

Community Wellbeing Priorities 2023-24

Purpose of Report

For decision.

Summary

This report outlines proposals for the Board's priorities and key areas of work, set against the available resources for 2023/24. The proposals are based on the suggested priorities considered by the Board in July, as well as the relevant priorities in the LGA business plan and ongoing work and recent policy announcements by Government. Subject to members' views, officers will develop a work programme to deliver these priorities.

LGA Plan Theme: Putting people first

Recommendation(s)

That the Board agree the priorities outlined in the paper.

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Community Wellbeing Priorities 2023-24

Background

1. At this first meeting of the Community Wellbeing Board, members are asked to consider the policy priorities for the work programme for the coming year.
2. This report sets out proposed high-level priorities for the Board for 2023/24. It takes account of feedback and suggestions provided by Board members at the meeting in July 2023.
3. It also reflects the relevant priorities in the LGA's 2022-25 business plan. This identifies four main themes relevant to the LGA's objective of promoting, improving and supporting local government. One of these four main themes is 'Putting people first', and commits the LGA to achieve the following outcomes:
 - 3.1. The reform of adult social care gives councils the resources to address their funding pressures; changes in the adult social care assurance framework helps them improve quality and standards.
 - 3.2. Councils remain at the heart of work to integrate health and care and can make effective contributions to integrated care systems and place-based partnerships.
 - 3.3. Councils have the appropriate leverage to enable them to deliver their public health and health protection responsibilities.

Proposal

4. The section on improving health and care services in the 'Make It Local' publication launched at the LGA annual conference in July highlighted there are common issues across adult social care, public health and the integration of health and care, as well as the work councils do to assist adults with care and support needs. These include funding of services where as well as the level councils receive, the timeliness of grant announcements, the short term nature of funding packages and the stringent conditions attached to some grants all can limit the ability of councils to maximise their impact.
5. In addition across adult social services and public health, the ability for councils and local to lead can be hampered by both national directives that stifle local priority setting and a narrow approach to accountability that only looks upward, rather than outward to communities and citizens.
6. Councils and the LGA have also been pointing out for some time that there is a focus in health and care on treating sickness rather than on preventing or delaying the onset of conditions which require more acute and costly support.
7. It is therefore suggested that the Board's priorities reflect the cross cutting nature of the challenges affecting adult social care and public health, rather than the approach we have taken previously of setting priorities for each distinct area of work within the Board's remit. As members have pointed out this latter approach has tended to result in a significant list which is difficult to prioritise.

8. Drawing on the health and care improvement section in 'Make It Local' it is proposed the Board have three high level priorities in 2023-24, which will also ensure the Board is delivering on the outcomes around adult social care, health and care integration and public health identified in the LGA's business plan. These suggested overarching priorities are:
 - 8.1. Increased and sustainable levels of funding for adult social care and public health;
 - 8.2. Real freedom for local leadership to focus on what is important for local communities; and
 - 8.3. A relentless focus on prevention and wellbeing.
9. Set out below are the more specific priorities that will sit under these overarching priorities.

Increased and sustainable levels of funding

10. Within this overarching priority it is proposed the Board:
 - 10.1. Continue to evidence the scale of pressures facing social care and public health (and their consequences) and make those well-known publicly and privately to Ministers, senior officials, partners and the public as part of continued calls for additional investment.
 - 10.2. Continue to work with the full range of the LGA's national partners to identify areas of shared interest for joint lobbying and influencing, including in relation to the social care and public health workforce.

Real freedom for local leadership

11. Within this overarching priority it is proposed the Board:
 - 11.1. Continue to represent councils' interests in adult social care assurance including learning from the pilot sites as assurance rolls out more widely.
 - 11.2. Support councils, and manage public perceptions, around winter pressures and delayed discharge.
 - 11.3. Further push the LGA's priorities for adult social care reform, possibly to include a major new publication reflecting on the 10-year anniversary of the Care Act receiving Royal Assent.
 - 11.4. Continue to represent local authorities in the development of Integrated Care Systems – in particular advocating for local authorities to have a key role in Integrated Care Boards, Integrated Care Partnerships and place-based partnerships.
 - 11.5. Support councils to make an effective contribution to integrated care boards, integrated care partnerships and place-based partnerships.

- 11.6. Work with government and national agencies such as NHS England and the Care Quality Commission to ensure that the views and concerns are local government are addressed in the developing policy agenda for integration.

A relentless focus on prevention and wellbeing

12. Within this overarching priority it is proposed the Board:
 - 12.1. Continue to work with other LGA boards to highlight the link between people's health, education, skills, productivity and employment prospects. Economic Inactivity is an increasingly high-profile issue nationally. The underlying causes of economic inactivity are often multi-faceted – mixing factors such as family context, mental and physical health conditions, with compounding barriers to do with loss of confidence or self-esteem, or practical factors such as access to transport.
 - 12.2. Continue our commitment to improve national and local level policy across all public health services, specifically: substance misuse services, sexual and reproductive health services and smoking cessation services.
 - 12.3. Continue to work closely with partners on issues surrounding the rising cost of living and the impact on health and wellbeing.
 - 12.4. Continue to make the economic case for prevention. Evidence shows that early intervention and prevention represent good value for money and help reduce the growth in demand on public services.
 - 12.5. Continue to work with the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for Education (DfE) and partners to ensure “Start for Life” is a collaborative and strength-based programme which empowers councils to improve services and ensure local flexibility and leadership rather than a one-size fits all approach. We will work with DfE and the Centre for Family Hubs to ensure sector input into the continued roll out of Family Hubs.
 - 12.6. Work with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and key partners to strengthen the health protection role of local government.
 - 12.7. Work jointly with the Children and Young People's Board on cross-cutting issues such as childhood obesity, nutrition, Family Hubs and support for children, such as Free School Meals and Healthy Start.
 - 12.8. Ensure the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 is implemented in a way that works for councils, makes as much positive change as possible to residents, and takes into account service, capacity, and budget pressures.
 - 12.9. Continue to push for the funding, support and expansion of services which can prevent placements into hospitals and care homes (mental health, suicide prevention, supported housing, older people's housing).

Other work

13. Given the breadth of activity of the Board's work, not every area of work likely to be undertaken over the coming year has been listed, so the Board has a more focused workplan through out 2023-24.
14. For example the LGA will continue to represent the interests of local government at the Covid-19 UK Inquiry. The Inquiry was launched in 2022 to examine the UK's response to and impact of the pandemic and learn lessons for the future. The LGA has been granted core participant status in the first two modules of the Inquiry and may be involved in further modules which will look at areas of interest to the Board such as on social care and test and trace. Officers from the team supporting the Board will be involved in this work, co-ordinating evidence and responses on a range of issues. This will enable the LGA to provide evidence, review expert witness accounts and relevant supporting documentation in relation to the issues being considered by the Inquiry, and will support councils to the extent that we can in doing so.
15. The [LGA Asylum, Refugee and Migration Task Group](#) will also continue to report jointly to the Board and the Children and Young People's Board. Chaired by the LGA Chair, the Task Group consists of representatives from each English region, devolved administration and the LGA Political Groups, with meetings are held when relevant ministers are keen to meet.

Implications for Wales

16. Most of the Board's area of responsibilities are devolved issues and the responsibility of the Welsh government. Where necessary we will work with colleagues at the Welsh LGA to identify areas where our work will be applicable to Wales in terms of non-devolved issues. Where work relates to devolved issues our focus will be on English authorities, with the WLGA leading on work in Wales, but we will share our work with WLGA should they wish to use it as a basis for Welsh specific work of their own.

Financial Implications

17. This programme of work will be delivered with existing resources.

Equalities implications

18. The work of the Community Wellbeing Board impacts on a wide range of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) issues given that many of the people receiving council services falling under the Board's remit have protected characteristics under the Equality Act. The Board will want to consider how effective new and emerging policies and programmes are at meeting the needs of individuals and communities nationally, regionally and locally. In delivering the Board's work programme officers will therefore consider the equalities aspects of individual elements of the programme as these are developed. Board members are also encouraged to consider the EDI issues they may wish to scrutinise.

Next steps

19. Following the Board's discussion, officers will prepare a detailed work programme to manage the day to day work. The priorities agreed by the Board will also be reported back to the LGA Executive Advisory Board, which oversees the work of the policy Boards and includes the Community Wellbeing Board Chairman as part of its membership.