

LGA Boards' Improvement Activity

Purpose

To update the Board on improvement activity undertaken by the LGA Boards.

Recommendation:

Members are asked to note the update on improvement activity undertaken by LGA Boards.

Action:

Officers to respond as necessary to any comments.

Contact officer:

Nick Easton

Position:

Improvement Co-ordination Manager

Phone no:

020 7664 3278

E-mail:

nick.easton@local.gov.uk

LGA Boards' Improvement Activity

Background

1. Members have agreed that it is important for the Improvement and Innovation Board to retain a strategic or “overarching” perspective on the improvement activity currently undertaken across LGA Boards. This will help ensure consistency with the key principles underpinning the approach to sector-led improvement and help avoid any potential duplication.
2. In order to achieve this, the Board agreed that:
 - 2.1. officers be asked to 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
 - 2.2. during the year the Improvement and Innovation Board receives suitably timed progress reports on the major improvement programmes
 - 2.3. as far as possible, the Improvement and Innovation Board meets towards the end of each quarterly 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. A full report describing the improvement activity and support provided through LGA Boards was submitted to the Improvement and Innovation Board in October 2014.
4. At the last meeting in January 2015 the Board provided strategic input to the on-going work of the Planning Advisory Service and views on the development of the integrated Care and Health Improvement Programme for 2015/16.
5. A short update on the improvement activity undertaken by other Boards since the last meeting is **attached**. In terms of consistency with, and implications for, our approach to sector-led improvement, Members may wish to note Ofsted’s developing improvement activity and the proposals being developed by our Children and Young People Board, Solace and the Association of Directors of Children’s Services for a new approach to inspection in children’s services.

Next steps

6. Subject to Members’ views, officers will continue to update the Board on the improvement activities across all LGA Boards.

Financial implications

7. There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.

LGA Board's Improvement Activity

Children and Young People Board

Ofsted's improvement activity

David Hoare, Chair of Ofsted, attended the Children and Young People's Board on 25 March 2015 to discuss the inspectorate's future work, including its improvement programme.

The inspectorate has increased its own role in children's services improvement, appointing a Director of Improvement in May 2014. The Director is leading the design, delivery and review of Ofsted's improvement offer to local authorities who are judged through inspection to be inadequate or require improvement. Ofsted has reported very positive outcomes and feedback from the councils involved in the pilot improvement work undertaken to date.

For all local authorities judged to require improvement, Ofsted's offer comprises:

- an improvement challenge seminar (within 35 days of the publication of the inspection report)
- invitations for up to four 'Getting to Good' seminars per year, with the subject matter designed to focus upon those factors that prevent local authorities achieving sustainably good services. Attendance is followed by a formal discussion between the linked Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI)/Senior HMI and the local authority director as a central part of Ofsted's regional development work.

For local authorities judged to be inadequate, the offer is made up of:

- invitations for up to four 'Getting to Good' seminars per year
- an improvement challenge seminar (within 35 days of the publication of the inspection report)
- a programme of one day per month scrutiny of practice (via case file audit) to enable scrutiny of the priority areas included in the improvement plan
- quarterly reviews of progress that bring together the findings of the last three monthly monitoring visits and lead to an evaluative assessment of progress, which is presented to the local authority's improvement board in person by the HMI who has led the work
- a formal Progress Inspection conducted by a team of three HMI over one week, which scrutinises the impact of the improvement plan on the quality of service and comes to a judgement about whether or not satisfactory progress is being made by the local authority.

Ofsted reports that this model has been successfully piloted in two inadequate local authorities (Cheshire East and Northamptonshire) where evaluations have demonstrated that the work of the inspectors involved has had a demonstrable impact in supporting the local

authority in its improvement endeavours. The lessons learnt from these pilots have been built into revisions to the model and into the current training programme for all inspectors.

The LGA has expressed concern that Ofsted's improvement role will undermine sector-led improvement, removing ownership from the sector and creating a clear conflict with Ofsted's role in monitoring the effectiveness of improvement work.

Integrated Inspections

On 26 February 2015, Ofsted published *Integrated Inspections: Consultation outcomes, learning from pilot inspections and next steps*. While this document reaffirms Ofsted's commitment to multi-agency inspections, it concludes that the experiences of the two pilot authorities (Hull City and Surrey County Councils) have shown that the integrated methodology that was piloted by the inspectorate did not add enough value to enable a proper multi-agency evaluation of services.

Ofsted intends instead to focus on 'short, sharp targeted multi-agency inspections' and this approach will be piloted before the end of 2015, with the aim of completing six inspections before March 2016.

This move towards short, targeted inspections mirrors, at least in part, an alternative multi-agency approach that is being developed by the LGA, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (Solace) and the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS). This therefore provides an opportunity for the sector to work closely with the inspectorate to develop a more proportionate inspection model which focuses on outcomes for children, rather than institutional boundaries, to support service improvement.

The LGA, working in collaboration with Solace and ADCS, has produced an alternative, multi-agency inspection framework, which seeks to replace Ofsted's existing, flawed Single Inspection Framework. Our new approach has been developed within the context of the sector's approach to improvement. The framework can be found [here](#).

Children's care in need of 'significant improvement'

On 10 March 2015, Ofsted published its second annual state of the nation social care report, drawn from the results of 5,600 inspections of a range of local authority children's services, children's homes, fostering and adoption support services. The report can be found [here](#).

Of 43 inspections in 2013/14, seven authorities were found to be "inadequate", with a further 26 "requiring improvement". Ten areas were judged to provide a good standard of care and protection for children and young people. Ofsted says demand for children's services has been rising continually for the past seven years, and that children and young people were often waiting too long for the help they needed.

In the authorities judged to be good, inspectors found:

- strong leaders and managers have a relentless focus on outcomes for children
- social workers work directly with children and families at an early stage to prevent the need for further intervention

- managers and social workers have a discernible 'grip' on cases at all times
- managers have strong oversight of caseloads, vacancies and high quality training and supervision.

The LGA's response is [here](#).

Community Wellbeing Board

LGA Public Health Opinion Survey 2015

The transition of public health into local government in 2013 has seen one of the most significant changes for councils in recent years. It has created huge opportunities for local authorities to make a stronger impact on improving the health of local communities.

The LGA surveyed lead members of public health in all 152 upper and single tier councils in England to hear from the key decision makers in local government about their perceptions of public health, the priorities councils have set themselves and their ambitions for the future:

- 95% agreed or tended to agree that the transition of responsibility for public health had gone well in their council
- 96% agreed that bringing public health under local council control will deliver better public health for the local population
- 91% said that their public health team was effective at championing public health issues
- 60% said that insufficient resources were the main barrier; 35% a mismatch between local and central government. Only 5% of respondents identified poor working relationships and 5% a lack of political will as the main barriers to the council achieving better public health outcomes in the local area over the next two years
- 79% of the respondents who wanted to see more preventative health activity identified mental health as an area for increased activity and 71% obesity in children.

Findings show that amongst portfolio holders, embedding public health within local authorities has given cause for optimism. There appears to be greater belief that this move will lead to better health outcomes, and public health is working well with other departments. Clearly, insufficient resources and embedding public health within the council remain a challenge for some. Results of the survey can be found [here](#).

Joint LGA and local government e-learning tool for councillors on health and social care complaints

Arising from a fringe session at the LGA Annual Conference in 2014, the LGA and the Local Government Ombudsman are working together to develop an e-learning module for councillors on their role in complaints about adult social care and health services. The module will have two main purposes:

- to support councillors to better understand the complaints system for adult social care and health so that they can help residents and citizens navigate their way through the system
- to understand how complaints data can be used to drive service improvements in health and social care.

This module will be helpful to councillors in their frontline role in working with people wishing to make complaints, members of health overview and scrutiny committees, cabinet members for health and adult social care and members of health and wellbeing boards in making best use of complaints data to identify trends in quality and safety, and to drive improvements.

Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport

Councils currently spend nearly £1 billion on energy for their buildings each year. While the spending on energy has reduced in recent years, there remain significant opportunities to make savings through increased use of energy efficiency measures and techniques. At the same time, a number of councils have demonstrated the value of renewable and low carbon energy generation schemes, which help reduce energy costs and provide income to the authority.

Officers in our productivity team and our finance and policy team are working collaboratively to commission a report that will identify the opportunities for councils on energy efficiency and energy generation. An Energy Task and Finish Group has been established through the Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board to maintain oversight of the renewable and low carbon energy generation element of the report.

The report will also have a strong improvement focus, as it will demonstrate the business case for different technologies and the opportunities for different types of council-owned building to support councils in identifying the opportunities and potential savings or income generation available to them. It is envisaged that the report will be completed by this summer.

City Regions Board and People & Places Board

Devolution and public service reform

The City Regions and People & Places Board jointly commissioned RAND Europe to analyse the factors that underpin successful locally-led public service transformation and the barriers to faster progress. The report shows that there is an emerging evidence base about how locally-led transformation is starting to lead to improved outcomes for residents and has the potential to deliver savings for the Exchequer.

Discussions with city regions during the process of commissioning the report revealed that there is a great demand for support and development from the LGA to help them scope out a more comprehensive and tangible plan for public service integration across their areas. For example:

- they were keen for more help in identifying total public spending coming into a city region
- building cross-public sector leadership capacity
- harnessing the lessons from areas achieving early successes for the benefit of areas at an earlier stage.

The LGA has already started to work on some tools that may help in this regard; for instance, our finance team is developing a tool to help places who want to develop place based budgets to map public expenditure coming into an area.

Since last autumn, there has also been a big increase in demand from city regions and non-met areas across the country to help them scope out their **options for forming combined authorities and/or other models of formal sub-regional governance**, as well as their more detailed devolution proposals. To that end, the LGA has produced a set of tools that can help authorities take stock of the breakthroughs that have been made through the City and Growth Deals and understand the different governance models in operation. These tools can be found at <http://www.local.gov.uk/devolution>.

Safer and Stronger Communities

The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

The new tools and powers for councils and the police to tackle anti-social behaviour came into effect in October 2014. Having already run three regional workshops over the summer on the introduction of the 'community trigger' that was included in the Act, the Safer and Stronger Communities Board ran three regional workshops in November and December. These examined the six new tools and how councils might use them to address common anti-social behaviour.

The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015

The Act imposes two new statutory duties on all local authorities and a number of other bodies. These are a duty to:

- have due regard when exercising their functions to prevent people being drawn into terrorism
- set up panels to assess the extent to which people referred to them are vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism.

The duty to prevent people being drawn into terrorism comes into effect on 1 July 2015.

Statutory guidance on implementing the duty in England and Wales was published by the Home Office in March 2015. The guidance confirms that the Home Office will continue to identify a number of local areas as Prevent priority areas – up to 50. They will be funded to employ a Prevent coordinator, and there will continue to be Home Office funding available for Prevent projects and activity. Funding will also now be made available to other areas, though it is not clear whether this will cover the cost of implementing the new duties. The Home Office will monitor and assess delivery in the priority areas.

The Home Office will also monitor the wider implementation of the Prevent duty, which as a last resort could include the appointment of an inspector to assess an authority's compliance and intervention in areas judged to be failing.

As well as pressing the Home Office to properly fund the costs of the new duties on councils, the Safer & Stronger Communities Board will be running regional roadshows for councils over the summer to help them implement the new duties.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) and taxi licensing

Following publication of Louise Casey's report into the handling of child sexual exploitation in Rotherham, the Board has been supporting councils to respond to the recommendations around taxi licensing. This has included helping authorities to review their policies and procedures, and the LGA Licensing Forum has provided a conduit for sharing progress, best practice and raising sector-wide issues. The Board has also:

- updated the online councillor training module on regulatory services with CSE information
- updated the LGA Councillor Handbook on taxi and PHV licensing
- organised two taxi licensing events
- written to all Chairs of Licensing highlighting the potential role of licensed vehicles and premises in CSE.

The LGA will also be encouraging the professional bodies to develop comprehensive training programmes for both officers and elected Members. The LGA will also be reminding community safety partnerships of the role they have to play in addressing CSE, and gathering and sharing examples of good practice.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

The Safer & Stronger Communities Board established a cross-board Task and Finish Group in 2014 to look at how the LGA could assist councils in tackling female genital mutilation (FGM).

This work led to the publication of a **Councillor's Guide to FGM**, which was published in October 2015 and updated in February. The guide, which is available on the LGA's website, has been downloaded over 3,700 times since its launch.

The **on-line resource for councils** on FGM, which was launched in October, has also been updated. New case studies from councils about their work to end FGM in their area have been added to the briefings and information, useful documents and links to other organisations. Officers are in the process of gathering further case studies to be added to the resource to help other councils identify good practice they can adopt.

In addition, a joint bid by the LGA and Barnardo's to the Department of Education's Social Care Innovation Programme to develop a specialist FGM service has been successful. The LGA and Barnardo's will receive £2.14 million to establish and run the **National FGM Centre** for its first two years, after which it is planned to become self-sustaining. The service will include: specialist social workers to help local authorities case manage FGM referrals, a consultancy and practice development service to build the capacity of professionals working with children, the gathering of information and good practice examples to help inform the development of better practice, and a community outreach service to change attitudes and behaviours in communities.

New Psychoactive Substances

The sale of so-called 'legal highs' or new psychoactive substances (NPS) is a growing issue for councils. The Board published a guide for councillors to tackling NPS in January 2015 and was downloaded over 1,200 in the month after publication. Since then, councils have been making innovative use of new powers in the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act to address the sales of NPS.

Resources Board

Social work/social care careers

A guide for members focused on **improving retention of qualified social workers** has been developed with the Public Sector People Managers' Association. A further co-produced guide is being produced for HR directors to support good social work practice and sustainable structures with clear Decision-making Accountability (DMA).

Frontline, the Fast Track Graduate Scheme for Children's Social Workers, has met with the LGA to explore working together to support first line managers in improving social work practice. A pilot is currently underway in the Manchester area and this is likely to be extended to London. Frontline has just had its third cohort agreed and will be looking to enrol 180 applicants following a rigorous assessment process.

Finally we are planning to develop and issue some further benchmark social work role profiles to aid job evaluation and career development. The profile set will focus on new roles being developed as part of care responsibilities and roles inherited from the NHS.

Smart working

The LGA is working with the Cabinet Office, other Government Departments as well as the private sector, to create a Smart Working Maturity Self-Assessment Tool. Partners include Vodafone, Microsoft and McMillan, as well as The Timewise Foundation.

The LGA is also working with six councils to run a national pilot to test the impact of the Timewise Council programme as a way to help local government and its partners both improve the quality of its services and build efficiencies in how they are delivered through flexible working. This is on the understanding that Timewise will work with councils to help them to achieve this and also undertake an evaluation with each participating council to assess the impact of the process had/will have on their ability to embrace flexible and agile working. We will be using the learning to inform a flexible working offer to local government.

Other

New communications support offer

Increasingly, councils are also requesting communications support as part of the sector-led improvement offer. This support includes crisis communications support, help with high profile issues such as communicating during periods of extreme weather and protecting the most vulnerable, through to full communications peer reviews.

Tailored to the councils' individual needs, we are able to offer a wide range of communications support. Two specific examples are highlighted below:

Communications health check: This takes the form of a one-day rapid assessment and includes:

- an overall review of the current communications function
- a review of the communications strategy
- an assessment of current communications activity, capability and capacity
- a set of quick wins to help tackle key issues.

Communications reviews: For councils looking for a more in-depth and strategic view of their communications activity, there is a two or three-day communications review. Although this will be tailored to the council's specific requirements, it would usually include:

- an in-depth review of the current communications function (to include communications links to corporate priorities, corporate narrative, media relations, proactive campaigns, communications with key partners internal communications and digital communications)
- an in-depth review of the communications strategy and advice on developing an authentic corporate narrative
- a detailed assessment of current communications activity, capability and capacity
- a feedback session, set of recommendations/quick wins to help tackle key issues and a formal report.

The scope of a communications review can be amended or extended to include other areas, including visitor/tourism communications and encouraging economic growth. Once the review is completed, the LGA communications team will assign a lead partner to provide ongoing support and help to implement the agreed recommendations.