

West Midlands Sector Led Improvement Bulletin –

September 2014

Overview

Welcome to the latest edition of the West Midlands Sector Led Improvement (SLI) bulletin, published on behalf of the region's SLI Steering Group. Since our last bulletin we have now published the latest *Performance of the Region Report* and copies have been sent to all Leaders and Chief Executives across the region.

The report headlines some great achievements that as a region we can all be proud of, for example, we now have more pupils achieving 5+ GCSEs at grades A* to C, with pupils and schools across the region performing better than the national average for educational attainment. There is good news too for Adult Social Care services, with the West Midlands providing more reablement support to service users than any other region, ensuring more people in our communities regain the ability to look after themselves following illness or injury.

In the past 12 months we have made some great strides too in relation to the way we

collaborate and support one another around the Sector Led Improvement agenda and our emerging approach here in the West Midlands is often held up as a model of best practice for others to follow.

However, the West Midlands continues experience major challenges as we are all aware, and we believe that now more than ever, we as sector leaders need to come together to up the level of ambition here for our region and to use the best of our collective talent to not only drive and deliver real improvements to the services that we deliver but also to demonstrate to government that we are best placed to deliver that improvement.

Our ambition for the coming months is to promote a dialogue, both as a region and with partners nationally, as to

- how the sector can 'toughen up' its approach to Sector Led Improvement and get better traction in what is essentially a voluntary system;
- how we can be unified and confident in our efforts to intervene where we have very real concerns about performance and can quickly come together to mobilise talent, capacity and support;
- how we can demonstrate that we, the sector, has the credibility, knowledge and skills to drive its own performance improvement, without the need for government intervention or interference.

This will be one of the main focuses for debate at the *IEWM 4th Annual Conference* which is again being hosted in partnership with the LGA and this year will be sponsored by Virgin Media.

The event takes place on *Friday, 5th December at the ICC in Birmingham* and we promise an engaging, value-packed programme. Tickets are 'selling' fast so to secure your free place [Register here](#)

LGA Update and activity

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

- Learning from Ofsted's Single Inspection Framework (London) – 23rd September 2014
- Public Sector Transformation: what does it mean for the workforce? (Birmingham) – 24th September 2014
- Avoiding gridlock 2040: How councils can save our roads (London) – 7th October 2014
- Redesigning the Health and Care landscape (London) – 22nd October 2014
- Master class in how a contribution based pay framework rewards and drives performance (London) – 13th November 2014
- Looking ahead: annual local government finance conference (London) – 6th January 2015

LGA Publications

Here are details of some recent publications available from the LGA website, many are free to download. To see a full list of the latest publications, visit:

<http://www.local.gov.uk/publications>

- Under pressure – How councils are planning for future cuts (May 2014)

- The Health and Wellbeing System Improvement Programme (June 2014)
- Enabling learning, development and improvement: being a peer as part of the LGA corporate peer challenge programme (July 2014)
- Transforming public services, using technology and digital tools and approaches (July 2014)
- Investing in our nation's future: the first 100 days of the next government (July 2014)
- Future funding outlook 2014 (July 2014)

The LGA also 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:
<http://www.local.gov.uk/peer-challenge>
- The Productivity programme:
<http://www.local.gov.uk/productivity>
- LG Inform and LG Inform Plus:
<http://lginform.local.gov.uk/>

An evaluation of the LGA SLI offer has been published [http://www.local.gov.uk/SLI Evaluation](http://www.local.gov.uk/SLI-Evaluation). More information about the full range of support can be found at: <http://www.local.gov.uk/sector-led-improvement>

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 peer 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 LG Inform Plus

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/>

LG Inform Plus has recently been launched which supplements the LG Inform service, giving subscribers the power to drill down from authority wide information to much smaller areas, such as wards. The service is based on the framework of local government information sharing standards making information easy to use and giving consistency across the sector. For more information on subscribing to LG Inform Plus and the benefits of doing so see: <http://about.esd.org.uk/subscription-benefits>

Children's Services

Sector Led Improvement continues to be a key part of improvement in children's services in the West Midlands. During the last few months there has been activity in the following areas:

1. **Auditing the Auditors peer challenge:** The five LAs participating in the second phase of this programme are now confirmed as Walsall, Herefordshire, Coventry, Shropshire and Sandwell. Biographies of the 3 peer challengers from each authority are just being collected and there is a briefing session organised for the 29th September. Next steps will be to set up the steering group for this phase of the programme and timetable the challenges to take place between October and March 2015. A task and finish group has been set up with representatives from the first phase of the

programme with the aim of developing a good practice guide for conducting early help case file audits for LAs across the region. A number of authorities were working on this and it makes sense to share the learning and development that is already happening.

2. *Annual peer challenge of self-assessments:*

Work has begun on preparing for the peer challenge event on the 22nd October 2014 when all authorities in the region will come together and challenge their self-assessments in

small groups. This work will be supported by an IEWM Associate, Virginia Roberts, commissioned to support our Children's Improvement Partner, Claire Burgess, with the support to authorities as they review and develop their self-assessment, moderation of self-assessments before peer challenge and identifying emerging themes on areas of strength and areas for improvement in the region. This together with the outcomes of the challenges will inform improvement planning for 2015/16 and SLI activity with individual authorities. Accurate self-evaluation is key to continuous improvement and this is a key piece of intelligence that Ofsted will consider in their inspection of local authorities.

3. *Performance monitoring and analysis:*

This continues to be a priority as the region develops its awareness of performance in children's services across the region and within individual councils. The next 6 monthly regional data pack will be coming out in September.

4. As well as overseeing the elements of the Children's Improvement Plan 2014/15 relating to sector led improvement, the *Children's Improvement Board* is considering how it can be more proactive in supporting the sector to identify dipping/poor performance earlier and mobilise support accordingly.

5. *Ofsted* - the next round of unannounced inspections are due to start again in September. Dates notified by Ofsted to the sector for the next round of inspections are:

- 16th September, 30th September, 21st October, 4th November,
- 11th November and 18th November.

We know that it is highly likely that the region will have authorities who will be inspected in this period. The evaluation of the first 11 inspections under the Single Inspection Framework has been published and can be found here

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/framework-and-evaluation-schedule-for-inspection-of-services-for-children-need-of-help-and-protection>

The good news is that Walsall Council had their Ministerial Improvement Notice lifted in July. 4 councils in the region currently remain on Ministerial Notices: Herefordshire and Coventry are on Improvement Notices and Sandwell and Birmingham are on Direction Notices.

6. *Support for Lead Members and Scrutiny Chairs:*

The region has a number of new Lead Members and Scrutiny chairs following elections in May. To support them in

their new roles the region is holding an induction event on the 12th September in Birmingham, followed by the quarterly Lead Member and Scrutiny Chair Network Meeting.

7. *LGA Sector Support:* The LGA Leadership Essentials Programme for Children's Services is a residential development event providing an intensive introduction to Children's Services for Lead Members. It is run at Warwick University. There are three programmes starting in the autumn until end of March 2015. More details can be found at

http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/councillor-development/-/journal_content/56/10180/6175927/ARTICLE

The West Midlands continues to have good take-up of the LGA Children's peer review and diagnostic offers. One authority in the region is part of a pilot for a new diagnostic offer for LSCBs which will take place in November.

8. As part of our *workforce development programme* we are developing a regional bank of expertise to carry out small pieces of work in the region. Local Authorities will be able to use the capacity of the staff registered on the programme to carry out small projects or pieces of work, which will also serve as professional development for those completing the work. As priorities are developed following the Peer Challenge day on 22 October, Local Authorities will be able to put forward their requests for support.

For more information please contact Polly Reed, Children's Programme Manager at preed@westmidlandsiep.gov.uk

Adult Social Care

1. The West Midlands **Adult Social Care Sector Led Improvement Board** Chaired by Martin Reeves CEO Coventry is continuing to focus on delivering the joint ADASS / IEWM improvement plan agreed for 2014/15. The key strategic priorities remain preparing for the implementation of the Care Act in 2015, supporting the development of Better Care Fund plans as part of the wider vision of integrating social care with health services and focusing on the use of resources and what 'good' looks like in a climate of austerity.
2. All 14 councils in the region continue to be committed to the regional ASC peer challenge process and have all completed a regional ASC **self-assessment** which is used as the basis for our onsite peer challenge programme. Coventry and Herefordshire have recently completed their challenges bringing the total undertaken to date to 9 with the remaining 5 scheduled to be completed this year. As part of the commitment to be transparent with the results of each challenge the letters sent to each authority outlining the findings of the challenge have been published on the WM ADASS website <http://adasswm.com/sector-led-improvement/>
3. Following the successful **peer challenge summit** held in April at which all 14 councils shared their self-assessments and received challenge from colleagues from within the region a further event is planned

to take place later in the year to ensure those councils not having a challenge will receive challenge by their peers. Details of the Peer Challenge summit process can be found at <http://adasswm.com/west-midlands-adass-challenge-workshop-4th-april-2014/>.

4. The peer challenges have continued to include **experts by experiences** who have contributed to the process by providing a user perspective on the services being reviewed. This we believe is a unique approach and continues to attract interest from national colleagues. Additionally lead ASC elected members have also been participating in the reviews and this has provided a valuable insight into the governance and financial management of the authority being reviewed.
5. The **'performance of the region'** report has been produced reflecting the key performance and financial challenges facing ASC services in the region and has assisted in identifying the priorities that the region is focusing on during 2014/15 and as part of our Improvement Plan.
6. A regional data set outlining the main areas of performance upon which ASC services are measured has been published with analysis of the data being undertaken by Raj Chauhan who has recently been appointed to support the region's Performance and Standards network. The **data set** of agreed indicators that complement the national Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework can be viewed at

<http://adasswm.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/ASCOF-chart-final.pdf>.

7. The Performance and standards network is assisting the SLI Board in developing a matrix of **risk triggers** that will combine performance, finance data and other agreed indicators as part of the ongoing work to ensure that the region remains alert of those councils who may require additional support.
8. The **regional improvement programme** has defined 10 thematic areas for improvement and has been summarised as plan on a page www.adasswm.com/wm-adass-iewm-improvement-plan-2014-15/ The regional improvement plan continues to link closely with the national TEASC programme which is currently being refreshed to reflect the national focus on demonstrating the impact that SLI is having on adult services.

For further information about the programme contact Pete Jackson, Adult Social Care Programme Manager at pjackson@westmidlandsiep.gov.uk