

Update on MoU activity in 2020/21

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

This report updates MoU SLI activity in 2020/21.

Recommendation

That the meeting considers the report and agrees any follow-up action.

Action

Officers to initiate any required action.

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Update on MoU activity in 2020/21

1. *LGA Refocused Sector Led-Improvement Offer: Highlights and Summary (Appendix 1)* provides a record of core Sector Led-Improvement (SLI) activity and achievements since April 2020. As shown by the report, we have supplied councils with support across a broad spectrum of areas relating to the immediate COVID-19 response, as well as recovery and renewal. The SLI programme for 2020/21 features a range of new programmes, including a number launched following the Improvement and Innovation Board meeting in October.
2. There has been broad interest and take up of remote offers, which support councils with their immediate responses to COVID-19 and plans for recovery and renewal. The peer support offer now includes a new interim virtual support offer for councils to focus on key corporate issues—such as priority setting, place leadership and financial planning—over a period of days. With the COVID-19 vaccine programme now in progress, Corporate Peer Challenges and other support offers that require on-site activity will re-launch in the new year (COVID-19 measures permitting).
3. Remote support offers and other aspects of the SLI programme were established to support councils and communities to recover, rebuild and renew. With this view the LGA has provided councils with ongoing and dedicated support to mitigate the financial and economic impacts of COVID-19, including the launch of our Economic Growth Advisors programme in November, alongside additional forms of support in areas such as income generation, business, leisure centres, town centres, jobs and skills.
4. The LGA has introduced further programmes and resources to respond to social issues exacerbated by COVID-19. The Housing Advisors Programme and Next Steps Accommodation Programme and were launched to address challenges relating to housing and housing and homelessness and new tools and resources have been developed to support vulnerable people during the pandemic, including those who are shielding.
5. Alongside developing support in relation to COVID-19, the LGA has continued to provide new support in areas where additional support is required. This includes working with DfE to launch a campaign to promote the new T-Level qualification; the launch of a Digital Inclusion Network to provide councils an avenue to network and collaborate on digital inclusion development; the publication of resources under our new predicative analytics programme; and the release of new template to support greater embedding of social value in local government contracts.
6. Climate change also remains a core priority. Noting the push for green recovery, the LGA has launched a new carbon accounting tool and net zero innovation programme to support councils in reaching their emissions targets.

7. With the effects of COVID-19 likely to outlast the pandemic itself and transition from the EU on the horizon, councils' support needs will continue to evolve throughout the new year. Our SLI offer will remain flexible and adaptive to ensure we remain well positioned to meet councils' improvement needs and support them to address challenges, present and emerging.

Equalities Implications

8. Commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion is a core priority for the LGA and its member councils. Following the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on individuals of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds and Black Lives Matter protests, we are developing a more comprehensive programme of support to reduce inequalities, set for launch next year.
9. With this, we will continue to provide leadership programmes to attract new and diverse talent to the sector, including through the national graduate development programme (ngdp) and provide new training to support councils to understand and address unconscious bias and discrimination.
10. We will also continue to work with Government departments and national partners on developing and implementing the Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) for social care in local government, with the first cohort of councils set to commence working with the WRES in April 2021. Alongside, we are preparing a range of webinars, guidance and other materials for councils so that they are equipped to respond more effectively to workforce equality, diversity and inclusion issues for BAME staff members.

Implications for Wales

11. Although MHCLG grant funding cover England councils only the LGA continues to work closely with WLGA in relation to our positions on SLI.

Next steps

12. The LGA will continue to report directly to both the Improvement and Innovation Board and IDeA in relation to this year's MOU and shaping the future SLI offer as well as ongoing negotiations with MHCLG.