

Overview

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

Since our last bulletin in February, we have been busy preparing this year's Performance of the Region report, which takes a look back at our performance in key service areas during the past year and looks forward to the key priorities and challenges for the sector to collectively tackle in the year ahead.

We aim to publish the report to all West Midlands local authorities by the end of April, with a summary version available for wider circulation shortly afterwards.

We have also been consulting upon and developing Improvement plans for both Children's Services and Adult Social Care and Health services in the region, in addition to a host of other activities about which you can read more below.

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

LGA Update and activity

The LGA has a range of tools and programmes to support councils to learn from each other and try out new ways of improving and delivering services, including:

- A programme of corporate and thematic peer challenges
- The Productivity programme
- LG Inform and the Knowledge Hub

Corporate and thematic peer challenges

Since April 2011, 29 of the 33 authorities in the West Midlands have either undergone or are planning some form of LGA peer challenge. Every authority has access to a corporate challenge delivered at no cost once every three years and one of the great strengths of the offer is the way it is tailored to each council's needs. The region's SLI Steering Group is actively encouraging all authorities to consider some form of peer challenge; if you are interested in finding out more about how a peer challenge could support improvements in your own authority, please contact Howard Davis, LGA Principal Adviser.

Email: howard.davis@local.gov.uk

LGA Productivity Offer

The LGA's Productivity Programme supports councils to achieve better for less. It has focussed on critical high spend areas such as children's, adults and families, procurement and capital assets. The programme aims to provide practical support to councils as they grapple with the challenges local government faces to deliver better for less. The [Productivity Expert Support](#) offers to fund a number of productivity 'experts' to work with councils over a 6-9 month period of time to assist with their productivity issues. Specialisms include: contract renegotiation, procurement, income generation, energy efficiency and adult social care. For more information about the offer see: <http://www.local.gov.uk/productivity>

LG Inform and the Knowledge Hub

LG Inform is a free service, co-designed by the sector that provides you with up-to-date published data about your local area and the performance of your council or fire and rescue authority. It has been designed to support councils to manage performance, assist benchmarking and provide a means of data analysis. So whether you are interested in scrutiny, a particular service area, or simply need an overview, it can help you review and compare performance with other authorities.

Register as a user at: <http://lginform.local.gov.uk/> and you can use the 'report builder' function to create maps, charts, text or tables using any of the value for money and performance metrics that are held in LG Inform. The LG Inform Knowledge

Hub group is a place to share ideas, comments and news about LG Inform. Join this group to hear more about future plans of LG Inform and share with us your thoughts and ideas for the system.

For a case study on how Harlow Council is using the LG Inform service to collate and present information more efficiently. See: [Case Study: Harlow Council LG Inform](#). Find out more about LG Inform at: <http://lginform.local.gov.uk/about-lg-inform/faq>

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

- Healthy schools, healthy citizens: the council and school's role in improving health and wellbeing outcomes (London) – 28th April 2014
- Integration, inclusion and acquiring talent (London) – 12th May 2014
- Introduction to Social Impact Bonds in Health (London) – 12th May 2014
- LGA annual conference and exhibition 2014 (Bournemouth) - 8-10 July 2014

Adult Social Care & Health

Since our last bulletin, the WM ADASS / IEWM Adult Social Care SLI programme has continued to make significant progress with all 14 authorities signed up to the collective memorandum of understanding, completed self-assessments of their individual performance and active involvement in the regional peer challenge programme.

The improvement plan has also focused on the production and sign off of the Better Care Fund plans which as a region we have approached through the co-ordination of the BCF Steering group that has been chaired by Nick Bell and included representatives from NHS England, Department of Health and LGAs. The assurance process for the sign off of the plans has presented particular challenges but the region's strong commitment to SLI has assisted in adopting a supportive peer element to our approach.

Governance arrangements are operating effectively, 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 have been provided to TEASC the national body charged with overseeing SLI. A single improvement plan has been agreed and signed for 2014/15 will focus on the key challenges facing in the region 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

7 councils (Telford, Wolverhampton, Walsall, Worcestershire, Dudley, Stoke and Coventry) have completed Peer Challenges between September 2013 and March 2014, each of which has been bespoke to the specific authority; emerging themes include the use of resources, safeguarding and 'what good looks like' in a climate of austerity.

A peer challenge summit has been arranged for 4th April 2014 where all 14 councils will be challenged by their peers using the self-assessments that all councils have produced and to identify common areas where improvement is required over the next 12 months

The joint West Midlands ADASS/ IEWM improvement plan for 2014/15 will also focus on a number of areas that have been identified where, through a collaborative approach, further improvement can be gained. These include; Personalisation, Support for Carers, Continuing Health Care, and safeguarding.

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

Children's Services

Sector Led Improvement and collaboration continues to develop and be embedded in the region as there is a growing recognition that there are some areas of improvement and development that children's services in the region can do better collaboratively. Over the last three months the specific areas of activity have focused on the following:

1. Continuing the development of a robust quarterly report of benchmarking data and analysis for the region around social care, including adoption, early help and educational achievement - Quarter 3 report just finalised
2. Performance workshops, including for LSCB partners, with Ofsted representatives
3. A review of all 14 LSCB annual reports in the region followed by a workshop with LSCB chairs to focus on emerging themes, what they can do collaboratively in the region to support improvement in 2014/15. They have agreed that for next year they will work in pairs to challenge their annual reports and look at wider challenge activity of LSCBs in the region
4. The development of a peer challenge model for LSCBs, using the new Ofsted Review descriptors, with a recent successful challenge of Worcestershire's LSCB by Wakefield
5. Delivery of 5 of the 6 planned 'Auditing the Auditors' peer challenges in the region which have been successfully delivered using reciprocal resources from each of the councils at team manager, independent reviewing officer, performance officer and strategic performance manager level to form each team of three challengers. The feedback from those participating is unanimous in terms of the positive learning and development for both the challenged authority but also the challengers and there has been significant impact in terms of improving auditing tools and processes within individual councils
6. Principal social workers met together in the region for the first time and there was agreement that they will meet quarterly to share experience and learning relating to this new role as it develops, and also to provide a focus and some capacity to support the priorities for the improvement of front line practice that have been agreed regionally
7. A joint workshop for Directors, Lead Members and Scrutiny Chairs was held for the first time in the region and looked at exploring and understanding the different roles and their place in the improvement system, as well as discussing and agreeing the regional priorities for improvement for next year
8. The Children's Leadership and Workforce Development plan has now been agreed, and amongst the strands now being implemented is a programme for Team Managers, harnessing and sharing expertise from within the region to develop a programme of regional seminars around a range of leadership and practice issues. A Children's Workforce Supply Working Group, a WMADCS subgroup, has been established to support consistency of quality, costs and incentives for the Children's Social Worker workforce across the region, and to achieve improved retention of experienced social workers. In addition, the launch of the new national systems leadership programme, initially for CXs, LMs and DCSS, took place on February 13th with involvement from the West Midlands in the first cohort

A significant achievement in the region has been the development of a single Children's Improvement Plan for 2014-15 to be governed jointly by WM ADCS and the WM Children's Improvement Board (WMCIB). The Plan sets out a set of agreed strategic improvement priorities, based on the peer challenge of each authority's self- assessment at the regional workshop (attended by all 14 local authorities), performance intelligence provided by the regional benchmarking data pack, work with the regional ADCS Networks, Lead Member and Scrutiny Chair regional workshops, and the recent joint Directors, Lead Member and Scrutiny chair workshop. The Improvement Plan contains a detailed action plan around the following strategic improvement priorities:

- Effective Safeguarding
- Better outcomes for looked after children, care leavers and adoption
- Early Help for Stronger families
- Educational Achievement
- Readiness for SEND reforms.

Enablers identified to support the achievement of the improvement priorities are:

- Peer challenge and support
- Robust performance management and quality assurance
- Individual support to Councils
- A high quality workforce
- Leadership and governance development
- Effective commissioning arrangements
- Shared learning of evidence informed practice.

WMADCS and WMCIB will oversee the delivery of the plan, taking responsibility for their agreed actions under each strategic priority.

At a recent visit to the WMCIB by Michael Coughlin, Executive Director of the Local Government Association, he described the children's services arrangements for SLI in the West Midlands as 'exemplary', with strong governance and a clear focus on outcomes and improvement.

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