

# Regional Improvement and Innovation Alliances (RIAs)

Evaluation exercise findings and next steps

CYP Board 27<sup>th</sup> June 2023

# Summary

- The LGA carried out a RIIA evaluation exercise on behalf of the Children's Improvement Board (ADCS, LGA, Solace, DfE, and Ofsted).
  - The aim was to take stock of the progress made through the RIIA structures, and to identify learning that can be shared across the networks, as well as opportunities for further supporting the RIIAs to drive improvement across the sector.
  - This exercise highlighted areas that are working well and opportunities for development and found that whilst the overarching model for RIIAs is consistent across all nine regions there is, as expected, also a range of regional variation.
  - In March 2023 Children's Improvement Board reviewed and agreed an action plan to support further development of the RIIAs.
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# Evaluation approach

Information gathering to inform the evaluation was undertaken by the LGA and included:

- A desktop review of existing information, structures and materials from each region
- Discussions with key individuals in each region including the Lead DCS, Chief Executive and Lead Member, regional co-ordinators and the LGA Children's Improvement Advisers

Interviews were framed around the following questions, to provide consistency and a framework for analysing themes across the regions.

- What are the common approaches across RIAs?
  - Have some regions developed a unique approach?
  - What are the strengths of current RIA arrangements?
  - What are the areas that could be improved?
  - What has been the impact of the network of RIAs?
  - Are there opportunities for better working across RIAs?
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# Findings – strengths

- **Structured regional programmes of self- assessment and peer challenge** activity to provide challenge, assurance and identify support needs
  - Professional generosity in **supporting councils in need**
  - **Sharing ideas and practice** to support improvement and innovation – ethos of everyone has something to learn and something to give
  - Developing **supportive professional networks** – mutual support and reducing isolation
  - **Collective action and common purpose** – including regional projects and workplans
  - Opportunities to use **regional voice to influence national dialogue and policy** (but national mechanisms need strengthening)
  - **Data sharing and benchmarking** as mechanism for identifying priorities, discussing performance, providing regional transparency and sharing good practice
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# Findings - Opportunities for Development

- **Strengthening ability of RIAs to ‘catch before they fall’** – some regions have escalation processes in place
  - **Role of national partners:**
    - Strengthening relationships with DfE regional groups
    - Mechanisms for RIAs to ‘feed up’ when they need a national response and to support national learning
    - Opening up opportunities and funding to all councils irrespective of Ofsted rating
  - **RIA engagement of key partners** to address shared challenges (corporate teams in councils, health police and education partners, ADASS)
  - **Longer-term DfE funding** to strengthen sustainability and stability of RIA programmes
  - **Engagement of all members of the ‘quartet’ at regional level**
  - **Developing mechanisms for RIAs to influence national policy**
  - **Collaboration between RIAs in different regions to share learning** (e.g. governance, peer challenge models and outcomes monitoring approaches).
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# Next steps

- A high-level action plan to take forward identified opportunities has been agreed by Children's Improvement Board, and circulated to RIIA co-ordinators for comment.
  - Key areas of action are:
    - Children's Improvement Board to provide collective oversight of RIIA activity through a rolling programme of RIIA input at meetings, and considering items raised by RIIA Chairs.
    - DfE to consider a more sustainable funding model for RIIA arrangements, to strengthen links between RIIAs and DfE regional groups and to review restrictions on applications for funding and pilots that specify Ofsted outcome
    - Creating opportunities for RIIAs to collaborate and share practice across regions using existing networks, and through an annual event to bring together RIIA leads
    - Reviewing how RIIA governance supports meaningful engagement of all members of the strategic quartet and encouraging CEXs and council Leaders to make use of regional performance reports produced through the RIIA
    - Exploring opportunities for better links between RIIAs and health, education and police partners, and with ADASS
    - CEX regional leads to agree an escalation process for places of concern to be adopted by RIIAs
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