

## Equality Advocates

### Purpose of report

For information.

### Summary

This report provides an update on the board Equality Advocates, which were introduced following the Executive Advisory Board's previous decision to review and strengthen the LGA's equalities work.

Reports should be made available to the public where possible. Consider why the report should be confidential (e.g. does it include commercially sensitive or personal information?). Please note that reports may be disclosable under Freedom of Information legislation. For further information see the FOI procedure [here](#).

### Recommendation

- The EAB to note the proposed update on the progress of board Equality Advocates work and the next steps outlined from paragraph 16.

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## Equality Advocates

### Background

1. Following a decision made at the Executive Advisory Board in 2021, officers developed a high-level description for the Equalities Advocate role, which involves raising the profile of equalities within their respective board areas and to attend occasional meetings of the Advocates to discuss cross-cutting equalities issues and develop views to present to the Executive Advisory Board.
2. The Equalities Advocates were appointed by the Group Offices and each Advocate has an LGA policy officer single point of contact. Officers developed an initial briefing document for each Advocate so that they were familiar with the main equality issues in their board's area of interest.

### Issues

3. Following recent consultation with the Equality Advocates on how they have found their time in post, there have been varied responses with some feeling very supported in fulfilling these functions with the help of LGA officers and others highlighting that they would appreciate further guidance.
4. A number of Advocates have requested more consistent support and communication from the LGA in order to fulfil this function most effectively.
5. The Equality Advocates have not met to discuss their role, so there is an opportunity to establish a series of regular meetings to share perspectives and approaches to addressing inequalities within their respective board areas.
6. Advocates have also identified a need for clearly defined outputs for this role and an overview of what models of good practice would be for addressing equalities within their respective board portfolios.
7. Following a meeting with Heads of Group, relevant officers within the policy directorate and Member Services will be engaging with Advocates to ensure that they are able to meet consistently to discuss key equalities priorities for their respective boards and to share learning, good practice and local insights, as well as set consistent goals for equalities discussions and actions within their groups.
8. There was also discussion around the possibility of filling gaps around training and capacity for the Advocates, which Member Services could support to meet. There would also be a need to ensure this is consistently offered to each newly appointed group of

Advocates.

9. It may be useful for Equalities Advocates to lead conversations around developing and implementing key outputs for each year, to ensure that each board addresses equalities in a consistent way. This can be supported by relevant LGA policy officers.
10. The board papers template being updated to include a section on equalities considerations will help to provide more substantial talking points for board meetings on equalities issues.
11. The LGA policy directorate has also recently received training on key equalities frameworks to engage within policy work, so there is an opportunity for officers to play a stronger role in supporting advocates and addressing the key equalities issues within boards more consistently.
12. There is also an opportunity for Advocates to guide other members to play a more active role in addressing equalities issues within boards, enabling them to highlight trends and patterns from a local perspective and share good practice.
13. If the Equality Advocates function does not fulfil its intended aims over time, members may also decide that the role is not necessary in future. Officers will monitor the proposed changes over the coming months and can provide an update on progress where necessary.

### **Implications for Wales**

14. As a cross-cutting issue, the LGA has already been in conversation with the WLGA about the work they are doing to focus on equality issues and will continue to collaborate as and when appropriate.

### **Financial Implications**

15. There are possible further financial implications around the commissioning of training for Advocates.

### **Next steps**

16. Officers will work with the existing Advocates to develop a clearer outline of the responsibilities and remit of this post. This will also help to prepare future Advocates to ensure they can fulfil the role most effectively.

17. Once new Advocates are appointed, officers will continue to work with them to ensure that they meet regularly and are provided with any relevant training and additional support to fulfil the role most effectively.
18. Officers will continue to monitor progress to ensure that any additional needs are identified and met in a timely way.
19. Officers can provide a progress update on this work to the LGA Board in future if required.