Peer support review progress update

Purpose of report

For information

Summary

Work to address actions arising from the peer support review is progressing, supported by discussions involving the national lead member peers and the Heads of Political Group Offices. An action plan has been updated to respond to Lead Members' direction that progress be expedited. This includes additional provision of mentoring training and work to support members to update their peer profiles.

Is this report confidential? No

Recommendation

That the Improvement and Innovation Board note progress in implementing actions arising from the peer support review.

Contact details

Contact officer: Dennis.Skinner@local.gov.uk

Position: Director of Improvement

Phone no: 0207 664 3017

Email: dennis.skinner@local.gov.uk

18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ   www.local.gov.uk   **Telephone** 020 7664 3000   **Email** info@local.gov.uk
Local Government Association company number 11177145
Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government company number 0367557
Chairman: Councillor James Jamieson OBE   **Chief Executive:** Mark Lloyd CBE   **President:** Baroness Grey-Thompson

Peer support review progress update

Background

1. The Board received a report at its October meeting which outlined the findings of a review of the LGA's use of peers in its improvement support offers. The review found that member and officer peers make a vital contribution to these offers and are, on the whole, highly regarded. The report highlighted recommendations arising from the review which related to:

   - Recruitment of Member Peers;

   - Member Peer Mentoring;

   - Feedback on the quality of support provided by Member peers;

   - Particular challenges experienced by the Independent Group;

   - Member Peer Training and Development;

   - National and regional lead member peers;

   - Diversity of Member peers;

   - Member Peer profiles.

2. Lead Members had decided to share the lead in relation to a new Board priority of peer support.

Progress update

3. Lead Members have initiated detailed discussions involving national lead member peers, Heads of Political Group Offices and the Improvement team, to consider current practice in each Group, and the potential for common approaches in relation to:

   i)   Recruitment and retention of an appropriately experienced, skilled and diverse cohort of Member peers;

   ii) Member peer training;

   iii) Quality assurance.

4. In discussions to date, Lead Members have identified the following further issues to be prioritised:

   i)   Updating and rolling out mentoring training;

ii) Working alongside the Political Group Offices to ensure we have high quality and up to date member peer profiles;

iii) Improving record keeping on attendance at training by member peers;

iv) Keeping member peers up to date (e.g. themes arising from improvement work, relevant issues in the sector).

5. These are included in the draft action plan attached.

6. Further work to address recommendations relating to the administration of Member peer support is underway.

7. Consideration is being given to holding a session at LGA Conference targeted to member peers: this could contribute to the aim of keeping members up to date by addressing key themes and lessons arising from the LGA's improvement work from the last year. This will be in addition to the programme for the LGA Member Peer Conference which will be expanded to include wider development opportunities for peers

8. An action plan to address the recommendations of the peer support review appears at **Appendix 1**.

Implications for Wales

9. Improvement support is provided directly to Welsh councils by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA). On occasion, the LGA has responded to requests from Welsh councils to provide peer reviews to Welsh councils, and there are some Welsh members in the LGA's peer pool. The improvements recommended in the peer support review will benefit those member peers and Welsh councils who receive LGA peer reviews in future.
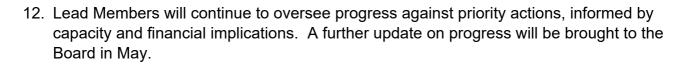
Financial Implications

10. Prioritisation of activities within the peer support review action plan will ensure that work is carried out within existing resources.

Equalities implications

11. The peer support review explicitly considered equality, diversity and inclusion issues in respect of the LGA's peer support offer. Recommendations to increase the equalities data available on LGA peers (where they wish to share that information) will support the LGA to meet the needs of councils seeking peers to match the diversity of their own councillor cohort and populations, and to ensure that member peers with protected characteristics are not negatively impacted by processes for their selection for assignments and associated support.

Next steps

12. Lead Members will continue to oversee progress against priority actions, informed by capacity and financial implications. A further update on progress will be brought to the Board in May.

Appendix 1: Peer support review action plan

Theme 1: Recruitment and retention of an appropriately experienced, skilled and diverse cohort of peers	
Actions	**Timescale**
Ensure that the member peer pool and usage keeps pace with the national councillor census in terms of demographic profile: • Circulate peer profiles to all members for updating with guidance for completion • Analyse updated peer profiles and decide on areas for more proactive recruitment of Member Peers	 end of September 23 end of October 23
Lead Members consider whether there should be any changes to the limit on the number of assignments (or days) any member peer should be used	11 May 23
Ensure a good, sustainable 'supply line' of member peers • Lead Members consider feedback from programmes about gaps in member peer capacity to meet current and future demand • Lead Members identify and share best practice in peer recruitment across Groups • Improvement/ PGOs develop joint programme of work	 • 11 May 23 • 11 May 23 • End September 23
Brief regional teams/ programme leads on criteria and processes for selecting member peers	End September 23
Review usage of Member peers (including by protected characteristics) • Produce annual report • Lead Members review annual report (prior to IIB)	 15 December 23
Consider the respective roles of the Group Office and the Improvement directorate in addressing challenges related to the supply and development of Independent member peers.	End December 23

Theme 2: Mentoring	
Actions	**Timescale**
Ensure coordinated development, quality assurance and promotion of the mentoring offer: • Draft proposals • Lead Members consider proposals	 13 October
Relaunch and promote the current mentoring handbook and training, updated as appropriate (interim measure)	End February 23
Offer mentoring training 4 times a year to ensure peers can access prior to commencing assignments	End May 23
Put in place a structured process for recording and monitoring member mentoring	End December 23

Theme 3: Member peer training	
Actions	**Timescale**
Ensure the peer conference includes the opportunity for cross-party reflection on peer practice and updates peers on themes arising from improvement work and relevant issues in the sector	End November 2023
Agree a standard approach to peer induction and include in updated peer induction pack for all peers	End September 23
Discuss and agree a protocol for the use of shadow member peers on peer challenges	End February 23
Consider approach to eligibility for assignments for example: • all member peers to attend the peer conference at least once every three years to be eligible for assignments • some mandatory elements to training and development of peers Lead Members consider PGO response	End May 23
Agree an approach to ownership, development and commissioning of member peer development	End September 23

Theme 4: Quality assurance	
Actions	**Timescale**
Agree proportionate and systematic approach to feedback from regional teams/ programmes to PGOs on member peer performance/ communicate PGO approach	End May 23
Consider whether to introduce some form of Performance appraisal for member peers: • Liaise to consider potential for a more systematic approach • Lead Members consider proposals	End May 23
Consider whether to reintroduce some form of peer accreditation/ assessment process in light of associated costs and benefits	End May 23

Theme 5: Management and administration	
Actions	**Timescale**
Produce process notes on allocation and authorisation of days	End June 23
Ensure compliance with GDPR on all peer records	End June 23
Develop a PGO/ Improvement Support Protocol to clarify roles and mutual expectations	End December 23
Support the regular updating of member peer profiles through: • agreeing common standard for frequency of updates • agree a solution to automate the update process	End May 23 End of September 23
Agree a standard timescale for PGO response to peer requests and resilience arrangements	End of May 23
Establish a consistent process for capturing and monitoring records of attendance at CPC and mentoring training	End of May 23