

LGA Boards' improvement activity

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

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

Is this report confidential? Yes No

Recommendation

That Members note the report.

Actions

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:
 - 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
 - during the year, the Improvement and Innovation Board receives suitably timed progress reports on the major improvement programmes
 - 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 December 2020 is set out below.

Community Wellbeing Board, including the 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 by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).
5. **Home Care Cost of Care - Toolkit and Guidance:** CHIP has worked to develop a [Home Care Cost of Care Tool](#) which provides every council with a license for free and unlimited use, along with [supporting guidance](#). The Toolkit was developed in the context of national work on costs of care and the [Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care Fund](#) announced as part of the Local Government Financial Settlement in December 2021. CHIP is currently working with council colleagues and provider representatives to commission a Care Homes Cost of Care Tool that will be free for all councils to use from around April 2022.
6. **Alleviating winter workforce pressures in adult social care:** This is a rapid piece of work undertaken during October - November 2021 to [compile a list of things that providers say could be most helpful in alleviating workforce capacity pressures this winter](#). The list is for consideration by Directors of Adult Social Care and providers as they work together on local solutions to maximise the benefit of the Workforce Recruitment and Retention Fund. This list also includes some of the key policy asks of government in managing and mitigating these pressures.

7. **COVID-19 Safeguarding Insight Project: Final report:** The final report from the [COVID-19 Safeguarding Insight Project](#), summarising changes and patterns in adult safeguarding activity from January 2019 to June 2021, has recently been published. This project has been contributed to by over two-thirds of social care councils in England.
8. **Digital Support Programme:** The [CHIP Digital Support Programme](#) launched in October 2021 to support councils to realise ambitions for care technology and adopt digital tools and solutions in adult social care. The programme runs for six months until the end of March 2022 and includes an exciting programme of masterclasses, online resources, coaching, leadership development and communities of practice. All resources that emerge from this programme are accessible on the [CHIP Digital Resource Centre](#).
9. **Suicide prevention support offer:** The LGA and the Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) have launched the [suicide prevention sector-led improvement programme](#) for 21/22. The programme will provide national support through a series of case studies and a national sharing event designed to ensure wider and easier access to good practice, learning and existing resources. Additionally, councils will receive regional support through the regional ADPH network, which will receive a grant for suicide prevention activity. Finally, local support will be available for up to 15 local authorities and partners who self-identify as facing significant delivery challenges locally around suicide prevention.
10. **Shaping Places for Healthier Lives:** The [Shaping Places for Healthier Lives Programme](#) launched in October 2021. The programme, managed by the LGA, is supported by The Health Foundation, which will provide councils with £300K each over three years to work with partners from their local area to improve health and address health inequalities. Bristol City Council, Doncaster Council, London Borough of Newham, Northumberland County Council and Shropshire Council have secured the funding. They will use a complex systems approach to tackle food insecurity, crime, anti-social behaviour, and mental well-being in their local areas.

City Regions and People and Places Boards

11. The People and Places and City Regions Boards have focussed on support around devolution and levelling up, particularly through the LGA's combined authority networks, jobs and skills, and the community renewal fund.
12. **Combined authority governance:** The combined authority governance network is facilitated by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, which produced a [guide to support combined authority governance of post-pandemic policymaking](#). This guide sets out some examples of current activity, alongside practical suggestions to support combined authorities in planning and directing their governance and considering the most appropriate ways of working for the future. This [guide](#) was published at the end of

October 2021.

13. **Combined authorities and culture:** The combined authority communications network has contracted BOP Consulting to explore the role of combined authorities in supporting the creative industries and the broader creative economy in their areas. As part of BOP's work, they are convening a series of roundtables to identify current best practices in supporting the creative industries at a regional level, barriers to progress, and opportunities for further development. This project will conclude in May.
14. **New ways of working for combined authorities:** The combined authority HR network has commissioned Melian Dialogue to produce two products to support combined authorities as they move to new ways of working following the pandemic. These are a pen portrait of each of the combined authorities from an HR perspective, looking at how these are distinct from councils and even each other, and a guide to support combined authorities to implement and embed new hybrid models of working. This project will conclude in April.
15. **Combined authority financial freedoms and fiscal devolution:** Working with the combined authority finance network, we have commissioned WPI economics to research how combined authorities can raise and spend the funding. This work compares the fundraising and spending powers available to each of the combined authorities. The final report will be useful to existing combined authorities and those areas currently negotiating or considering a devolution deal. This project will conclude in late February.
16. **Developing employment pathways for those hard to reach:** To support the sector to learn from one another on how best to support hard to reach young people to gain the skills, experience, and qualifications they need York Consulting has been commissioned to develop case studies from a range of councils and combined authorities, an overview document summarising key messages, and a webinar to share learning. The project will conclude in March.
17. **Good Work project:** Local authorities want to create the right conditions to attract and secure businesses to invest in their area and create employment opportunities to help tackle inequalities and deliver a more inclusive and diverse economy through Good Work interventions and policies. We have commissioned the Institute of Employment Studies through a competitive process to make a case for exploring Good Work initiatives locally, showcase good practice and identify trends. The project will conclude in March.
18. **Community Renewal Fund:** To prepare for the introduction of the Shared Prosperity Fund, Shared Intelligence has conducted ten interviews with lead authorities and councils who bid for projects under the fund. The project will deliver case studies incorporating some of the learning from the fund, such as the benefits of partnership working and setting local priorities. The case studies will be complemented with a

narrative document and a webinar which will help support councils as they develop their investment plans for the UKSPF.

Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport (EEHT) Board

19. **Economic recovery:** Economic Growth Leadership Essentials programmes were delivered to support elected members in their economic development roles. Additionally, an E-learning module has been commissioned to introduce economic growth for both members and officers. We had positive feedback from the members who attended the training, with the section on the changing face of our high streets and how this links to the green agenda ranking especially highly with delegates.
20. **Economic Growth Roundtables:** The LGA continues to provide economic growth roundtables and webinars on subjects of pressing interest to councils, including training for young people and promoting local growth. The LGA has held five economic growth roundtables, with another scheduled in the final quarter. The Economic Growth Design skills programme is now underway, with six councils taking part.
21. **Case studies:** The Community Renewal Fund project has been commissioned and awarded to an external organisation. The consultants will be producing 12 case studies and a webinar to capture and share the learning from the CRF so far. There are now over 40 case studies on the Economic Growth Hub on various topics.
22. **Housing Advisers Programme:** The 2021/22 Housing Advisers Programme (HAP) has funded 30 successful projects, supporting 91 councils. The scheme will support councils by funding the provision of independent expertise for councils undertaking specific projects to tackle the effects of the housing crisis in their local communities. The grants have been issued to all but 4 projects (and 4 councils), as we await for the grant agreement to be signed and returned.
23. **Temporary Accommodation Peer Support Programme:** Work is underway on setting up a number of delivery and impact panels to engage with 100-150 councils on the topic of temporary accommodation. This follows on from the success of the [Rough sleeper peer support programme](#). Temporary accommodation use in England is on the rise and as councils continue to work with the legacy of Everyone In and an ongoing lack of affordable housing, homelessness services are faced with the difficulty of finding suitable accommodation in their area. This project will capture best practice, uncover the main challenges and opportunities for change, and produce a voice of the sector report, which will provide guidance to councils and be shared with central government. We hosted [a webinar](#) attended by 140 delegates to launch the project, indicating huge interest in this topic across the sector.
24. **Homelessness Prevention Project with Local Partnerships:** Leeds City Council and Cornwall Council have been selected to participate in research to identify best practice in

relation to homelessness prevention and begin developing a case for investment that can help improve homelessness prevention services nationally. This work is part-funded by the LGA and will be carried out by Local Partnerships. As part of this work, Local Partnerships will compare national and local Key Performance Indicators in relation to homelessness prevention expenditure and outputs. They will be looking to understand what works well and how broad outputs associated with homelessness prevention can be measured or estimated. We will then work with Local Partnerships to consider making recommendations to DLUHC based on examples of good practice which are replicable.

- 25. Out of Area Placement Protocol:** Homelessness and Children's services placements made out of area continue to be an issue nationwide. We have produced and consulted on out of area placement protocol which covers suitability and notification, dispute resolution and some suggestions for how we better share and deal with data. The consultation results will go to a private and confidential board meeting to decide the next steps. We are likely to publish this guidance for councils soon after, accompanied by an event to promote the work and a period of time spent supporting councils who want to implement the protocol.

Children and Young People Board

- 26. DfE 3-year improvement contract:** In June 2021 the IDeA secured a three-year contract (with the option to extend by a further 12 months) from the Department for Education (DfE). The budget for 2021/22 is £1.387m, and this will rise to £1.751m in 2022/23. The key focus of this contract is to provide leadership support, diagnostic activity and a range of training, development and mentoring. Since June, we have set up mentoring arrangements for 36 political leaders (mainly lead members and chairs of children's scrutiny), provided 391 days of targeted support to councils through our regional improvement advisors and peers, and delivered six peer challenges and four test-of-assurance exercises. We have also delivered 11 leadership development events that have engaged over 200 councillors. The new financial year will see an expansion of support for corporate leadership teams to build their understanding of children's services and the roll-out of a corporate parenting diagnostic and children's scrutiny support package.
- 27. Early Years Support and peer challenge programme:** Since the start of the pandemic, the DfE funded early years peer challenge programme has been paused. During this time, we agreed with DfE to provide a range of alternative support, and the grant for 2021/22 is £247,284. This has included the delivery of over 100 online events, workshops and action learning sets that have engaged more than 5000 colleagues who work in the early years' sector to build their understanding and share learning about key topics such as workforce recruitment and retention, invisible babies and family hub development. We are also providing intensive support for 12 councils to develop their early years' strategy and a further 14 councils to look at how libraries can form part of the

family hub delivery model. Although not agreed yet, DfE has indicated that from April 2022, they want to resume the funding of the early years' peer challenge programme.

28. **Further early years guidance and support:** We have continued to share information with early years teams throughout Covid-19, supporting them to interpret guidance and acting as an intermediary between them and central government. We continue to receive very positive feedback from early years' local authority teams. We have also worked with DfE to identify good practice on preventing choking in early years settings, collate feedback from councils and develop case studies to be used by DfE.
29. **Leadership support:** We held two Children's Leadership Essentials courses that took place on the 21st and 22nd October and 20th and 21st November. Lead Members for Children's Services and Children's Scrutiny leads had the opportunity to discuss topics including the shape of an effective Lead Member/Director of Children's Services relationship, the evolving council role in education, effective use of data, multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and the SEND review.
30. **The National Children's and Adult Services conference** took place online from the 24th-26th November. Delegates heard from Will Quince MP, the new Children's Minister, while workshops covered early years, education, mental health, inspection and child and family poverty.
31. **Mental Health:** We have worked with the DfE to roll out training for senior leads training for a whole school approach to mental health, providing guidance on their communication with councils and other partners, and identifying improvements and adjustments in their approach. We also collated good practice for children's mental health week, with a feature on Sefton council's work on parent and infant mental health.
32. **Childhood Obesity:** The most recent Trailblazer Assembly, held in September 2021, provided an opportunity for people involved in the Trailblazers and others working on childhood obesity to explore the lessons from the programme to date. The Childhood Obesity Trailblazer Programme is an ambitious programme that aims to support the mobilisation of cross-sector action in localities across England to tackle childhood obesity. The five Trailblazer projects are in Birmingham, Bradford, Lewisham, Nottinghamshire, and Pennine Lancashire. The online event led by the CHIP Team had over 90 attendees and included several workshops and presentations.

Safer and Stronger Communities Board

33. **Counter extremism:** In partnership with the Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism (SIGCE), we have delivered a series of six roundtables for practitioners to explore extremism and cohesion related issues. These have included a focus on anti-vax conspiracy theories and misinformation, asylum seeker harassment and hate crime, cohesion concerns linked to terrorist attacks, and online mobilisation. We have delivered

a seminar on extremism and young people, which attracted over 100 delegates from local authorities and wider partners.

34. **Faith-Based Extremism Working Group:** We have continued to work with the SIGCE's Faith-Based Extremism Working Group, which brings together councils working on issues relating to "Islamist" extremism, and the SIGCE's Far-Right Working Group, working to proactively respond to these issues and provide dedicated support to affected local authorities.
35. **Counter extremism elected member support:** We have supported two elected member prevent and counter-extremism networks in the North East and Yorkshire Humber regions and delivered bespoke training to members in one local area facing significant cohesion and extremism concerns.
36. **Modern slavery:** we held two free webinars to support council training on understanding and tackling modern slavery: one focused on partnership working and another on submitting good quality national referral mechanism referrals.
37. **Licensing:** we held a successful taxi licensing conference to promote best practice and highlight the importance of implementing the new DfT statutory standards on safeguarding.

Resources Board

38. **Social Work Health Check:** The 2021 Social Work Health Check has now closed and is being analysed, with 148 councils taking part and over 10,000 responses received nationally. Councils will receive individual reports in February 2022, when there will also be a webinar for Principal Social Workers on workforce planning.
39. **Recruitment and Retention:** A video is being recorded for councillors on best practice in recruitment, which should be available in March and will be based on a webinar we are running for councillors in London in February. In January, we also ran a session for Chief Executives in the East of England on recruitment and retention to share best practice and ideas.
40. **Creating effective organisation structures (DMA approach):** We are continuing to work with councils to create performing organisational structures using the Decision-Making Accountability Model ([DMA](#)).
41. **Fire: Fit for the Future:** The Local Government Association, National Fire Chiefs Council, and the National Employers (England) are developing 'Fit for the Future' document, the purpose of which is to set out a joint vision for how fire and rescue services should operate in the future and make a better case for more sustainable, long-term funding. A number of strategic consultation workshops took place in November with senior political and operational leaders of the fire service (Chairs/Chief Fire

Officers). A further set of workshops will take place in February with the next level of service management (Heads of Department/Senior Managers). Once the consultation phase has concluded, all three organisations will analyse the views gathered during the consultation process and this data will inform the next iteration of Fit for the Future, which is due to be completed in the Spring.

42. **T-Levels:** The LGA is launching a new support offer to help 35 councils to be early adopters of the T Level post-16 qualification for 16–19-year-olds. T Levels have the potential to be an ideal way for councils to engage and attract local young people into a job and ideally a career in local government. The programme is supported by a joint partnership between the Gatsby Charitable Foundation, Department for Education and the LGA.
43. **Apprenticeships:** Our 2021 support offer for councils came to an end in December, having completed the following work for councils:
- Reached officers from 150 councils at least once through our programme of eight webinars
 - Completed Apprenticeship MOT Health Checks with 11 councils
 - Supported 32 councils through a programme of action learning
 - Held 17 Apprenticeship Surgery sessions for councils
 - Delivered a successful inaugural ‘Local Government Apprentice of the Year’ event in partnership with East of England LGA and South West Councils
 - Revised and updated our Apprenticeships in Schools Toolkit to support councils with creating apprenticeships in their maintained schools.
 - Our annual apprenticeship survey, carried out in July, saw councils rate our support offer on average as 4.1 out of 5, with the Apprenticeships Maturity Model (4.4), Apprentice of the Year event (4.4) and Apprenticeship Surgeries (4.3) among the individual elements that rated highest.
44. **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:** From July to December 2021, LGA Workforce delivered five equality-themed webinars in partnership with ACAS. Each webinar focused on different equality characteristics to help employers understand and support the different needs of their staff to aid recruitment, retention and productivity. Over 1,000 delegates booked to attend the series, and feedback showed that 95% of delegates were satisfied or very satisfied with the webinars. We are using the feedback from delegates to inform and plan further equalities information and support for local government employers in 2022.
- Equalities Implications**
45. Officers continue to ensure that issues relating to equality, diversity and inclusion are factored in decision-making processes and work undertaken with councils. This includes supporting protecting vulnerable people, enhancing community cohesion, and increasing diversity within councils and the local government workforce.

Implications for Wales

46. We are working closely with colleagues in WLGA to ensure that we share learning and best practice based on our work.

Financial Implications

47. The Board should note that the funding for the support listed above comes from a variety of government grants, including from the Department for Health and Social Care, Department for Education and the main Department for Leveling Up, Housing and Communities. In June 2021 the IDeA secured a three-year contract (with the option to extend by a further 12 months) from the Department for Education (DfE). The budget for 2021/22 is £1.387m, and this will rise to £1.751m in 2022/23.

Next steps

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