

Local Government Association – Children’s Services Programme

January 2019 Update

The LGAs Children’s Services Programme Team is responsible for delivering a range of activities and support to help local authorities improve services for children. This newsletter is to provide an update on the key developments in the programme and over the last quarter. We have also used the opportunity to provide more information on the role of Children’s Improvement Advisors (CIAs) along with a ‘day in the life of’ one of our CIAs.

This is the first update in recent times and we intend to provide these on a quarterly basis. Those peers who have already been part of either a review, diagnostic or peer challenge will have used the Knowledge Hub to access the pre-review documentation. We have set up a private Knowledge Hub group just for peers – this is anyone who has completed our peer training and/or been part of an LGA peer team in relation to Children’s Services (including Early Years). Later this month we will add peers to the group - we are going to use the group to keep everyone informed as to developments with our children’s programmes and we will also use it to let you know of upcoming peer challenges so that you can let us know if you are available. If you do not want to be added to the group then please get in touch.

Children’s Services Peer Challenge Programme Refresh: to respond to the changing needs of Councils and the different approach now taken by Ofsted through ILACS we are refreshing the safeguarding peer review methodology. A revised model is being piloted in early 2019 and will feature a modular approach where Councils can build a review tailored to their individual needs.

Peer Review Delivery: since April 2018 we have delivered 9 reviews and have 15 more scheduled, with more to come.

Early Years Peer Challenge Programme: funded by the DfE, we have now piloted this in three councils and have agreed the roll out to a further 10 areas. The criteria for identifying the next cohort of councils to receive an early years peer challenge is currently being agreed and will be published soon. In addition, we are busy training early years peers with nearly 60 having completed the training and further sessions in early 2019. We are also working closely with the early Intervention Foundation who have developed an Early Years Maturity Matrix which will be used as part of the peer challenge process. Further developments will include the delivery of three learning and evaluation events over the next 18 months and the agreement that DfE will fund a follow up visit, 12 months after each peer challenge.

Children’s Finance Diagnostic: there has been lots of interest in this new offer and we are piloting this work in two councils in January/February 2019. These pilots will inform the development of a framework and guidance materials to support the roll out of the diagnostic from April onwards – get in touch if you want to explore the possibility of receiving a children’s finance diagnostic.

Elected member support and development: providing support, development opportunities and peer mentoring for lead members and chairs of children’s scrutiny. Delivering regional workshops on topics such as children’s service finance; performance management and corporate parenting and working to ensure effective children’s services lead member network exist in all regions providing the opportunity for shared learning and collaboration.

Peer recruitment: all our peer reviews rely on the expertise, experience and commitment of people already working in the sector. Being a part of a peer team is a hugely rewarding experience and you will receive support and training so that you can participate fully. At the moment we are particularly looking for skills and experience in the following areas:

- Early Years Peer Reviews (council officers, health professionals, school head teachers/education leads)
- Children’s Finance Diagnostics (senior officers involved with children’s services finance and commissioning)

If you, or your colleagues, are interested in getting involved and want to find out more, please get in touch.

Children's Improvement Advisers (CIA)

These are key people in the LGA's support of Children's Services at Councils, and we have one covering each local government region in England. A summary of their role is below, and attached is a 'day in the life' diary of one of our CIA's, Claire Burgess.

Working closely alongside the Local Government Association's Principal Adviser in each region the CIA will be instrumental to the improvement of children's services within councils. The key purpose of their role is:

- To provide support to the Principal Adviser and work with councils that have been identified for sector-led support and develop strong relationships with Leading Members, Chief Executives and Directors of Children's Services and build a clear understanding of their needs to identify innovative solutions, broker improvement strategies, and ensure they are delivered;
- To provide complementary support and assistance, where required, to existing Regional sector led improvement programmes for children's services and contribute to the development of the Local Government Association's (LGA) peer support service and support improvement in local authorities;
- To deliver programmes to support and develop leadership and best practice in councils and support councils at risk, acting as a broker between the Local Government Association (LGA) and local authorities;
- To commission additional capacity and expertise, through to facilitating staff development and change management programmes. Working with regional networks to ensure best practice, policies and partnerships are shared.