

Improvement and Innovation Board – report from Cllr David Simmonds (Chair)

Improvement

1. I shared a panel with the President of the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), Alison O'Sullivan, and Ofsted's Deputy Director of Social Care Policy, Lisa Pascoe, to discuss '*The future of inspection – a sector-led approach?*' at the 2015 National Children and Adult Services (NCAS) Conference, which took place from 14 – 16 October. The panel debated whether a sector-led, multi-agency inspection of children's services could result in better outcomes and restore confidence in the inspection system.
2. I will be meeting with the new Minister of State for Children and Families, Edward Timpson MP, to discuss children's services improvement funding and the impact of the Ofsted regime on 27 October.
3. As regards audit arrangements in local government, I am pleased to say that in response to our lobbying, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has decided to extend the transitional arrangement for principal local government bodies to 1 April 2018. We estimate that this equates to a saving of £24m for local government. The LGA will be bringing forward proposals to allow councils to opt-in to a form of national procurement of external audit once the transitional arrangements come to an end. We believe this will be the most efficient way for councils and will achieve the lowest level of fees overall. It will also mean that councils will not have to carry out their own procurement process, nor will they be required to set up an independent audit appointments panel.

Innovation

4. In March we launched our innovation database that makes it easier for councils to share new ideas and practices. The database originally included examples from our Innovation Zone, which is part of the LGA's annual conference. We have however since expanded the database to include numerous examples of innovation and good practice from councils across the country. The database is currently showcased on the LGA website homepage and now features around 800 individual examples as it continually expands. I would encourage you to take a look!

Transparency

5. We launched a new version of LG Inform over the summer. LG Inform is the LGA's benchmarking service containing over 3,000 items of up-to-date published performance, financial and contextual data about local areas. The new version will make accessing information and reports easier wherever users are via a tablet user interface compatible with Android, Windows and iPad (iOS).
6. We also launched a new Application-Programming Interface (API) for LG Inform over the summer, which allows anyone to view and download the local open data stored in the database. It combines thousands of widely used data items from an array of different sources.
7. Latest metrics added to LG Inform include those on: homelessness prevention, benefit cap statistics, housing benefit claimants, Job Seekers Allowance sanction decisions, total CO2 emissions estimates for all sectors at local authority level, numbers of Personal Independence Payment claims and council tax collection rates.

LEADERSHIP

8. Our Leadership offer continues to go from strength to strength. We had over 610 bookings on our 'Highlighting Political leadership' programmes by the end of September, and a record number of councillors will be participating on various programmes. In addition, in November we are launching the first two in a series of one-day focussed master classes for councillors who hold leadership positions on their councils, including cabinet members, committee chairs and opposition group leaders. The first will be on Consultation and Engagement and the second will focus on Leading Cultural Change. These are in addition to our existing wide-ranging [Leadership offer](#).
9. The National Graduate Development Programme (ngdp) for local government has had another successful year, with 98 National Management Trainees joining 44 councils in September/October to start their two-year programme, which aims to develop graduates into the high-calibre managers that local communities need.

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