

## Freedom to Lead – developing a new accountability framework

### Summary

At the last meeting of the Board in September, members agreed proposals for a significant programme of work to develop a new sector led accountability framework and set the strategic direction for this work. This report updates the Board on the work that has taken place since then. In particular, it highlights the publication of *Freedom to Lead*, a call for evidence from the sector on what a new framework could look like. Input from the sector will help inform the development of draft proposals which will be brought to the Board in January for full discussion.

### Recommendations

That the Improvement Board:

- notes the work underway as part of the *Freedom to Lead* campaign and the intention to bring draft proposals to the next meeting in January
- offers any further guidance on the issues raised in the *Freedom to Lead* consultation brief.

### Action

That LGA Group officers continue to develop proposals for a new accountability framework, for discussion in January.

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## 1. Freedom to Lead – developing a new accountability framework

- 1.1 At the end of October, *Freedom to Lead*, the Improvement Board's campaign, was formally launched for a new accountability framework which has local people and localities at its heart rather than government and the regulators. The consultation brief is **attached** as an Annex to this paper.
- 1.2 *Freedom to Lead* launches the debate, sets out some of the key issues we will be considering and invites anyone with an interest in how our country is governed locally to submit evidence that would add weight to the case for change.
- 1.3 The consultation brief has been sent to Council Leaders and Chief Executives, Government Ministers, Shadow Ministers, other leading politicians, senior civil servants, the Inspectorates, RIEPs, central body boards and other stakeholders.
- 1.4 The deadline for response is 30 November and officers will update the Board orally at the meeting.
- 1.5 In addition we are using opportunities to engage with members and officers from across the sector at various meetings. These include a meeting of the RIEP Directors and the Chief Executive's Task group in early December. RIEPs have also agreed to discuss the campaign at meetings in their regions. Of course the LGA's Improvement and Innovation conference will also be exploited to build the momentum behind the campaign. *Freedom to Lead* has been sent to all delegates and plenary and workshop speakers. In addition a specific workshop is planned at the conference and an offer to each of the political groups to discuss the topic in their closed sessions has also been made.
- 1.6 Work is also well underway on identifying practice from other countries and this will be fed in to the next phase of work. In addition, the second CAA survey includes a number of specific questions which will help to inform the campaign. Annex 1 sets out the key milestones of the campaign.
- 1.7 *Freedom to Lead* and the call for a significant cut in the overall burden and cost of the current accountability regime is a key part of the LGA's Pre Budget Report submission.

## 2. Setting the Pace

- 2.1 Board members will recall that the campaign around *Freedom to Lead* builds on the work arising from Setting the Pace, the developing framework for sector led help.
- 2.2 Setting the Pace is now being taken forward as part of the wider *Freedom to Lead* campaign. Discussions have taken place at civil servant level with CLG about the developing framework. It is recognised that a key aspect of the framework will be the need to look at the ability of the sector to facilitate the delivery of significant and timely capacity to turn performance around, corporately or at a service level, when there are serious failings in high risk areas.
- 2.3 Therefore, we are currently facilitating meetings with children's services improvement stakeholders (from the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes (C4EO,) Ofsted and the Department of Children, School and Families (DCSF) to widen our understanding of successful improvement models within children's services and to discuss a sector-led approach to children's services improvement. The first meeting was successful in gaining a shared understanding of the issues and this group is scheduled to meet again on 17 November.
- 2.4 The consultation responses also highlighted the need to look at how we as a sector support authorities on aspects of partnership working, from turning around dysfunctional partnerships to promoting excellent practice in partnership working.
- 2.5 We have already been working alongside health and police improvement agencies to design and deliver support to LSPs, for example in Surrey and Herefordshire. We are recruiting more peers from partner organisations and we will also be distilling the learning from the Total Place pilots on leading partnerships.
- 2.6 The responses to the consultation also made clear that we need to continue to promote the case for effective sector-led improvement and how it is more efficient and effective than inspections. As a result we have worked with government on launching the Local Innovation Scheme, a more sector-led awards scheme to replace the Beacon Scheme. We are also considering work to collate evidence of the impact of the various peer support methodologies we use.

## **Financial Implications**

There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.

## **Implications for Wales**

As reported at the last meeting there is a different approach to performance management in Wales and we will be drawing on the lessons of the system in Wales as part of this work.

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## Annex 1

### 'Freedom to Lead' Work Programme

This annex provides an overview of the activity that is being taken forward as part of the *Freedom to Lead* campaign.

#### Overall Campaign

- 'Call for evidence' published 27/10/09
- Response deadline 30/11/09
- Responses analysed Dec 09
- Draft 'place-based performance and accountability framework' approved by Improvement Board 19/01/10
- Consultation on framework Feb 10
- Final 'place-based performance and accountability framework' approved by Improvement Board March 10

**Workstreams:** Each of the three workstreams outlined below will feed in to the development of the place-based performance and accountability framework'.

#### **Workstream 1: Local delivery, accountability and governance**

- Proposals on future of the national indicator set submitted to Improvement Board 24/11/09
- Proposals on governance of partnerships, learning from Total Place, developed Dec 09
- Information on the cost of regulation collated to feed in to overall proposals Dec 09

#### **Workstream 2: Reducing the burden of regulation and inspection**

- Headline messages about CAA Year 2 to be discussed at Improvement Board 24/11/09
- Co-ordinated communications to coincide with launch of CAA results 12/12/09
- Sector evaluation of first year of CAA published at Group CAA conference 26/01/10
- Local accountability and communicating performance IDeA/Localis report Feb 10

**Workstream 3: Supporting sector-led improvement**

- Children's Services - IDeA, LGA meet with ADCS, C4EO, DCSF and Ofsted to discuss implications of Setting the Pace and wider Freedom to Lead work  
17/11/09
- Further discussion with partners (police, health etc) re co-ordination of improvement support to LSPs Nov 09 – Jan 10