

### Overview

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

The Sector Led Improvement agenda continues to gather pace with lots of activity at both the national and regional level in recent weeks and you can read more below.

### LGA Update and activity

Since the launch of the **LGA's Rewiring Public Services campaign** this summer, its 10 big ideas have been discussed and debated in the media and Parliament and across local government. Here in the West Midlands, following our conference in December, several councils have chosen to have a debate locally about the Rewiring campaign and have publicly resolved to support it. Solihull MBC has an extraordinary Council meeting on Tuesday, 18 Feb, at which Sir Merrick will be making an opening address. You can find out more about the Rewiring campaign here: [www.local.gov.uk/campaigns/](http://www.local.gov.uk/campaigns/)

### Evaluation of the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge

The LGA recently commissioned the Centre for Local and Regional Government Research at Cardiff Business School to undertake an independent evaluation of the effectiveness of the corporate peer challenge (CPC) programme. The findings have now been published and we present a short summary here:

The evaluation found that one of the great strengths of the offer is the way it is tailored to each council's needs. This means that it can be used in different ways by different authorities. However, all councils agree that preparation is key to its success. It is important to get the scope and timing right and to ensure ownership across the council. Councils reported that the feedback and reports from CPC teams offer challenging, constructive and honest insight and that CPC has had a positive impact on their capacity to take responsibility for their own improvement. It encourages open and honest self-assessment and provides councillors, officers, staff, partners and communities with an independent review of a council's strengths and weaknesses and the challenges it faces. As well as promoting greater self-awareness, CPC has increased councils' self-confidence, often enhancing their reputation and encouraging them to become more outward looking and to engage with regional and national initiatives.

The evaluation also highlights that CPC has helped improve the way councillors and officers work together. It has encouraged councils to agree clear priorities and to integrate strategic management with resource planning. It has supported councils in improving their medium financial planning, efficiency programmes, partnership working, performance management, and engagement with partners and local communities.

Councils that have experienced the CPC process are strong advocates for it. Many have encouraged other authorities to participate. By March 2014, councils will have contributed more than 2,500 days of senior councillor and officer time to CPC teams. This represents a considerable investment by the sector in its own improvement which is equivalent to millions of pounds worth of consultancy.

The evaluation concludes that the issue is not whether CPC should continue to be supported. The question is how to build on the success that it has already achieved to enable the sector to meet the growing demand for the offer without compromising on quality. There are a number of recommendations to further fine-tune the CPC process in order to ensure that the sector builds on the success it has already achieved. You can read the full report here: [Corporate Peer Challenge: evaluation report](#)

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](mailto:howard.davis@local.gov.uk)

### LGA Events

Here are details of just a few of the up-coming LGA events that you may find of interest. To see the full list of events and to register, visit [www.local.gov/events](http://www.local.gov/events)

- The Social Value Act – One Year On (London) - 24 February 2014
- Launch of the Our Place Programme and the Our Place Champions Network (London) - 10 March 2014
- LGA annual fire conference and exhibition (Cardiff) - 11-12 March 2014
- Strengthening Healthwatch in a changing system: bringing outcomes and impacts to life (Birmingham) - 17 March 2014
- Health and Wellbeing System Improvement – Looking to the Future (London) - 19 March 2014
- LGA annual conference and exhibition 2014 (Bournemouth, 8-10 July 2014)

### Adult Social Care & Health

The WM ADASS / IEWM Adult Social Care SLI programme has made significant progress over the last 9 months with a strong commitment for all 14 authorities to sign up to the collective memorandum of understanding, share self-assessments and take part in the regional peer challenge programme.

Governance arrangements have been established with Martin Reeves chairing the ASC SLI Board which includes representatives for the Department of Health, Local Government Association and the Care Quality Commission. Quarterly reports are being provided to TEASC the national body charged with overseeing SLI. A single improvement plan has been developed during 2013/14 and is currently being consulted on for 2014/15 and provides a focus on the key challenges facing ASC which are identified as:-

- **Integration**- working across the region for the preparation of Better Care Fund Plans
- **Prevention/Use of Resources** - understanding the financial pressures within the system and sharing strategies for mitigating impact on service
- **Care Bill Implementation** - continuing to interpret and develop understanding of the implications of the Care Bill

It is designed to build upon the successful work undertaken in 2013, to build capacity in the region that supports sector led improvement and that reflects the priorities outlined by the 14 DASS in the region following recent consultation.

6 councils (Telford, Wolverhampton, Walsall, Worcestershire, Dudley and Stoke) have completed Peer Challenges between September 2013 and February 2014 each of which has been bespoke to the specific authority; emerging themes include use of resources, safeguarding and 'what good looks like' in a climate of austerity. An evaluation of the programme is planned to be undertaken in March with the remaining 8 authorities scheduled to be reviewed during 2014/15. A peer challenge summit is also planned for April to ensure all councils in the region are receiving some challenge from Peers.

The approach that the West Midlands is taking in its peer challenge programme to involve experts by experience has been recognised nationally and the guardian recently carried an article highlighting the innovative approach <http://www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network/2013/dec/09/adult-social-care-west-midlands-peer-challenge>

The improvement plan has also focused on areas of performance where the West Midlands is below national averages and during 2013 improvement has been achieved in relation to the Delayed Transfer of Care, the number of councils signed up to the Think Local Act Personal framework and the number of adults with a learning disability placed out of the region. WM ADASS continues to emphasise the importance of recognising the other work being undertaken through the regional improvement programme run jointly with Improvement and Efficiency West Midlands and the activity that individual authorities are undertaking to improve their own services. This includes a number of regional networks focussed on improvement in relation to areas such as Learning disability, personalisation, carers, continuing health care and performance & standards.

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

**Children's Services**

An increasing focus and activity on working together to support and challenge each other is being maintained, with a strong recognition that the improvement of all LAs children's services performance in the region is a collective responsibility. All 14 Children's Services authorities in the region are actively involved in SLI activity.

As part of the more robust and systematic approach to improvement and development, a single integrated Improvement Plan across children's services is being developed for 2014-15, that incorporates Sector Led Improvement work - particularly focused on safeguarding - with WM ADCS's wider improvement agenda across the whole of Children's services. The plan will set priorities for collaborative work as a region, in keeping with one of the key principles of SLI.

A regional benchmarking data pack is being developed which will include performance data around social care, early help and educational achievement. It is already providing a good overview of the region's strengths and areas for improvement and will inform the priorities in the Improvement Plan.

Work is now underway to review all 14 *Local Safeguarding Children's Boards* annual reports, with a challenge workshop for LSCB chairs around their annual reports taking place in March. There is also a performance workshop for LSCB members in February, and a peer challenge of Worcestershire's LSCB planned for 24-25<sup>th</sup> March. This will all support the development of a programme of support and challenge next year.

The first of the 6 peer challenges forming the *Auditing the Auditors* project this year took place in December, and was very well received by both Stoke and those acting as peer challengers. The remaining five challenges will all take place in March and early April.

A meeting took place of the Principal Social Workers in the region in February, the first time this has happened. All who attended agreed that this was a really valuable opportunity to share experiences of delivering the role and supporting the improvement of front line practice. The plan is now to hold quarterly meetings to support PSWs in their developing role and provide capacity to supporting the improvement of front line practice.

An *Early Help workshop* took place on February 7<sup>th</sup> attended by more than 50 people involved in commissioning and delivering early help services from a wide range of agencies in the region. The workshop discussed both regional and national findings of the LARC5 research project around effective support to engage with services for families across the early intervention spectrum where there is neglect. There was also a very productive interactive session around regional approaches to performance management and outcomes measurement for early help and intervention services. Feedback from the day has been very encouraging, with many areas of good practice noted for taking back to local areas for sharing and implementation.

A joint workshop with Directors of Children's Services, Lead Members and Scrutiny Chairs is being held on 7<sup>th</sup> March. The session will share approaches to implementing the Sector Led Improvement model and identify some common themes and challenges, as well as common priorities and ways to work together on improvement in the coming year.

In the second round of *Ofsted Inspections of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers* which began on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2014, two West Midlands Children's Services Departments have had an inspection - Staffordshire and Coventry; these were completed on February 5<sup>th</sup>.

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

**Strategic Improvement Activities and Support**

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.

Work is now actively underway via both a new regional Procurement Group established to look at the possibility of a collaborative regional framework for the supply of children's agency social workers and the WMADCS Workforce Supply Group who are exploring a number of opportunities to improve the employment experience for children's social workers.

**And finally...**

We're sure by now that you will all be aware that Trish Haines (the current IEWM Chair) announced her intention to retire shortly before Christmas, with a view to leaving Worcestershire CC sometime around May.

Since then we have been reviewing arrangements and are delighted to announce that Mark Rogers has kindly agreed to be our new Chair. Trish handed over the reins to Mark at our last Board meeting on 11th February.

IEWM would like to thank Trish for the fantastic support she has given both the Programme and the IEWM team in recent years and wish her all the best in her well-earned retirement.

In taking on the role of IEWM Chair, Mark will also now chair the West Midlands Sector Led Improvement Steering Group and consequently Jan Britton will now take on a lead role with the West Midlands Children's Improvement Board.

For more information contact Sue Banks, Director, IEWM. Email: [sbanks@westmidlandsiep.gov.uk](mailto:sbanks@westmidlandsiep.gov.uk)