



West Midlands Sector Led Improvement Compact

This Compact is a voluntary agreement between all of the 33 councils that make up the West Midlands region. It sets out the agreed areas and activities in which our councils will work together to support Sector Led Improvement.

May 2013

WEST MIDLANDS SECTOR LED IMPROVEMENT (SLI) COMPACT

1. Purpose and Scope

This Compact is a voluntary agreement between all of the 33 councils that make up the West Midlands region. It sets out the agreed areas and activities in which our councils will work together to support Sector Led Improvement with the shared aims of:

- Ensuring our improvement activities are focused upon achieving the best quality of service provision and best possible outcomes for local people, working in particular on the need to avoid service failures, but also finding increasingly innovative solutions whilst sustaining progress during a period of significant economic restraint and budget reductions;
- Utilising our collective sector capacity (corporately, in adult social care, children's services and with partners) to diagnose improvement challenges, identify risks to performance and to commission effective, evidence based and value for money responses;
- Systematically sharing knowledge about what works across the sector with a particular emphasis on quality assurance and accelerating practical solutions;
- Ensuring that sector-led improvement becomes fully embedded in 'the way we do things' and is not seen as an 'add on' or something which sits outside of our everyday activities.

Its' purpose is to support the improvement of local public services by setting a framework for co-operation and collaborative support between all 33 councils and key partners (e.g. the LGA) in order to lead that improvement.

The Compact is not a statutory or contractual document; it does not override the statutory responsibilities and functions of each council and is not enforceable in law.

It is however a statement of commitment to work collaboratively to support the regional sector led improvement model and all councils in the West Midlands agree to adhere to the contents and spirit of the Compact.

2. Principles of Sector-Led Improvement

Following changes to the nationally imposed inspection and assessment regime, a new approach to improvement has been developed by local government. This was set out in the LGA's document '*Taking the Lead*' published by the Local Government Association in February 2011 and is based upon the following key principles, which are strongly endorsed by the sector:

- Councils are responsible for their own performance improvement and are self aware;

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- Councils are primarily accountable to local communities not government or inspectors;
- Councils have a collective responsibility for the performance of the sector as a whole;
- The LGA has a role to maintain an overview of performance of the sector, to identify potential performance challenges and opportunities; and to provide tools that support the sector to collectively improve.

3. Principles of the West Midlands SLI Compact

The West Midlands SLI Compact is built upon the principles of '*Taking the Lead*'. It also fully supports and incorporates the broader aspects and principles of the respective Memorandum(s) of Understanding, developed and agreed on behalf of the sector by the national improvement boards for Adult Social Care and Children's Services (see below).

The national Promoting Excellence in Councils' Adult Social Care improvement board includes the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), the LGA, SOLACE, Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), Care Quality Commission (CQC), the Department of Health and 'Think Local Act Personal'.

The national Children's Improvement Board is a partnership board comprising the LGA, the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) and SOLACE.

The Memorandum(s) of Understanding developed nationally have already been adopted by the regional branches of ADASS and ADCS here within the West Midlands.

Additionally, the key principles for this overarching West Midlands SLI Compact include:

- Sector collaboration at the regional level is crucial in making our improvement activities optimally effective;
- A commitment to openness and honesty between all councils in the West Midlands;
- A commitment for all councils to take collective responsibility for the improvement of services in the region by sharing good practice and actively getting involved in improvement activities such as peer challenge etc.;
- A recognised role for defined sector representatives to respond to significant areas of underperformance on behalf of the West Midlands region;

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- Setting the tone of our improvement programme as one of promoting excellence, learning and continuous improvement and encouraging individual Councils to self-assure.

The signatories to this Compact recognise that the programme cannot and should not aim to provide a full external quality assurance system for local public services commissioned and provided by councils in the region.

4. Areas of co-operation to deliver Sector-Led Improvement

The main areas of activity for co-operation between the signatories are as follows:

a) Co-ordination and delivery

There are existing Improvement Programmes in place for Adults and Children's Services in the West Midlands, managed by the respective regional Improvement Boards and overseen by WMADASS and WMADCS arrangements.

The West Midlands SLI (WMSLI) Steering Group will complement and enhance these arrangements to ensure a collective focus on broader regional improvement activity and requirements beyond that in Adults and Children's services.

The WMSLI will bring together nominated Leaders, Lead Members and Chief Executives, along with chairs of the regional Improvement Boards for Adults and Children's Services and key improvement partners, to look at our collective priorities for improvement and monitor progress on behalf of all authorities in the region.

It will also commission an annual 'performance of the region' report, summarising the findings from peer challenges and reviews, alongside broader performance information for all councils (where available), together with a review of progress with the Adults and Children's Services Improvement programmes.

IEWM will support the West Midlands SLI Steering Group and ensure communication with other regional forums to raise awareness and secure engagement in key issues as appropriate.

It is recognised that each council remains responsible for implementing its' own improvement activities.

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b) Peer Challenge and Review

Each council will consider the current LGA offer to invite and engage in a corporate peer challenge before the end of March 2015.

In addition, each of the 14 authorities within the West Midlands that provide Adults and Children's Services, has committed to undertake both an Adult Social Care peer challenge and a Children's Services peer challenge within a similar timescale. These reviews may be undertaken by the LGA as part of their menu of peer support or via more locally tailored arrangements developed within the region.

Each council agrees that the learning points from their peer challenge(s), or equivalent, will be shared with the sector. Each council also undertakes to publish the agreed letter/feedback that they receive summarising the peer challenge/review findings and their related action plan/s within six months of the challenge or review taking place.

All councils in the West Midlands recognise the need to build capacity to ensure that sector led improvement is a success. Each council therefore agrees to release a small number of managers/expert staff and Lead Members to enable peer challenges and reviews to be undertaken in other councils on behalf of the sector.

It is recognised that this will help share learning and develop people's skills to challenge their own council's practice, however, it is also recognised that this commitment should not place an undue strain on councils and needs to be manageable. For example, each Director of Children's Services has committed to give up to 5 days per year for peer challenges and SLI support to other councils, this will not only help to ensure adequate resources are available for SLI activities on behalf of the sector, but should also help ensure resources within individual authorities are not significantly over-stretched.

c) Sharing Learning & Information

Each council agrees to share relevant learning and good practice with the sector in the spirit of openness and collaboration to improve.

Each council also agrees to share standard activity, finance and performance data and other information that they routinely produce and publish, to enable an evidence-based approach to self-assessment and improvement planning.

It is recognised that requests to share information and learning should not create an additional burden for councils. All requests will be agreed via the various regional improvement boards/associated arrangements and in addition the region will increasingly seek to draw upon data/information published from existing sources e.g. LG Inform and similar sector tools as they become more developed.

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Signatories to this Compact recognise the need for data accuracy, the importance of rigorous analysis and triangulation of information in developing an evidence based approach to sector led improvement.

d) Early Support

Every council can access support from the sector and the regional improvement programmes offer, within available resources and working with improvement partners, support for any council identifying an area of emerging performance concern.

In the spirit of collaborative co-operation and support, each council will consider how they can contribute to the Early Support arrangements within the West Midlands (examples may include: offering coaching, sharing policies and procedures, allowing staff to be released on secondment etc.)

e) Targeted Support

Councils are often directly involved in supporting authorities at risk of, or undergoing some form of intervention, alongside a broader package of support commissioned from various improvement partners.

Again, in the spirit of sector led improvement, each council commits to consider how it can best assist an authority in difficulty, as part of a wider package of support, if it is asked to do so.

5. Duration of this Compact agreement and review

This Compact comes in to effect from 1st July 2013. It will be subject to an annual review by the West Midlands SLI Steering Group to make sure it remains valid and to enable any necessary action to update it.

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6. Signatories

Authority:

Leader:

Date:

Chief Executive:

Date:

For those authorities with responsibility for Adults and Children's Services:

Lead Cabinet Member Adult Social Care:

Date:

Lead Cabinet Member Children's Social Care:

Date: