

Selection of quotations from the consultation responses

Setting the Pace

Barnsley

The document is quite comprehensive and should, therefore, provide a good base for moving forward.

Birmingham

BCC is very supportive of peer input into its improvement, evidenced by us developing our Excellence Board and our recent peer reviews for CAA and Equalities Standard. However, early priority has to be given to the engagement of other sectors locally in the peer support process. This applies particularly to our health partners where we have considerable shared challenges to our delivery of services and have a great deal to learn from one another.

Bradford

I welcome positive and constructive challenge to the work of local authorities and, in the case of Bradford, am happy to work with anyone who can assist us in raising the quality of services we provide. But I do not believe that the traditional 'box-ticking' form of regulation from central government has been helpful. Local authorities need to be trusted to get on with the task of improving what they do and how they do it. This should be the sole focus of their efforts, not taking using up vast amounts of time and scarce resources to satisfy the demands of clipboard carrying regulators from Whitehall.

East Riding of Yorkshire Council

Councils are well placed to provide mutual support and learning opportunities across the sector. In the last four or five years the sectors has delivered high performing councils, improved services quality and a step change in leadership, however the pace of change has varied across organizations and those at the leading edge have a duty to support those working hard to catch up. Setting the Pace provides a sound framework for sector led improvement.

Kirklees

This is about local government striving to improve from within rather than having improvements led and imposed by national government.

Leeds

Local authorities are community leaders and increasingly deliver services and work to shape places in partnership with others. The partnership dimension of local government work cannot be neglected when considering the effectiveness of local government. As a beacon authority for local area agreements and local strategic

partnerships this is a lesson Leeds has learnt well.

Hammersmith and Fulham

“We welcome the IDeA’s consultation paper, “Setting the Pace”, as a demonstration of local government’s ability to self-regulate and to drive performance improvements across the board, without the imposition of burdensome external regulation and control.”

“The successful delivery of public services is increasingly reliant on cross sector partnerships, therefore, any framework to deliver improvements would be restricted in its scope if it could not address problems in partner relationships. This may, however, require the IDeA to engage with other public sector bodies, such as the NHS Confederation and the Association of Police Authorities, to develop an agreed cross sector framework.”

North Tyneside

It is desirable that the framework covers the full range of services right from the start because councils will want to address any issues that affect the sector for themselves.

Sheffield

As a sector, local government is best placed to work with, understand and respond to the needs of local people. We have much to learn from each other on how we best deliver services that meet these needs. However, I do not believe that we need a plethora of regional and national bodies to help us talk to each other and share what we know, and I will be responding to the IDEA’s ‘Setting the Pace’ consultation to make this clear. I would urge others to do the same.

Wychavon

The LGA/ IDeAs’ current consultation paper ‘ Setting the Pace’ proposes that the local government family takes responsibility and ownership for its own improvement. This is an excellent Paper and demonstrates that local government has the capacity, will, drive and ambition to ensure that the sector continues to perform well and serve local communities well in future years.

Association of North East Councils

The primary focus should remain at the corporate centre. If this is strong then the LA will be able to deal with most service issues effectively. Specific service support should only be developed where there is evidence of widespread shared needs. The RIEPs are well-placed to be able to do this at a regional level.

Lambeth

Any sector-based improvement framework must increasingly focus on area-based service delivery – not just performance/improvement of local government. With the ever-increasing focus on integrated/joined up public services and increasingly poor public finances joint working may well become the primary means by which services are delivered/maintained. This therefore should be central to any improvement framework.

Any sector-led approach to improving services must be risk-based and proportionate. A sector-led improvement framework should come with a corresponding streamlining/reduction in government-led improvement inspections/improvement work.

Further work is needed to clarify the roles of the sector-based improvement organisations (I&DeA, RIEPs, LGA etc).

Capital Ambition

In London the sector has established, managed and is responsible for the regional support and improvement framework. Any process of monitoring, awareness raising and collaboration will assist the sector in recognising strengths, abilities and areas for improvement. The framework must be appropriate to the circumstances of the region, its partners and respond to changing political and area priorities.

Y+H RIEP

The framework must cover all services from the start. As is demonstrated in the case study examples in the paper all services are subject to the improvement agenda. Whilst some may prefer a phased approach, as we now enter a CAA regime which takes into account all council services then so should this framework. We are, and have been for some time, in a place where things need to be implemented quickly and where learning is disseminated promptly within individual councils and across the wider local government family. An approach to sector led improvement cannot be any different.

Association of Directors of Children's Services

ADCS agrees wholeheartedly with the principle of sector-led improvement. The Association supports a 'local government family' approach to corporate and service improvement; such an approach is more likely to be effective, sustainable and better value for the public purse.

ADCS strongly supports the principle of differentiated support for local authorities based on a local authority's own assessment of its needs. This requires a re-direction of resources away from central Field Forces and back to individual local authorities. Although this is implied (in para 26) it must be an absolutely explicit requirement. Similarly the proposals to release peer officers and politicians would require back-fill funding to the releasing local authority; clearly proposals as to how this might work in practice require further development before for example any local authority is asked to sign a commitment or mutuality statement.

The response then goes on to express disappointment at not having been engaged in STP sooner before finishing..

It would not therefore be appropriate for Setting the Pace to be implemented without further, detailed consultation with representatives of the children's services sector (we include in that concept Children's Trust and LSP partners both of whom receive scant reference in the consultation document). Moreover it would be dangerous for the proposed framework to be implemented across all Council services except children's services.

Chief Fire Officers Association

The focus of the IDeA paper is the local government agenda, however, the fire and rescue service (FRS) has been completely ignored throughout the paper. This highlights the wider issue for the fire and rescue service within the sector – one where our overall size, and relative perceived success in the public's eyes, leads to the wider sector ignoring us. An example is the engagement between fire and rescue authorities

(FRAs) and RIEPs – where in some areas we see full participation and in others we see very little engagement.

We also have a slight concern that the suggestion in the paper will lead to the IDeA having sole control of the improvement agenda within the sector. As an LGA body, they would obviously play a major role but its needs to be recognised that other organisations can provide different services to and that it should be up to the individual Authority to decide the best route for improvement, rather than it being a fait accompli that the IDeA will be the first call.

Care Quality Commission

As one of the principle regulators contributing to the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) framework with our data on health and social care, we were disappointed to note that there were no references at all to us in the document. The direction of travel for this improvement framework as set out in the consultation appears to complement the approach taken by the Care Quality Commission and other inspectorates within the CAA framework. CAA provides the framework for local government, in partnership, to take ownership of their own performance and it emphasises the importance of organisations identifying improvement plans for themselves. Furthermore, the approach, which we support, is one that positively encourages councils to share good practice by encouraging benchmarking approaches highlighting positive outcomes for communities.

Audit Commission

Overall, we welcome the focus of the consultation on supporting local government to improve services to local people. We believe there are three key areas where the draft proposals could be enhanced, these are:

- a greater emphasis on partnership working to better reflect the current and likely future landscape of public services;
- a stronger focus on improved outcomes, services and value for money, protecting vulnerable people and reducing the likelihood of serious service failures as critical factors and measures of success; and
- ensuring that the approach is both proportionate and risk focused to avoid burdensome impacts on public service providers, particularly via mandatory activities and rolling programmes of assessment.

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