

## **LGA Boards' improvement activity**

### **Purpose of report**

For information.

### **Summary**

This is a progress report on improvement activity undertaken by other LGA Boards.

#### **Recommendation**

That Members note the report.

#### **Action**

Subject to members' comments, officers will develop the LGA's improvement offer as part of its on-going work.

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### Background

1. Members have agreed that it is important for this Board to retain a strategic or “overarching” perspective on the improvement activity currently undertaken across LGA Boards. This helps ensure consistency with the key principles underpinning the approach to sector-led improvement and helps avoid any potential duplication.
2. To achieve this:
  - 2.1 officers coordinate the flow of business through the Boards so that the Improvement and Innovation Board can be invited to express strategic views about any significant improvement issues put before other Boards.
  - 2.2 during the year the Improvement and Innovation Board receives suitably timed progress reports on the major improvement programmes
  - 2.3 as far as possible, the Improvement and Innovation Board meets towards the end of each cycle of meetings so it can consider any significant issues put before other Boards and then report back to Boards at their next meeting.
3. Significant improvement activity led by other LGA Boards since this was last reported in May 2019 is set out below.

### Community Wellbeing Board: Care and Health Improvement Programme (CHIP)

4. The [Care and Health Improvement Programme](#) (CHIP) is the sector-led improvement programme for adult social care funded mainly by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).
5. **Care and Health Systems Leadership:** We have held a number of successful leadership events in West Midlands for leading health and wellbeing chairs and non-executives in partnership with NHSE/I and NHS Confederation. The events explored leadership roles at neighbourhood, place and system level, with learning shared on Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership and the Wigan Deal. Opportunities for similar networks to develop in East Midlands, North East and Yorkshire & Humber are in progress.
6. **Adult social care use of resources:** Following extensive engagement with councils, elected members, government departments and consultancies, a new approach to looking at the use of resources to ensure value for money in adult social care has been developed. The aim of the approach is to allow benchmarking at a national, regional and local level to support sector-led improvement. The use of resources approach was made available to Directors of Adult Social Services via LG Inform in August following feedback from a series of data consistency workshops. The approach was taken up by 14 councils in the first week and is gathering wide support.

7. **Public health risk awareness:** With the Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) support has been delivered within 3 ADPH regions on use of the public health risk awareness tool which was only launched in Q1. We continue to support ADPH more widely such as on sector-led improvement planning.
8. **Suicide Prevention:** The government pledged funding in 2019/20 for the suicide prevention sector-led improvement programme. With ADPH, Public Health England and the Department of Health and Social Care have jointly developed a public mental health support offer, starting with suicide prevention. This followed extensive engagement by Members to secure Ministerial support for a locally-driven approach to further strengthening local suicide prevention plans. The programme includes:
  - 8.1 A series of national tools, products and events designed to provide wider and easier access to the good practice, learning and existing resources;
  - 8.2 Regional funding to support regional suicide prevention SLI activity; and
  - 8.3 Local bespoke expert support for up to twelve local authorities and partners who self-identified as facing delivery challenges around suicide prevention
9. **Shaping Places for Healthier Lives:** With the Health Foundation, an endowment charity, we have been developing a programme to launch in the autumn. The three-year grant award programme for local areas, led by their council, will explore the innovative approaches that mobilise action on the wider determinants of health. The emphasis will be on projects that will make a sustainable change to local systems with a focus in the following areas:
  - 9.1 Early years and education;
  - 9.2 Work and income;
  - 9.3 Housing and place; and
  - 9.4 Strengthening communities.

#### **Children and Young People's Board**

10. **Regional Improvement Alliance (RIA):** We hosted a RIA summit for all RIA Lead Members on the 16<sup>th</sup> October. This event brought together members from all nine regions to share their experiences of the work of RIAs to date, what had worked well, where more could be done and what more the LGA could do to support those members involved in RIAs.
11. **Children's Leadership Essentials:** We have already held two Children's Leadership Essentials courses for lead members, which were attended by 38 Lead Members, their deputies and members involved in children's scrutiny. Two further courses are scheduled for November and January 2020.

#### **City Regions and People and Places Boards**

12. The LGA's work to support devolution and local industrial strategies is led by the City Regions, and People and Places Boards and has continued throughout this period.

13. **Devolution:** We facilitated a meeting of the Combined Authorities chief executives' network and meetings of the employment and skills, governance and scrutiny, HR, communications and finance officer groups. On behalf of the CA Governance Network, the Centre for Public Scrutiny have produced two short research reports. The first focuses on [management of freedom of information by combined authorities](#) while the second focuses on [combined authorities' governance relationship with Local Enterprise Partnerships](#). The Centre for Public Scrutiny are in the process of scoping a new research project on behalf of the network for the current financial year.
14. **Local Industrial Strategies:** The LGA's online hub is now complete, hosting two reports 'Developing Successful Local Industrial Strategies' and 'The role of councils in developing Local Industrial Strategies' alongside videos and other guidance. Further work examining the lessons learned from the Local Industrial Strategy Trailblazers has been commissioned and is expected in early December.

#### **Culture, Tourism and Sport (CTS) Board**

15. **Library and Culture Peer Challenges:** Since the last board we have now completed this round of library and culture peer challenges funded by our contract with Arts Council England. Three Culture peer challenges and nine Library Services peer challenges took place between March – July 2019. Feedback from the challenges has been positive with some senior managers from participating councils going on to become peer officers on other LGA challenges.
16. We are pleased to confirm that Arts Council England have agreed to fund a further three culture peer challenges and seven library peer challenges in 2019/20. The application process for these has recently closed and the challenges are due to start towards the end of 2019.
17. **Leadership Essentials Courses:** In partnership with Sport England, we continue to deliver Sports and Physical Activities Leadership Essentials courses for councillors and officers. These courses continue to be well received gaining positive feedback. We have commissioned a further two courses for councillors and three courses for officers in 2019/20. We continue to work with Arts Council England to design and deliver the Cultural Services Leadership Essentials courses with [two events arranged for 2019/20](#).
18. **Deep Dive Events for Officers:** In partnership with Sport England, we will be running three deep dive events for officers. The events build on the learning from the Sports and Physical Activities Leadership Essentials programmes and provide an in-depth look at a key topic over 1.5 days. The events will take place between October and December 2019.

#### **Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport (EEHT) Board**

19. **Housing Advisers Programme (HAP):** We launched the 2019/20 programme and are funding 14 projects, supporting more than 70 councils to meet their local housing need via direct grant funding through which councils can secure specialist expertise. The projects are diverse and wide ranging, covering our key themes of housing supply, housing strategy, homelessness and planning. We also ran an event to embed and share learning from previously funded projects.

20. **Housing Springboard programme:** We are launching a programme of masterclass events to support a group of 16 councils to investigate their different options for enabling housebuilding. It brings councils together with industry experts to provide business, technical and leadership support relevant to their needs.
21. **Leadership Essentials Courses:** We have commissioned two [Leadership Essentials](#) courses for councillors on homelessness and housing which will be running in December 2019 and January 2020 respectively.
22. **Compulsory Purchase Orders masterclass:** We have commissioned a technical masterclass for councillors and officers to provide an overview of the compulsory purchase and compensation process. This is taking place [on 5 November](#).
23. **Councils and housing associations working in partnership:** We have worked with the National Housing Federation to develop and [publish a series of case studies](#) demonstrating good practice in partnership working between councils and housing associations in developing new housing supply and tackling homelessness.
24. **Understanding local housing markets:** We published [advice and guidance for councils](#) wanting to use data in ways to best inform their decisions for intervening in the local housing market.

#### **Brighton and Hove City Council: Homelessness Reduction Act Trailblazer**

Brighton and Hove City Council was one of twenty-eight councils to be awarded Trailblazer funding in 2017 to pilot new approaches to preventing homelessness. As part of their trailblazer work, Brighton and Hove Council established an Early Intervention service; making home visits to at-risk households, offering them help with current housing problems and showing them how to plan for future housing need amid the challenges of the Brighton & Hove housing market. The council has encouraged landlords, including its housing association partners, to make referrals into the service, and has carried out engagement work with partners to facilitate this. Where people have been eligible and involved with support available, the outcome is successful in 89 per cent of cases (229 households have been prevented from becoming homeless). As opposed to office based processes, the approach of an officer meeting an applicant at their home can encourage a much more meaningful disclosure as part of the assessment and planning process, leading to positive engagement, and finding a solution to their current housing need.

#### **Safer and Stronger Communities Board**

25. **Tackling serious violence and county lines:** At the LGA Annual Conference, Cllr Simon Blackburn chaired a workshop session on 'taking a public health approach to tackling serious violent crime and county lines'. We had some excellent speakers from the Children's Society, the National County Lines Co-ordination Centre and the Violence and Vulnerability Unit. The panel discussed the importance of strong multi-agency partnerships to tackle

serious violent crime and highlighted the valuable role that councils play in tackling this important issue.

26. **New legal duty to tackle serious violence:** In July, the Government published its [response](#) to its recent consultation, announcing that it is creating a new legal duty to support multi-agency action to tackle serious violence. The LGA's [response](#) noted that we support a public health approach to tackling serious violence crime, but emphasised the need to ensure key services including youth services, youth offending teams and public health, are properly funded to support this.
27. **Government response to the Draft Domestic Abuse Bill consultation:** In June, the Joint Committee on the Draft Domestic Abuse Bill published its [final report](#). The committee supported the LGA's calls for a greater focus on prevention and early intervention work to tackle the root causes of domestic abuse, including help from teachers and healthcare professionals. The committee has asked the Government to provide clarity on how non-accommodation based support services will be provided and funded, which Cllr Simon Blackburn called for in his [oral evidence](#) to the committee.
28. **[Taking a public health approach to tackling serious violent crime - conference:](#)**  
We are organising a conference at 18 Smith Square for councils to share best practice and good examples of how local government has adopted a multi-agency public health approach to tackling serious violent crime locally. This will be held on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> November and free to member councils.  
**Speakers included so far:**
- 28.1 Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, Cllr Simon Blackburn (Chairing);
  - 28.2 Home Office (tbc);
  - 28.3 Sophie Linden, Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime (to discuss London's plans to reduce violent crime and the importance of strong multi-agency partnership working.);
  - 28.4 Anna Crispe, Director of Public Health, Suffolk Council (to discuss information sharing across public health/comm safety/ education/ safeguarding – to respond to SV locally). Anna spoke at the Home Office' SV engagement event and gave a really useful presentation on using data.
  - 28.5 Local government colleagues from Waltham Forest, Croydon and Surrey also due to speak.
29. **Modern slavery:** We have published two new documents to support councils in their work to tackle modern slavery. Our new [councillor guide](#) focuses specifically on the role that councillors can play on this agenda, while our council [case studies document](#) highlights good practice from councils up and down the country.
30. **LGA Leadership essentials courses - Prevent, counter-extremism and cohesion:**  
Following last year's highly regarded [leadership essentials programmes](#), and in recognition of the vital role of local leaders in this work, we are now developing five further courses for

councillors on Prevent, counter-extremism and cohesion over the coming months. The programmes will explore emerging challenges and threats, councils' role in delivery, and effective leadership around sensitive issues.

31. Prevent/counter-extremism courses will have a regional focus and will be held in Blackpool (14-15 Nov); London (29 Nov); and Leeds (4-5 Feb). National cohesion and integration courses will take place in Loughborough (3-4 Dec) and Coventry (10-11 Mar). Places are still available on all programmes; for further details, please contact [Grace.Collins@local.gov.uk](mailto:Grace.Collins@local.gov.uk)
32. **Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism:** We are continuing to work closely with the [Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism](#) (SIGCE), a local authority led network co-chaired by Leeds and Luton councils to support the sector around countering extremism. This has included supporting the delivery of a recent seminar on Islamist extremism, and a forthcoming event on women and extremism scheduled for November.
33. We are also supporting Leeds Council to develop a conference on [Bridging Northern Communities](#) on 4-5 November, which will look at councils' role in responding to the threats and challenges from radicalisation, extremism and integration, in recognition of some of the common issues facing communities across the North of England.
34. **Leadership Essentials for fire and rescue:** We delivered programme 12 and 13 which ran in June and September respectively. They were attended by a variety of elected members including a Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. The programmes covered a range of topics relating to fire and rescue authorities and focused on inspection, culture and inclusion, and governance. Feedback from programme 13 was particularly positive and comments from attendees will inform the next programme which will take place in February.
35. **Leading the fire sector:** We have launched a new series of member development resources and events under the title 'Leading the fire sector' which will cater to fire and rescue authority members. This will include a Good Governance guide which will be published shortly, two Good Governance [events](#) in November and two Culture, diversity and inclusion events in January.

#### Resources Board – Finance

36. **2019 Spending Round / 2020 Spending Review:** Ahead of the September Spending Round we published a range of reports, research and media releases supporting the case for local government as part of our [#councilscan campaign](#). This included a [publication](#) at annual conference, a major survey of councils and the savings they have made since the last spending review (the results of this are still being analysed) and [analysis](#) of varying children's services costs between councils in order to show that these are affected by external factors. On the day of the 2019 Spending Round announcement, we issued a [briefing](#) providing a summary of the key announcements alongside our view on the proposals, and a [media statement](#) which has been widely covered.
37. With the full Spending Review now expected to be in 2020, we are continuing to prepare by building the case for local government. To do this, we are gathering evidence of how local

government is a 'good investment' by demonstrating the savings in public spending generated by councils.

38. **Fair Funding Review / Business Rates Retention:** At the same time as the Spending Round the Government announced that the implementation of further Business Rates Retention and the Fair Funding Review would be postponed by one year until 2021. We are continuing discussions with government officials, local authority officers and councillors to develop our policy on these work programmes.
39. Following the MHCLG consultation on business rates retention last year, we commissioned LG Futures to prepare an Excel based model showing how the proposed alternative system could work. The [model](#) is illustrative because it is based on currently-available data (and decisions have still to be taken on which data will be used in future) and how authorities may be rewarded under the scheme.
40. **Treasury Select Committee on the Impact of Business Rates on Business:** We gave [oral evidence](#) to the Treasury Select Committee following the LGA's [written submission](#) earlier in the year. The session covered a wide range of issues, including business rates as a source of income for local government, the impact of on-line retailing and out of town developments, the need for flexibility around reliefs, and the need to tackle the effect of appeals and business rates avoidance.
41. **Business Rates Avoidance:** We recently conducted a survey of councils in order to gather information about estimated amounts of business rates lost to avoidance. It is a repeat of a survey that was carried out in 2014. We intend to use the results of this survey to press the Government to take action on this issue along the lines of the package of measures announced by the Welsh Government (which are due to come into effect in Wales in 2021).
42. **Audit:** A number of councils have faced issues with delays to the audit of their 2018/19 accounts. Resources Board raised this with Ministers and have secured an assurance that councils affected will not be penalised by additional audit fees as a result of the delays or unfair performance reporting. We are also now seeking further assurances from Government that councils will not be penalised for delays in the audit of housing benefit claims where this is out of their control.
43. [The Secretary of State announced a review](#) of the audit framework that will look at the effectiveness of current audit arrangements, the transparency of reporting, whether auditors are making full use of reporting powers and the gap between taxpayers' expectations and what auditing delivers. The review, led by Sir Tony Redmond, is [also seeking views](#) on the quality of local authority financial reporting and external audit. We will be responding to the review. An overview report on the review is elsewhere on the IIB's agenda today.
44. The National Audit Office (NAO) is drafting a new Local Audit Code of Practice for implementation from 2020/21. We [responded](#) to the first stage of the consultation, which covered areas for improvements in the code, in May, and will also respond to the [more detailed consultation](#) on the revised draft in November.
45. **Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally:** We continue to support the Board of Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally. The Board has now commenced its review of [the Fighting](#)

[Fraud and Corruption Locally Strategy](#) which was published in 2016 and is planning to publish a refresh of it early in 2020.

46. **Engagement with local government:** We are continuing our engagement with the county councils, district councils, and municipal and unitary authority treasurers' societies by attending regular meetings and updating them on developments in local government finance to keep them up to date and provide information that will help with their financial planning.

#### **Resources Board – Workforce**

47. **Tacking recruitment and retention challenges:** We used the annual workforce survey to “identify the 5 occupations with the most significant recruitment and retention problems and target advice and support on those areas”, which was a target of the MoU. We have developed the following list: Planning; Social work; Legal; Information and Communications Technology; and Building Control
48. We have agreed a £1m plus contract with Government Equalities Office to run a series of ‘returner’ programmes targeted at getting people who have formerly worked in certain hard-to-recruit professions back into work.
49. **Apprenticeships:** The team launched the second phase of the Apprenticeships Accelerator Programme (AAP) in June. This programme provides on-site consultancy support to help councils spend their apprenticeship levy getting the best ROI. AAP is grant-funded for a second year by the Education & Skills Agency. Following an open application process there are 34 projects covering 37 councils that receive support over 2019/2020.
50. **Direct support to councils on managing issues between political and managerial leadership:** So far in 2019-20 we have supported 18 councils dealing with challenging issues with demand higher than expected after the increased number of councils that changed control in May.
51. **Workforce data improvements:** As part of a programme of improvements to availability of workforce data we have launched [an infographic document](#) with handy statistics.

#### **Case studies on good practice in managing equality, diversity and inclusion:**

There is a new blog from Leicestershire CC about their award-nominated work on [managing the menopause at work](#) as part of menopause awareness month.

The LGA has also created a [video case study](#) with Nick Page, Chief Executive of Solihull, about how he manages his mental health issues at work and the different things that they are doing for staff in Solihull as a result of what he has learned which has been viewed more than 3000 times since we published it in May for Mental Health Awareness week. Brent Council used it as part of their staff roadshows during Sept and Oct.

**Implications for Wales**

52. There are no implications for Wales.

**Financial Implications**

53. There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.

**Next steps**

54. Subject to Members' views, officers will continue to brief the Board on the latest improvement activities across all LGA Boards.