

West Midlands Sector Led Improvement Bulletin

Conference edition
11th December 2015

Overview

Welcome to this special conference edition of the West Midlands Sector Led Improvement (SLI) bulletin. In here you will find a brief summary of just some of the Improvement work that is taking place in our region and details of who to contact if you would like to get involved.

Our focus for the coming year is to further enhance our programme of activity and continue to develop our collective capacity to improve local public services through a credible and robust sector-led approach.

As part of this, we are planning to host a **Spring Conference on 16th March 2016** to enable a major regional stock take of our **Sector Led Improvement** approach. We will also launch the **Performance of the Region report** at this event, which is intended to bring together Leaders, Lead Members, Chief Executives and senior managers from across the region, alongside key partners, to debate the key challenges facing the sector and

highlight those areas upon which we would wish to collectively lobby and stimulate dialogue at the national level.

In the meantime, we continue to work hard to promote the work of our region and there is a growing interest in our work both nationally and from other regions.

"The infrastructure appears to be in place which could see us witness, and be part of, a generational shift in the way the sector leads and governs itself". Alison O'Sullivan, President of ADCS

For our work to continue to develop and be successful we need everyone to be involved. If you would like to know more please contact Sue Banks sbanks@westmidlandsiep.gov.uk

Adult Social Care

With the financial pressures on adult social care and the focus on the NHS accident and emergency systems reaching new levels of demand, and receiving much media and political focus, the importance of understanding what works and how directors of social care retain a focus on improvement and challenge has never been under sharper focus.

In this climate the West Midlands **Adult Social Care Sector Led Improvement Board** Chaired by Martin Reeves CEO Coventry is focusing on delivering the joint ADASS / IEWM improvement plan agreed for 2015/16 as well as recognising the enormous challenges being faced in all councils. The key strategic priorities for 2016 have been identified as:-

- Integration with health services through the implementation of the better care fund
- Focus on the financial challenges facing social care services and the role that prevention can play in reducing demand for services
- The embedding of changes introduced through the Care Act as business as usual while focussing on the fragility of the care provider market and the challenges and opportunities provided by joint commissioning with health, with specific emphasis on workforce matters
- The performance of the region in relation to delayed transfers of care and the specific challenges that will be posed in winter 2015/16

All 14 councils in the region completed a regional peer challenge by July 2014 and a new round has recently started with Walsall being reviewed in October 2015. All councils continue to be committed to the regional ASC peer challenge process and all have completed a regional ASC *self-assessment using a framework that focuses on 6 key areas of risk*. As part of our commitment to be transparent, the results of each challenge sent to each authority have been published on the WM ADASS website <http://adasswm.com/sector-led-improvement/>

The third peer challenge summit was held on 4th December 2015 where all councils were challenged using the data profiles collated in

the regional balanced score card and each challenged a peer council with some prepared key lines of enquiry. The day also identified the key challenges for 2016 and agreed a work programme for the coming year.

The peer challenges have continued to include **experts by experience** 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.

The region's '**Balanced score card**' has continued to evolve to incorporate the performance of councils in the region against a set of 20 data sets that combine performance, finance and thematic data to assist in identifying common challenges and identifying possible areas where councils may require support. The scorecard has focussed specifically on devising a set of finance metrics that are being used to better understand the key challenges councils are facing in sustaining adult social care services.

The scorecard has attracted interest from other regions who are also developing systems to better focus performance data and answer the challenge posed by the Department of Health to demonstrate the difference sector led improvement is making. The region will shortly be publishing its first **regional account** that

summarises both the regions' performance and its plans for 2016.

The **regional improvement programme** has defined 10 thematic areas for improvement and has been summarised as plan on a page <http://wm-adass.org.uk/plan-2016-17/>. 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.

The next meeting of the ASC SLI Board will take place on 11th February 2016.

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

Children's Services

Reciprocal challenge and support continues to be at the heart of children's services improvement in the region, alongside further collaboration in areas that benefit from a more joined up regional approach.

The Children's Improvement Board:

The Children's Improvement Board (CIB) continues to meet quarterly with representatives from the CX group, ADCS, Lead Members network and the LSCB Chairs network. Its key role is to monitor and challenge performance across the region and provide support as laid out in the **Protocol for identifying support and challenging risk and under-performance in children's services in the West Midlands** that has

been developed in 2015 and is available here www.wmadcs.org.uk. The CIB also has an overview of the key policy and practice areas and how these are progressing in the West Midlands.

Support for Lead Members and Scrutiny

Chairs: The regional member network for children's services in the region continues to meet quarterly. There was a successful induction event in July for new Lead Members and Scrutiny Chairs following the elections that was supported by the LGA. The LGA are also sponsoring an event on 27th January 2016 for members with a role or interest in children's services, where members will have the opportunity to meet with the Regional Schools Commissioner and regional Ofsted leads, see: www.westmidlandsiep.gov.uk/events for further details. There has also been an increase in the region in the number of Lead Members accredited by the LGA to provide peer mentoring to other Lead Members and Scrutiny Chairs.

Ofsted: The last inspections for 2015 have started. The region still has a significant number of authorities waiting for an inspection under the Single Inspection Framework. The next inspection date is the 11th January 2016.

LGA Sector Support for children's

services: The last of this year's LGA Leadership Essentials programmes for Lead Members of Children's Services and Children's Services Scrutiny Chairs is being held on the 28th -29th January 2016, for more details and registration see <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**. Since January 2015, there has been 2 LGA peer reviews, an LSCB peer diagnostic, a Safeguarding peer diagnostic and a bespoke peer diagnostic looking at School Improvement.

The **LGA Children's Improvement Adviser** continues to offer bespoke support to councils in the region and is currently working with five councils providing improvement support, and additionally provides advice and support to others on request.

Auditing the Auditors peer challenge:

This continues to be a successful way of councils checking out how their audit tools are working, to assure themselves on the quality of their audit practice and also provides an opportunity for good practice and learning to be disseminated across the region. By the end of March 2016 all 14 local authorities will have received a peer challenge over the past 3 years. The programme will then be reviewed.

Annual peer challenge of self-

assessments: Over the last three years in the West Midlands region we have developed a process that has focused on supporting the fourteen local authorities (LAs) in the region to improve their self-assessment of areas of good practice and areas where they need to further develop and improve across the children's services system. Core to this has been the assumption that an authority that 'knows itself', and can evidence this, is in a good position to

deliver continuous improvement and good outcomes for children and families. A key driver has also been to know, understand and improve our performance as a region through reciprocal peer support and sharing of good practice. All local authorities have participated in the process and we had 100% attendance at this year's **peer challenge day**.

We have further refined the process this year so that the moderation of self-assessments and feedback on the quality of these was completed by September in advance of the peer challenge day. Each local authority was also asked to identify a practice area for peer challenge from their areas for improvement. On the day, each challenge took approximately ninety minutes. Evaluation feedback was extremely positive and many authorities are continuing the links going forward with some joint improvement activity.

The overall analysis of the self-assessments identifies the following areas that all 14 LAs have identified as common areas for improvement. These are not dissimilar to last year and give clear regional focus for 2016-2017:

- Consistent quality of practice; assessment/case planning and case recording;
- Early Help – assessment; step-up/step-down; application of thresholds;
- Quality assurance and becoming a learning organisation – embedding and assessing impact and outcomes;

- Workforce stability and high caseloads/managing a more even distribution of caseloads.

These priorities will be fed into the ADCS group to inform the Improvement Plan for 2016/17.

Regionalising Adoption: Two of our sub-regional bids to the Adoption Fund have been successful with both Adoption Black Country (ABC) comprised of six authorities and Adoption Focus; and the Coventry, Warwickshire and Solihull Partnership with Barnardo's successfully securing funding. Developments are moving quickly as the partners prepare to work together on recruitment, marketing, training, and placements. There are good links with VAAs through the Regional Adoption Leadership Board which is chaired by Tony Oakman, DCS, Dudley; and we have a new national sponsor, Hugh Thornberry.

The region received positive comments from the DfE re: the submission of our recent Adoption Support Fund Questionnaire; all fourteen local authorities contributed to a comprehensive response ensuring that the good work in the West Midlands continues to be quality assured, validated and represented in the national arena.

Performance Data: The region is prioritising the development of an enhanced children's services dataset and scorecard, supported by an improved method of collection and analysis. With Sandwell providing an interim solution, a specialist IEWM Associate will partner the region from January until June next year to develop and implement the new performance

dataset which will shape network agendas and drive improvement activity going forwards.

Workforce Analysis: In order to enable the DCS to project future trends, facilitate effective workforce and financial planning, better manage the commissioning of agency social workers, assess the effectiveness of the pay caps and take decisions about future levels; a current workforce analysis project is underway to consolidate all recent data collections into one cohesive report. The report will demonstrate key workforce trends with national comparators, review and combine data collections, make recommendations to ensure a sustainable process for data collection going forwards and in relation to the future of the agency pay cap. The report will be available before Christmas.

Social Worker agency numbers have increased to around 600 with only one breach in the last quarter, which has been suitably addressed. However the quality record is still not gaining ground due to confusion about its purpose therefore the aim is to rename and relaunch following a further engagement event with Agencies on January 12th. Rates also need to be reviewed at the start of next year.

Commissioning: The strategic commissioning network have agreed and in-contract review of the region's combined commissioning framework ahead of a March 2017 end. The West Midlands are keen to ensure maximum usage through increased functionality based on the strategic commissioning needs of the region. A core group along with the provider are now reviewing and planning so that the

revised framework and requisite training and development can be implemented during this financial quarter.

Team Manager Development programme: Building on the achievements of the first two cohorts of the Regional Team Manager's Development Programme the final cohort is upcoming with nominations closing Friday 18th December. The eight modules will run between January 22nd and April 11th and on conclusion the West Midlands will have supported some 75 front line Team Managers through this bespoke course. The concluding evaluation will follow on from the initial impact evaluation undertaken by C4EO following cohort one.

Principal Social Workers: Following the success of the Voice of The Child conference earlier this year the PSW Network are planning a further annual conference on April 22nd 2016. The event will centre on the role and function of effective supervision; improving the quality of supervision; and reflective practice. The event will offer managers and practitioners the opportunity to hear from leading experts on supervision, models and emerging learning and research.

Further to this the **Pride in Practice** event programme for the New Year has been finalised with a comprehensive development offer comprising Service Re-design, Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation, Post Adoption Support and Edge of Care.

Child Sexual Exploitation: The newly formed CSE Network continues to gather pace

with representation from Public Health and the Police. There will be a workshop for PHE and LA CSE leads in the New Year. Potential themes include; data robustness and messaging and community support. Communications nationally have been slow to start so there is interest in the West Midlands acting as a pilot to feed up best practice. The event will be at the end of February (date TBC) in Birmingham.

The group have identified nine priority areas and associated lead authorities who are each developing a business case and project plan for their priority with a view to a regional programme of joint CSE activity being agreed and finalised in February.

For more information please contact Paula Whitehouse, Children's Programme Manager at pwhitehouse@westmidlandsiep.gov.uk

Commissioning & Procurement

With mounting pressures on budgets we are continuing to work with lead officers improving the use of Regional Frameworks in Children's and Adult Social Care Services and focusing efforts on how we can make better use of provider information we hold to assist with market management.

We continue to scan the market place for development opportunities for public sector staff and are facilitating training in Market Engagement techniques as well as working with Crown Commercial Services on the development of a **West Midlands Regional Commissioning Academy**, potentially with financial support from DCLG, focused on

enhancing skills in systems leadership in a devolution context.

Leadership and Transformation

The *Transcend Leadership Alumni*

The programme continues to meet although there has been a lot of movement in those delegates involved in the programme with around half of the original 60 participants moving onto new roles. The group offers a resource for the region which can be utilised to peer challenge and support between authorities across a range of areas.

There is also a renewed interest in transformation activity across the region, driven no doubt, by the financial climate and the need for authorities to make further significant budget cuts in the face of increasing demand on services.

An event is planned for mid-January to bring together the Transcend Alumni and transformation leads in an open forum to exchange views with the aim of generating ideas for further quarterly events and activities over the coming year.

IEWM continues to support the district councils via the quarterly ***West Midlands District Council Network*** events which brings together the chief executives and directors of the 18 districts in a knowledge sharing and challenge forum, with external input from the LGA and private sector experts on topics including finance, housing reform, business rates etc. We have been approached by the national District Council Network to establish a closer working relationship with them using the West Midlands as a model of good practice.

For further details of our work in these areas contact Ged Bowles, Assistant Director for Transformation at gbowles@westmidlandsiep.gov.uk

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.uk/events

- The Forward View: the annual local government finance conference – 6th January 2016 (London)
- Supporting local businesses, sustaining regulatory services (Councillor Event) - 27th January 2016 (London)
- Leadership Essentials for Chairs and Vice Chairs of Health and Wellbeing Boards, 27-28 January 2016 (Warwick)
- LGA annual public health conference and exhibition – 3rd February 2016 (London)
- An ageing population: the challenges and opportunities for local government - 29th February 2016 (London)

LGA Publications

There are many 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>

Sector-led Improvement tools and programmes

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/>

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, 25 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-four years and one of the great strengths of the offer is the way it is tailored to each council's needs. To date 16 authorities in the West Midlands have had a corporate peer challenge.

If you are interested in finding out more about how a peer challenge could support improvements in your own authority, please contact Helen Murray, LGA Principal Adviser. Email: helen.murray@local.gov.uk

Design in the Public Sector

As part of our commitment to support and promote innovation, the LGA has commissioned the Design Council to work with a cohort of councils in the West Midlands using design thinking to tackle a current or future service delivery challenge. We will support a small number of teams from councils, potentially

involving partners too, to work intensively together as a cohort over a 6 months period between March and July 2016. This is a great opportunity to get involved in some innovative work which has been successful in the South West and East Midlands. It is fully funded and hopefully a lot to gain from exploring a different way of thinking to address complex issues.

The launch event is on Friday 8th January 2016 in Birmingham. For more information contact Anne Brinkhoff at anne.brinkhoff@local.gov.uk or register here: www.bit.ly/DiPS2016

DevoNext

Devolution to local areas can bring economic, political and social benefits to communities across the country. Our online resource details what powers councils have already been given and what they're doing with them, as well as tools to help your council negotiate further devolution. <http://www.local.gov.uk/devolution>

Housing Commission

The LGA has launched a Housing Commission to set out a forward-looking vision for the future of housing and the relationship between councils and communities.

This call for evidence invites councils, partners, organisations and individuals to contribute their issues, evidence, and examples of effective housing and ideas to the Commission's Advisory Panel, made up of LGA Board members, experts and academics.

We welcome all contributions before the 29 January 2016. Please send submissions of no

more than 3,000 words to LGahousingcommission@local.gov.uk.

Productivity Programme

The LGA's Productivity Programme supports councils to achieve better for less. It has focussed on areas such as commercialisation, 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, commercialisation and digital. 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 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 ensuring information is easy to use and consistent.

For more information on subscribing to LG Inform Plus and the benefits of doing so see: <http://about.esd.org.uk/subscription-benefits>