

Overview

Welcome to the second edition of the West Midlands Sector Led Improvement (SLI) bulletin, published on behalf of the region's SLI Steering Group.

There has been a lot going on since we published our last edition, not least of which was the very successful *Rewiring Public Services in the West Midlands* annual conference held in partnership with the LGA on 6th December. Cllr Sir Merrick Cockell, Chairman of the LGA, gave the keynote speech, focusing upon the LGA Rewiring Public Services Campaign, which is seeking a radical transformation of the way local government works and its relationship with Whitehall.

The full programme included contributions from Council Leaders, Chief Executives and colleagues from across the West Midlands and provided an opportunity for the region to debate its needs and challenges in the run up to the next general election. In addition to the 150+ delegates on the day, we reached 95,000 Twitter accounts via our social media activities, which exceeds the 75,233 who turned up to Old Trafford to watch Manchester United play Newcastle United that weekend!

You can find more details about the event and the LGA Rewiring Public Services campaign [here](#):

LGA Update and activity

Peer Challenge is the most recognised LGA support offer for councils and is a proven tool for improvement. The LGA's 'Rewiring Public Services' campaign endorsed the central role that peer challenge plays in ending bureaucratic inspection, improving council's impact on issues like economic development, improving social care and pressing ahead with transforming public services.

Every council is able to have a *corporate* peer challenge at no direct cost; it is voluntary in nature and tailored to the needs of each council. There is also a growing range of thematic peer challenges available to councils to support improvement in all major service areas. Eighty-six per cent of authorities who've already had a peer challenge thought the challenge was good at identifying key issues for the authority. More strikingly, their own experience of peer challenge was so positive that every single authority recommended a peer challenge for other councils. If you are interested in finding out more about the LGA's peer challenge programme and the opportunities available, please contact Howard Davis, LGA Principal Adviser. Email: howard.davis@local.gov.uk

The LGA is hosting an *Annual Public Health Conference in Birmingham on 4th February 2014*. The transfer of public health from the NHS to local government and Public Health England (PHE) is one of the most significant extensions of local government powers and duties in a generation. It represents a unique opportunity to change the focus from treating sickness to actively promoting health and wellbeing. The LGA's national annual conference on public health will offer a valuable opportunity to analyse the implications for local government and public health since transition. For more information and to book your place visit www.local.gov.uk/events

Adult Social Care & Health

West Midlands ADASS has developed considerable momentum for its approach to sector led improvement (SLI) over the last 12 months, embarking upon a programme of locally developed peer challenges (to complement the LGA offer). By the end of March 2014, 7 of our 14 Adult Social Care Councils will have hosted a peer challenge visit, with the remainder planned to be completed by December 2014.

The success of the programme lies with the practitioners and leaders in the sector who recognise the benefits of working with colleagues from outside of their own councils and appreciate the recognition and support gained from cooperating with peers who face the same challenges to deliver services to the most vulnerable in society.

The WM Peer Challenge programme involves 'experts by experience' as a key element of the challenge and it is intended that their observations of the challenges to date will be written up and shared. The West Midlands approach was recently

featured by the Guardian Public Sector Leaders network and you can read the article here

<http://www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network/2013/dec/09/adult-social-care-west-midlands-peer-challenge>

Keymn Whervin, a family carer, and Liam Waldron, a person who uses adult social care services, have both participated in two reviews so far. Keymn, who has cared for her mother for 14 years, says "When councils are under so much pressure to save money and find different ways of delivering services they sometimes overlook the simple and common sense solutions. As part of the teams we have been able to ask very simple questions that are obvious to the outsider but can be missed."

WM ADASS and IEWM have a joint improvement programme with active offers of support and active engagement from the 14 councils around: - personalisation, delayed transfer of care, commissioning and responding to the Care Bill, carers & employment, learning disability, dementia, care funding calculator, continuing health care, telehealthcare and Safeguarding. Benchmarking information to support improvement has been published for the first time covering all 14 councils. This includes data provided by the regional Performance and Standards Network who have agreed a subset of measures that are being used to highlight areas for improvement including Delayed Transfer of Care and Personalisation; Personal Budgets; and Re-ablement.

The integration of social care with health and the implementation of the Integration Transformation Fund (Better Care Fund) are key current challenges facing Adult Social Care in the region, with a target date of 14th February set to publish joint plans with CCG's. The quality of data collection systems is a particular challenge and joint work is being undertaken to agree processes for signing off agreed data sets with health.

A summary of recent regional Adult Social Care improvement activity includes:-

- submitting a regional response to the Department of Health on the Caring for our Future consultation on reforming what and how people pay for their care and support
- publishing a significant piece of work on the implications of the Care Bill for commissioning services
- undertaking a stock take of performance in relation to the recommendations coming from Winterbourne View investigation
- completing a state of readiness survey of the regions' position in preparing for the implementation of the Integration Transformation Fund

To find out more contact Pete Jackson, IEWM/WMADASS Programme Lead. Email: pjackson@westmidlandsiep.gov.uk

Children's Services

Across children's services in the West Midlands there is a strong recognition that the improvement of all LAs children's services performance in the region is a collective responsibility. For example, there is increased focus and activity on supporting and challenging each other, working together on some of the 'wicked issues' for mutual benefit, specific support and challenge activity and the embedding of a more transparent culture. All of which is leading to a more robust and systematic approach to improvement and development, with all 14 Children's Services authorities in the region actively involved in SLI activity.

In October all 14 authorities took part in a peer challenge of their self-assessments. A regional data pack was developed for the challenge and will be developed further and updated regularly to become a regional benchmarking data pack. We now have a good overview of the region's strengths and areas for improvement which will inform our improvement work going forward, including a programme of peer challenge and support activity which is now underway using both reciprocal and commissioned capacity from within the region.

Between December and March 2014 work will be underway to review and challenge all 14 *Local Safeguarding Children's Boards* annual reports with a learning workshop planned for March 2014. This will be enhanced over time by a regional peer challenge programme drawing upon expertise and best practice from elsewhere.

Stoke, Warwickshire and Staffordshire, who were originally national CIB Munro demonstrator sites, are developing the *Pride in Practice* programme to support the priorities of the region around quality of practice and workforce development. They are developing a series of learning events and an offer of bespoke support to individual authorities around implementation of Munro.

The first of the 6 local authorities involved in the *Auditing the Auditors* project received their peer challenge in the first week of December. The 3 peer challengers from Worcestershire, Telford & Wrekin and Solihull spent three days in Stoke on Trent challenging their audit tools and audit practice. Using the developed peer challenge guidance, all those involved felt that the challenge had been extremely useful and challenges for the remaining 5 local authorities are being scheduled before the end of March 2014, when a review will take place. Tilly Heigh, Peer Challenge Lead, commented: "I think the best thing about the peer challenge was that it was three way in terms of challenging and learning – for the 'receiving' authority, our own authorities and us as team members – so in terms of benefits it was 6 way!"

The regional Leadership and Workforce Development Plan for Children's Services is developing well, and a key strand of this will be a *Regional Capacity Builders programme*. The aim here is to maximize cost effectiveness with a co-produced delivery model that takes advantage (so to speak!) of some of the fantastic expertise we already have in the region. We are developing a regional pool of people who are willing, with appropriate training and support, to deliver a range of offers including coaching, Action Learning Set facilitation, peer challenge, and support to specific projects requested by LAs. Even though we are all busy people, we are keen to see how this works and of course, there is enormous development value to be had for those delivering too – as we know from previous peer challenges and feedback from the first Auditing the Auditors peer challenge. Just think what an offer of two days a year across the region would bring! Do get in touch if you would like more information.

The *Early Help Network* had its first meeting at the end of November, and there was a good discussion about priorities for future work together. There will be an *Early Help workshop* on February 7th with representation from all local areas to look at the findings of the LARC5 (NFER) research project around effective support to engage with services for families across the early intervention spectrum where there is neglect. Carole Brooks, our performance associate will be looking at how we develop some regional approaches to performance management and outcomes measurement for early help and intervention services.

The Lead Member and Scrutiny Chairs programme of workshops continues with the second workshop being held just before Christmas. At this workshop, Lead Members and Scrutiny Chairs explored risks to performance, using the CIB Signatures of Risk framework, sharing their own individual council issues and learning as well as a wider discussion on their roles in mitigating against risks to performance. The next workshop is being held on 7th March and will be a joint workshop with DCSs.

There are two key areas relating to children's services that are likely to have an impact on the region. *The Children & Families Bill 2013* – this reforms the systems for adoption, looked after children, family justice and special educational needs. The Government introduced an Adoption Scorecard process last year which identified those authorities not performing well against specific performance indicators. This national exercise has been repeated again with the latest authorities identified for poor performance being published shortly. The regional benchmarking tool has been sent to each local authority and will alert authorities where they fall in the lowest quartile so they can prepare for scrutiny by the DfE if necessary.

Ofsted Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. The new Ofsted framework was implemented in November, when the first five authorities had their inspections. None of these were in the West Midlands. The next round of Inspections is due to start on 20th January 2014.

Children’s Project Officer Secondment Opportunity: We have a secondment opportunity for someone from a Local Authority who would like to support the delivery of the Regional Children and Young People’s Programme, until 31st March 2015. This would be on present salary (up to a maximum of £18,500 pro rata for 3 days per week) plus travel expenses. Three days a week would be ideal but some flexibility is possible. The Project Officer will work for the Children’s Programme Manager and Sector Led Improvement Manager, and be responsible for supporting the implementation of the IEWM/WMADCS/WMCIB regional improvement programme, liaising with Directors and Local Authority and partner agency staff as appropriate. Key duties include organising and supporting Network meetings, Peer Challenges and improvement and learning events, providing administrative support and developing and maintaining effective communication systems. If you know someone who might be interested in this opportunity, please do pass on these details to them. The closing date is January 17th.

To find out more contact Carola Benion, IEWM/WMADCS Programme Lead. Email: carola.bennion@beaconcandc.org

Strategic Improvement Activities and Support

SOLACE, the LGA and Virtual Staff College are working together to build a new joint approach to *Leadership in Children’s Services*. With this in mind, the three organisations have been collaborating over the last few months to develop an integrated leadership offer that brings together Chief Executives, Lead Members and Directors of Children’s Services so that they can address some of the key challenges in partnership. This will be piloted at a "scenario planning" day due to take place in February. We will let you have details of future support offers as they emerge.

The Children’s Improvement Board has been working with colleagues to develop a *“Safeguarding Quality Assurance Framework for Chief Executives”*. The draft framework is currently being tested and refined prior to wider release in the next few months. Again, we will let you have further details when available.

In our last bulletin we highlighted work underway to review of the use of Agency Social Workers in Children’s Services by councils across the region. This work is continuing, with key areas of focus including looking at how we can collectively develop more effective commissioning and procurement arrangements for the supply of agency workers, in addition to some of the broader workforce development aspects such as improving career progression opportunities and professional development for social workers in children’s social care, drawing upon and learning from best practice that exists both within the region and further afield.

This issue is also gaining pace at the national level and we hope to be working with colleagues from the LGA and other national bodies as our work progresses.

For more information contact Sue Banks, Director, IEWM. Email: sbanks@westmidlandsiep.gov.uk