

National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy

Summary

This paper provides proposals for national performance oversight arrangements of RIEPs building on member's discussions at September's Improvement Board. The paper also provides members with a general update on key issues including an update on the RIEP member forum, efficiency and transformation fund and ongoing communication activity to support member engagement.

Recommendations

1. Members agree the proposed performance oversight arrangements for RIEPs (see paragraph 4)
2. Members note the outcomes from the RIEP member forum, ongoing work to engage with members and ongoing discussions with CLG regarding the Efficiency and Transformation Fund and Resource Centres.

Action

LGA officers to implement actions as appropriate

National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy (NIES)

Demonstrating and ensuring the success of the National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy (NIES)

1. Members discussed principles for the performance oversight of RIEPs at the meeting of the Improvement Board in September. In particular members provided a steer that reporting arrangements at a national level should; seek to demonstrate delivery against the minimum standards in the NIES and commitments within the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Strategies (RIES), be light touch, and that focus should be given to the reporting arrangements at a regional and sub regional level to ensure accountability of the RIEP to councils within their respective regions.

2. On this basis members are asked to agree the following proposals for oversight of RIEP performance.

- a) RIEPs ensure accountability to councils within their region by establishing strong performance reporting arrangements on progress and the allocation of funding. RIEPs have put in place performance reporting systems to ensure regional accountability. Individual performance management and governance arrangements vary across regions (a summary is provided in annex A). Progress and delivery is however considered at either a senior officer or member group at least quarterly across all regions. The RIEP Programme Office is discussing with RIEPs how best to ensure a steady flow of information on progress and will keep Improvement Board members updated.
- b) RIEPs report progress annually, this will form the basis for the release of years 2 and 3 funding.

These short reports will:

- report delivery against objectives within RIES, minimum standards and enablers in the NIES
- recognise regional diversity, accountability should not equal prescription or standardisation.
- minimise reporting burden. Demonstrating the success of a sector led approach to improvement is important to gain government support for further devolution of improvement resources. We propose to do this by the annual reporting process described in this report supported by a national approach to communicating sector success that draws on information available from RIEPs' own reporting arrangements.
- be supported by a peer support process, it is proposed that we explore the option of a peer challenge process .
- be jointly agreed by CLG and the sector, the NIES includes a commitment to stronger joint working. As such arrangements for performance oversight of RIEPs

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will need to be jointly agreed by the Improvement Board and CLG. It is also proposed that the annual reports and the release of year two funding is agreed jointly by John Healey MP and the lead LGA Improvement Board members.

- c) LGA group develop a 'state of the nation' report. The report will seek to tell the improvement story of the sector and highlight the support provided to councils by RIEPs, LGA Group and sector led improvement bodies.
- d) Continued pressure on Government to demonstrate its delivery of commitments within the NIES. In particular the commitment to the simplification of the improvement architecture and increased devolution of funding across government to the sector.

RIEP update:

3. RIEP Member Forum: Political leaders of the nine RIEPs met with lead members of the LGA Improvement Board on the 15th October 08 in the first meeting of the RIEP member forum. The meeting was a useful opportunity to discuss the significant progress that has been made over the first 6 months of implementation. Councillor Parsons has updated John Healey MP on the outcomes from the forum and will be meeting with the minister 25 November. A further meeting of the Member Forum is planned 6 January 09. A councillor's guide to the RIEPs is being developed and seeks complement communication activity at a regional and sub regional level by showcasing the support available from RIEPs.

4. Efficiency and Transformation fund: The NIES and 'Communities in Control' white paper include commitments for government to work collaboratively with the sector over the resources for improvement. This includes a £115m capital fund to support efficiency and transformation. LGA group officers are in discussions with CLG over an appropriate methodology for the distribution of the funding, in particular we will be seeking to ensure a joint decision making process led by members for the allocation of funding.

5. Neighbourhood Resource Centres: The National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy included a commitment for wardens and neighbourhood activity to come together through RIEPs from 2009. At present CLG supports wardens and other neighbourhood based training schemes via a network of regional Neighbourhood Training and Resource centres. Discussions are taking place between CLG and individual RIEPs on how the transition can be managed in a way that gives RIEPs time to determine their regional priorities for support in relation to priority neighbourhoods and to commission appropriate forms of support whilst ensuring that the Resource Centres can continue to function until those decisions are taken. The total level of funding available to support resource centres would be £2.3m in 09/10 and up to £1.8m in 10/11. This funding is intended to build the capacity of communities, local authority partnerships and to work together to develop and implement approaches that support the achievement of LAA targets in priority neighbourhoods.

Financial Implications

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NA

Implications for Wales

This report applies to England only.

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