

The timescale for the trial was very tight - just two months, but all the lead councils were extremely well motivated and worked hard to test the approach within our timeframe and to gain the benefits in doing so for their area. All areas except from Buckinghamshire have now completed draft partnership self evaluations. Given the complexity of undertaking a self evaluation across a large two tier area, it was expected that Buckinghamshire would take slightly longer. However, they are also making good progress.

Each self evaluation focused on three main headings:

- 1. Understanding local needs and translation into local priorities*
- 2. The delivery of improvements and outcomes in the area*
- 3. Gap analysis and planning for the future*

These headings can be cross referred to the questions covered within the area assessment within CAA, which looks at how well local public services are delivering better results for local people and looks to the future prospects for the area. However, the self evaluation headings also enable the partnership to work through and be able to demonstrate that it is sufficiently self aware of key issues and that there are effective plans in place to address any concerns. This is vital for both facilitating improvement towards meeting local priorities and also to ensure inspection is proportionate, within the context of CAA.

Feedback from the councils has been very positive. Their experience of undertaking the self evaluation was that it was beneficial for their partnership working regarding of the context of CAA, enabling them to take stock and most importantly look at where gaps needed to be addressed and what plans needed to be put in place for the future. However, many also said that they did the self evaluation as a way of ensuring that they were ready for CAA. They found that the self evaluation was a mechanism for ensuring that they were able to work through priority issues for themselves so that they would be in a place when CAA commences. All councils said that they intend to continue to use the self evaluation format to improve the effectiveness of their partnership working and are looking to build the process into the overall performance management cycle. Salford council, for

example, is planning to undertake the process as a yearly stock take in June each year. Others are planning to use the self evaluations for their initial starting discussions with their CAA Leads at the beginning of the financial year.

The draft guidance has been published on the Policy and Performance Community of Practice site. A number of councils are already using the draft guidance to develop partnership self evaluations outside the actual trials e.g. Warwickshire and LB Bexley. Also, South Staffordshire Council have used the self evaluation questions to develop a scrutiny tool kit to provide challenge to the self evaluation.

We are also trialling a new approach to peer challenge so that partnerships can have peer assessment of their self evaluation to ensure that it is sufficiently robust and self challenging. Trials are taking place in St Helens and Trafford in November. We are still in discussion with two county councils regarding a trial in a two tier area.

Leadership Academy

To complement the members guide to CAA, the IDeA Leadership Academy now also includes an optional module on CAA. This will enable members to ensure they have up to date information and can discuss how best to utilise CAA on their core agenda of improvement with other political colleagues.

Guide to Citizen Insight

We have produced a guide to citizen insight within the context of CAA. This is being finalised and will be published on IDeA knowledge.

Other Support

We are currently developing a wider package of support for members and officers to assist them with the transition to CAA. This is being developed and tested in two/three councils but will also be promoted nationally. There is a steering group overseeing the work, including Cllr Steve Houghton, Leader at Barnsley MBC and Carole Hudson, Chief Executive at St Helens MBC.

The package will be targeted at:

- 1. Councillors, both members engaged as part of the administration and through roles in scrutiny.*
- 2. People from councils and partner agencies who are involved in governance and the delivery of Local area Agreements (LAA's) and Sustainable Community Strategies*
- 3. Senior management teams, what changes might they need to make to their method of working to adapt to CAA*