

## **Sector-led Improvement**

### **Purpose**

For discussion and direction.

### **Summary**

This report invites the Improvement Board to consider and comment on a framework publication aimed at Council Leaders, senior Members and Chief Executives, describing sector led improvement overall, including children's and adults.

The report also updates the Board on progress on Peer Challenge and LG Inform.

### **Recommendations**

1. That the Improvement Board consider and comment on the draft framework publication attached at **Appendix 1** for discussion with the Children's Improvement Board and Towards Excellence in Councils Adult Social Care Board.
2. That Lead Members be authorised to approve the final publication.
3. That progress on Peer Challenge and LG Inform be noted.

### **Action**

Finalise the framework publication in the light of discussions and seek Lead Members' approval.

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## **Sector-led Improvement**

### **Background**

1. *Taking the Lead*, which sets out the sector's approach to sector-led improvement, was published just over one year ago. Since then we have made good progress in delivering our support offer and further work has been undertaken to respond to councils' requests that we find a way to manage the risk of performance failure.
2. At the same time new approaches to sector-led improvement have also been developed in children's services (through the Children's Improvement Board) and in adult social care (through the Towards Excellence in Council's Adult Social Care Board). In each case the approaches have been developed in association with relevant Government departments, the LGA and the sector's representative professional bodies. They are based on many of the core principles and practices set out in *Taking the Lead*.
3. Whilst this represents significant strides in the progress of transition from the old performance framework to a new sector-led approach to improvement, it also makes the process of transition more challenging.
4. It is important that this work is communicated to the sector in a way that demonstrates the linkages between the different strands and helps build understanding and "buy in" at senior Member and officer level.
5. Therefore the LGA Executive, at its meeting on 15 March, is being asked to approve the production of a single overarching framework publication that brings together the work of the Children's Improvement Board, the Towards Excellence in Council's Adult Social Care Board with that of the LGA Improvement Board.
6. The proposed document will be aimed at Leaders, portfolio holders and Chief Executives. The main elements to be covered include:
  - 6.1 Local accountability tools including the use of self assessment and scrutiny; local accounts for adults services.
  - 6.2 The role of corporate peer challenge, safeguarding and adults services peer challenges and the challenge process of self-assessments.
  - 6.3 The use of data and benchmarking, including the role of LG inform and the data profiles being produced by the Children's Improvement Board and Towards Excellence Board.
  - 6.4 The role of regional structures and networks.

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- 6.5 The national role for detecting and preventing potential failure and in particular the role of Principal Advisors.
  - 6.6 The principles of information sharing.
  - 6.7 The early support that the sector can offer to councils.
  - 6.8 The role of the Performance Support Panel.
7. In order to ensure that the three strands of work continue to be progressed in unison the LGA Executive is also being asked to agree:
- 7.1 that the approach and process in each case is politically led;
  - 7.2 that there is consistency in the offer across corporate, adult and children's improvement; and
  - 7.3 that this work is communicated to the sector in a consistent and mutually reinforcing way.
8. Members' views are invited on the first draft of the overarching framework publication, attached at **Appendix 1**. The publication will be developed to take account of the views of the Children's Improvement Board and the Towards Excellence Board and then submitted to Improvement Board lead Members for final approval.
9. The publication will be supported by more detailed guidance to lead Members and officers involved in delivering the arrangements (LGA Principal and Senior Advisers, CIB regional Member; Chief Executive and Director leads; CIB Brokers and ADASS regions, etc). This guidance will include the detailed approach to detecting and preventing failure which was reported to the last meeting of the Improvement Board.

**LGA support**

10. **The role of peer challenge:** As part of the LGA's offer to help councils improve we have made available to all councils over the next 3 years, at no cost, a corporate peer challenge. The challenge is primarily an improvement tool and is being tailored to allow councils to use it to focus on their local priorities. However, all corporate peer challenges include a core component that looks at issues of leadership, corporate capacity and financial resilience whose absence we know from experience is linked to organisational failure.
11. To date we have delivered 16 new corporate peer challenges with another 40 booked in or in discussion and initial conversations are progressing with a large number of other councils.
12. We are closely monitoring the effectiveness of this new approach. Feedback from two sounding boards involving leaders of councils that have had a peer challenge along with Member peers involved, has been positive:

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- 12.1 “A very high quality team who provided honest and helpful feedback.”
  - 12.2 “We wanted to test our financial plan – the team challenged us about what are our true priorities. This has sparked a very helpful strategic cross-party debate over our purpose and priorities for the future of the council.”
  - 12.3 “The report was powerful and raised some questions we really do need to consider.”
  - 12.4 “The flexible and tailored approach is a real strength ensuring it is bespoke to meet the needs of individual councils.”
  - 12.5 “Peer challenge is less formal and at the same time more informative and improvement focused than previous inspection approaches.”
13. A detailed report on the outcome of the current review will be submitted to the Improvement Board at its next meeting on 15 May.
14. **Comparative performance information:** LG Inform provides councils and fire and rescue authorities with free access to contextual (e.g. health and demographic data) and performance data covering 850 individual items. A wide variety of important services metrics (e.g. timeliness of care assessments) are offered to authorities, enabling local performance to be assessed regionally and nationally across all local authorities. Since its original launch, LG Inform has now built a user base of over 280 registered authorities and over 1,200 registered users.
15. Further improvements are underway and the next phase will deliver a significant number of enhancements to the current service. These will include:
- 15.1 Enhanced performance and speed.
  - 15.2 A highly responsive and intuitive system.
  - 15.3 High quality outputs in terms of charts, map, tables and reports for reuse online and offline.
  - 15.4 A range of configurable dashboard formats.
  - 15.5 Opening up parts of LG Inform to the public.
  - 15.6 Extending and enhancing the metrics library and data base.
  - 15.7 Ability to collect local ‘in year’ and ‘early sight’ and ‘new’ data.
16. Work will also continue with the sector to define core sets of data to be included within the scope of LG Inform.

**Conclusion and next steps**

17. Significant progress has been made in delivering our *Taking the Lead* offer and mainstreaming the approach in other areas. It is important that this work continues to be taken forward and communicated to the sector in a way that demonstrates how the different elements and strands are linked together.

**Financial Implications**

18. There are no additional financial implications arising as a result of this report.