

# Evaluation of sector-led improvement

Companion Report: survey of directors of adult social services

December 2013



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## Evaluation of sector-led improvement

This report forms part of the Local Government Association (LGA) evaluation of sector-led improvement. Other outputs from the evaluation can be found here: <http://www.local.gov.uk/research-performance-and-improvement>.

### Sector-led improvement

With changes to the nationally imposed inspection and assessment regime, a new approach to improvement has been developed by local government. This was set out in the LGA's document 'Taking the Lead' in February 2011, supplemented in June 2012 by "Sector-led improvement in local government"<sup>1</sup> which describes a coordinated approach to sector-led improvement across local government, the support being provided and where to go for further information and advice.

The approach is based on the following key principles:

- councils are responsible for their own performance and improvement and for leading the delivery of improved outcomes for local people in their area
- councils are primarily accountable to local communities (not government or the inspectorates) and stronger accountability through increased transparency helps local people drive further improvement
- councils have a collective responsibility for the performance of the sector as a whole (evidenced by sharing best practice, offering member and officer peers, etc.)
- the role of the LGA is to maintain an overview of the performance of the sector in order to identify potential performance challenges and opportunities – and to provide tools and support to help councils take advantage of this new approach.

'Taking the Lead' identified a small core set of activities that are commonly undertaken by councils who proactively take responsibility for their own performance and improvement. This common set of activities provides the framework for sector-led improvement across councils' services and activities. It is also the framework around which the LGA's offer of support to councils is based, as follows:

- strengthening local accountability
- inviting challenge from one's peers
- learning from good practice and through regional structures and networks
- utilising transparent and comparable performance information
- investing in leadership.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.local.gov.uk/sector-led-improvement>

A specific offer has also been developed to support sector-led improvement in adult social services. This is being taken forward by the Towards Excellence in Adult Social Care Board (TEASC), which is working with and for councils to support sector-led improvement in adult social care.<sup>2</sup> It is this work that this report is focusing on.

## The evaluation

The LGA's evaluation looks at both the overall approach to sector-led improvement and the specific offers of support. It is running over a two year period, with the main aim of understanding whether, in the context of reduced resources within the sector:

- the approach to sector-led improvement has the confidence of the sector and the government, and the trust of the public
- the sector has been able to strengthen local accountability
- the sector is adopting the sector-led improvement approach and continues to improve with a reduced burden of inspection, and in the absence of top down performance assessment
- the tools offered to the sector have had a positive impact on the sector's capacity to improve itself.

A baseline report was published in February 2013. In addition, a number of companion reports, of which this is one, are being published alongside the main evaluation reports, looking at specific issues in more detail. This companion report complements the final overall evaluation report, which can be found here: <http://www.local.gov.uk/research-performance-and-improvement>.

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on TEASC visit [http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/adult-social-care/-/journal\\_content/56/10171/3374265/NEWS-TEMPLATE](http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/adult-social-care/-/journal_content/56/10171/3374265/NEWS-TEMPLATE)

# Summary

## Introduction

This online survey of directors of adult social services looked at sector-led improvement in adult social care, with a particular focus on the 'Towards Excellence in Adult Social Care' (TEASC) programme.

The survey forms part of the two year LGA evaluation of sector-led improvement. A baseline survey of adult social services directors was conducted in November 2012, and this report outlines the results for the most recent survey as well as highlighting any changes between the two.

## Respondents

The online survey was sent via email to directors of adult social services in all 152 councils with responsibility for this service in England, and was in the field over the course of December 2013. Responses were received from 76 councils – a response rate of 50 per cent. This is a good response rate for a survey this kind, and is similar to the response rate received to the baseline survey (47 per cent).

## Key messages

Awareness of and support for TEASC and the approach it has developed to sector-led improvement in adult social care remains high.

Respondents were positive about the impact of the support and resources to date on the capacity of their authority and the sector to monitor its own performance and continually improve, and to sustain this improvement work. The minority who felt there had to date been only a small or no impact were invited to suggest how TEASC could improve, and their responses are outlined in the full report.

Respondents generally felt accountability to and engagement with adult social care service users and carers was at a high level in their authorities, although there was still aspiration to improve further.

## Skills and capacity for sector-led improvement

Respondents tended to be confident in the skills and capacity of both their own authority and of the sector to monitor its own performance and continuously improve. Ninety six per cent were confident in their own authority to a great or moderate extent, compared to 88 per cent for the sector. Levels of confidence had not changed significantly since the baseline survey.

## The TEASC programme

### **Awareness of TEASC**

Awareness of the TEASC programme and the approach it has developed to sector-led improvement in adult social care was very high – 99 per cent of respondents had heard a lot or a moderate amount about it.

### **Impact of TEASC**

Respondents were asked the extent to which they thought that the support and resources offered by TEASC had, to date, had a positive impact on the capacity of adult social care, both within their own authority and across the local government sector as a whole, to monitor its own performance and continuously improve.

Respondents were positive about this – slightly over two thirds of respondents thought that the support and resources had had a great or moderate positive impact on the capacity of their authority to monitor its own performance and continually improve (70 per cent), whilst two thirds thought this for the sector (66 per cent).

They were then asked about whether TEASC had had an impact on the ability to sustain this improvement work in the future. Again, the majority were positive about the impact on the sustainability of improvement work, although slightly less so. Fifty eight per cent thought that the positive impact on the sustainability of improvement work in their authority had been great or moderate, whilst 61 per cent thought this for the sector.

### **Views on the approach**

Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement, “the Towards Excellence programme approach to sector-led improvement in adult social care is the right approach in the current context”.

The majority of respondents (79 per cent) agreed or strongly agreed with the approach. Of the remaining respondents, the majority were neutral (16 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed), with only five per cent disagreeing with the approach.

## Driving improvement

### **Current improvement activity**

Respondents’ adult social care departments were undertaking a number of activities to understand performance and drive improvement.<sup>3</sup> The activities most commonly conducted at the time of the survey (or in the 12 months previous) were:

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<sup>3</sup> Please note that respondents were reminded that improvement can include maintaining service levels or service user outcomes in the face of a reduction in resources, as this requires an increase in productivity.

- sharing information and innovative practice with others (96 per cent)
- analysis and benchmarking of performance data (96 per cent).

The results suggest that overall, adult social care departments have maintained their level of improvement activities, with little significant change since the baseline survey. The only exceptions to this were:

- a decrease in the proportion developing leadership skills (75 per cent, down from 88 per cent in the baseline)
- an increase in the proportion inviting challenge from peers (58 per cent compared to 38 per cent in the baseline).

## Local accountability

### Levels of local accountability and engagement

Respondents were shown a scale depicting different levels of political and senior level 'buy in' to local accountability and engagement activity with adult social care service users and carers, running from 'no buy in to local accountability and engagement activity' through to 'local accountability and engagement are strategic issues of high priority'.

They were asked first, to indicate which of the options most closely described their local authority currently; and secondly, to indicate which of the options most closely described what their local authority aspires to.

A third of respondents (33 per cent) stated their authority was currently at the level it aspires to be at, whilst 64 per cent of respondents' authorities aspire to improve their level of local accountability and engagement with adult social care service users and carers.

### Local accounts

Ninety one per cent of respondents' authorities had produced a local account for 2011/12 and/or 2012/13. These respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about their local account. Respondents were positive about all of the statements, but the highest levels of agreement were with:

- "My council's local account acknowledges the areas requiring improvement and describes the actions to be taken" – 94 per cent agreed or strongly agreed
- "My council's local account is based on a robust and reasonable self-assessment" – 94 per cent agreed or strongly agreed.

The lowest level of agreement was with the statement "My council's local account was informed by engagement with local people" – 78 per cent agreed or strongly agreed.

## Introduction

This online survey of directors of adult social services looked at sector-led improvement in adult social care, with a particular focus on the 'Towards Excellence in Adult Social Care' (TEASC) programme. The TEASC programme board is working with councils to support sector-led improvement for adult social care. Its core elements involve self-evaluation; regional work; robust performance data; and peer support and challenge.

The survey forms part of the two year LGA evaluation of sector-led improvement. A similar survey was also conducted with lead members for adult social care.<sup>4</sup> A baseline survey of adult social services directors was conducted over the course of November 2012, and this report outlines the results for the most recent survey as well as highlighting any changes between the two surveys.

The purpose of this survey was to evaluate the extent to which the approach developed by TEASC is meeting the needs of councils as well as monitoring whether the approach has the confidence of the sector and is resulting in strong local accountability and improvement. The findings will be used by the TEASC board to develop and improve the approach.

## Methodology

The online survey was sent via email to directors of adult social services in all 152 councils with responsibility for this service in England, and was in the field over the course of December 2013. Responses were received from 76 councils – a response rate of 50 per cent. This is a good response rate for a survey this kind, and is similar to the response rate received to the baseline survey (47 per cent).

Whilst these results should strictly be taken as a snapshot of the views of this particular group of respondents, rather than representative of all directors of adult social services, this level of response means that the results are likely to provide a good indication of the position of the sector more widely.

A breakdown of response rate by authority type is shown in Table 1. There was a fairly consistent response across all authority types, although a lower than average response was achieved from London boroughs, whilst a higher than average response was achieved from metropolitan districts.

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<sup>4</sup> Other outputs from the evaluation can be found here: <http://www.local.gov.uk/research-performance-and-improvement>

	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Total authorities</b>	<b>Response rate (%)</b>
Shire county	15	27	56
English unitary	26	56	46
Metropolitan district	22	36	61
London borough	13	33	39
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>50</b>

Table 2 breaks down the response rate by region. The table shows some variation in response rate between regions, with a slightly lower response achieved in London and a higher response rate in the North East.

	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Total authorities</b>	<b>Response rate (%)</b>
East Midlands	5	9	56
East of England	5	11	45
London	13	33	39
North East	8	12	67
North West	14	23	61
South East	9	19	47
South West	8	16	50
West Midlands	8	14	57
Yorkshire and the Humber	6	15	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>50</b>

Please note the following when reading the report:

- Where the difference between the results of this survey and the baseline survey is statistically significant, this is stated within the report.
- Where tables and figures report the base, the description refers to the group of people who were asked the question. The number provided refers to the number who answered each question. Please note that bases vary throughout the survey.
- Throughout the report percentages in figures and tables may add to more than 100 per cent due to rounding.
- The following conventions are used in tables: '\*\*' - less than 0.5 per cent; '0' – no observations; '-' – category not applicable/data not available.
- It is not possible to break responses down regionally as the sample size in each region would be too small to draw meaningful conclusions.

## Survey of directors of adult social services

This section outlines the full set of survey results.

### Skills and capacity for sector-led improvement

In order to gauge levels of confidence in the sector's capacity to deliver on sector-led improvement in adult social care, respondents were asked the extent to which they were confident that:

- their own council's adult social care department had the necessary skills and capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve
- the local government adult social care sector as a whole (i.e. across all councils) had the necessary skills and capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve.

Respondents tended to be confident in the skills and capacity of both their own authority and of the sector to monitor its own performance and continuously improve, although they were slightly more confident about their own authority than the sector in general. Levels of confidence had not changed significantly since the baseline survey.

- Ninety six per cent were confident in their own authority to a great or moderate extent, compared to 88 per cent who were at least moderately confident for the sector.
- Four per cent were only confident about their authority to a small extent, compared to eight per cent for the sector.
- In both cases, no respondents were not confident at all.

<b>Table 3: To what extent would you say you are confident that:</b>		
	<b>a) <u>your own council's adult social care department</u> currently has the necessary skills and capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve?</b>	<b>b) <u>the local government adult social care sector as a whole (i.e. across all councils)</u> currently has the necessary skills and capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve?</b>
	<b>Per cent</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
<b>To a great or moderate extent</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>88</b>
To a great extent	55	30
To a moderate extent	41	58
To a small extent	4	8
Not at all	0	0
Don't know	0	4
Total	100	100

Base: all respondents (76 respondents)

## Towards Excellence in Adult Social care

### Awareness of TEASC

Respondents were asked how much, if anything, they had heard about the TEASC programme and the approach it has developed to sector-led improvement in adult social care.

As in the baseline survey, levels of awareness were high: over three quarters of respondents (78 per cent) had heard a lot, whilst a further 21 per cent had heard a moderate amount. No respondents had not heard anything about TEASC.

**Table 4: How much, if anything, have you heard about the Towards Excellence in Adult Social Care programme and the approach it has developed to sector-led improvement in adult social care?**

	2012	2013
	Per cent	Per cent
<b>Heard a lot or a moderate amount</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>99</b>
Heard a lot	76	78
Heard a moderate amount	19	21
Heard a little	6	1
Heard nothing	0	0
Don't know	0	0
Total	100	100

Base: all respondents (2012: 70 respondents, 2013: 76 respondents)

### Impact of TEASC

Respondents who had some awareness of TEASC and its approach to sector-led improvement in adult social care were asked the extent to which they thought that the support and resources on offer had, to date, had a positive impact on:<sup>5</sup>

- the capacity of their own council's adult social care department to monitor its own performance and continuously improve
- the capacity of adult social care across the local government sector as a whole (i.e. across all councils) to monitor its own performance and continuously improve.

Respondents' views on this were quite similar for their own authority and the sector more generally. Respondents were positive about the impact of the support and resources to date:

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<sup>5</sup> In practice, this was asked to all respondents as none answered that they had heard nothing about TEASC.

- Slightly over two thirds of respondents thought that the support and resources had had a great or moderate positive impact on the capacity of their authority to monitor its own performance and continually improve (70 per cent), whilst two thirds thought this for the sector (66 per cent).<sup>6</sup>
- Only a small proportion thought that there had been no positive impact at all to date: four per cent for their authority and three per cent for the sector.

**Table 5: To what extent do you think that the support and resources offered by the Towards Excellence programme have, to date, had a positive impact on:**

	<b>a) the capacity of <u>your own council's adult social care department</u> to monitor its own performance and continuously improve?</b>	<b>b) the capacity of <u>adult social care across the local government sector as a whole</u> (i.e. across all councils) to monitor its own performance and continuously improve?</b>
	<b>Per cent</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
<b>To a great or moderate extent</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>66</b>
To a great extent	25	14
To a moderate extent	45	51
To a small extent	24	17
Not at all	4	3
Don't know	3	14
Total	100	100

Base: all respondents that had heard at least a little about TEASC (76 respondents)

In order to get a sense of the extent to which TEASC has helped equip councils with the skills to sustain their work on improvement, these respondents were then asked the extent to which they thought that the support and resources offered by the Towards Excellence programme had, to date, had a positive impact on:

- the capacity of their own council's adult social care department to sustain its improvement work in the future
- the capacity of adult social care across the local government sector as a whole (i.e. across all councils) to sustain its improvement work in the future.

Again, respondents' views on this were fairly similar for their own authority and the sector more generally, with the majority positive about the impact of the support and resources on the sustainability of improvement work.

- Fifty eight per cent thought that the positive impact on their authority had been great or moderate, whilst 61 per cent thought this for the sector.
- Around a further third thought that the impact to date on the sustainability of improvement work in their authority had been small (32 per cent), and 22 per cent thought this was the case for the sector.

<sup>6</sup> Whilst the individual 'great' and 'moderate' answer options displayed in Table 5 appear to sum to 65 per cent, this is due to the fact the figures in the table have been rounded to the nearest whole number. Please note that this may also occur in other parts of the report where answer categories are combined.

- Only a small proportion thought that there had been no positive impact to date: eight per cent for their authority and three per cent for the sector.

**Table 6: To what extent do you think that the support and resources offered by the Towards Excellence programme have, to date, had a positive impact on:**

	a) the capacity of your <u>own council's adult social care department</u> to sustain its improvement work in the future?	b) the capacity of <u>adult social care across the local government sector as a whole</u> (i.e. across all councils) to sustain its improvement work in the future?
	Per cent	Per cent
<b>To a great or moderate extent</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>61</b>
To a great extent	17	12
To a moderate extent	41	49
To a small extent	32	22
Not at all	8	3
Don't know	3	14
Total	100	100

Base: all respondents that had heard at least a little about TEASC (76 respondents)

### Views on the approach

Those respondents who had some awareness of TEASC were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement, “the Towards Excellence programme approach to sector-led improvement in adult social care is the right approach in the current context”.<sup>7</sup>

The majority of respondents agreed with the approach – 21 per cent strongly agreed and 58 per cent agreed. Of the remaining respondents, the majority were neutral (16 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed), with only five per cent disagreeing with the approach. Levels of agreement were very similar to those seen in the baseline survey – although the overall proportion agreeing was slightly lower, this difference is not large enough to be statistically significant.

**Table 7: Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: “the Towards Excellence programme approach to sector-led improvement in adult social care is the right approach in the current context”.**

	2012 Per cent	2013 Per cent
<b>Agree or strongly agree</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>79</b>
Strongly agree	19	21
Agree	66	58
Neither agree nor disagree	10	16
Disagree	1	5
Strongly disagree	3	0
Don't know	1	0
Total	100	100

Base: all respondents that had heard at least a little about TEASC (2012: 70 respondents, 2013: 76 respondents)

<sup>7</sup> In practice, this was asked to all respondents as none answered that they had heard nothing about TEASC.

The five respondents who did not agree that the TEASC approach is the right approach in the current context were invited to briefly explain their reasons for this.

In addition, as Table 5 and Table 6 show, a number of respondents thought the support and resources offered by the TEASC programme board had only had a small positive impact or no positive impact at all (either for their own authority or the sector as a whole). In order to ensure that the programme continues to develop and meet the needs of councils, these respondents were asked to suggest any improvements or additional activity that the programme should provide in order to further support their authority and/or the sector's capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve.

The responses to these two questions covered very similar topics and have therefore been analysed together. Overall, 21 respondents provided comments (representing 28 per cent of respondents); these comments were varied but covered the following topics:

- Some comments looked at the role of and challenges associated with **analysis, intelligence and data**:

"I think it is about assisting colleagues to move from simple counting to understand the impact that we are having. We need to be using intelligence to actively plan our interventions. It would be good to see some assistance around understanding what new metrics we will need across health and social care systems."

Unitary, East of England

"If resources were available, the development of more sophisticated national analytical capacity, carrying out work which individual local authorities would not have the resources to undertake, perhaps with academic assistance, might provide valuable support - but the kind of information currently being fed back to authorities, which largely recycles readily-available data, is of limited use."

Unitary, North East

- Some **specific requests for support** were also made, as well as the sharing of best practise and topic papers in specific areas. For example:

"Capacity is the real challenge rather than capability. To assist in stretching our limited resource, key messages, summarising the latest evidence base, lessons learned and examples of good practice would be really helpful. Also, given our local integrated commissioning and service delivery of health and social care, tools that support performance management of integrated services, particularly those being delivered at "arm's length"... would be really helpful."

Unitary, South West

- Other specific requests included:
  - sharing good practice in relation to processes, such as the Direct Payments simplified process

- any specific learning from peer challenges in common areas such as safeguarding
- standard frameworks for key areas.
- Finally, some overarching comments were made about the approach in general. A couple of respondents commented on coordination of the different aspects of the support offer and clarifying roles, for example:

“At the present time there is a growing support offer coming from a range of initiatives and organisations. It is becoming challenging to understand how this fits together as a coherent whole. More work is needed on managing poor performance - particularly clarifying the roles of different parts of the system.”

County, South East

- Other general comments included:

“[The programme] has not fully recognised the significant financial challenges that councils face and helped create a model that will assist with how this is tackled.”

Metropolitan district, West Midlands

“Increased focus on coordinating existing activity rather than adding in new requirements/events. Increase in rigour and discipline around agreed processes.”

Metropolitan district, North West

## Driving improvement

### Current improvement activity

Respondents were presented with a number of steps their adult social care department might be taking to understand performance and drive improvement, in the context of a reduced burden of inspection and the absence of top down performance management from central government. Respondents were asked to state which, if any, of these activities their authority was conducting or planning to conduct.

It is worth noting here that, at the outset of the survey, improvement was defined as including maintenance of service levels or service user outcomes in the face of a reduction in resources, as this requires an increase in efficiency and productivity.

Table 8 outlines the results, with the activities presented in order of frequency. The table shows that the activities most commonly conducted at the time of the survey (or in the 12 months previous) were:

- sharing information and innovative practice with others (96 per cent)
- analysis and benchmarking of performance data (96 per cent).

The results suggest that overall, adult social care departments have maintained their level of improvement activities, with little significant change since the baseline survey. The only exceptions to this were:

- Developing leadership skills: 75 per cent said their authority was doing this; statistically significantly lower than the 88 per cent that said this in the baseline survey.
- Challenge from peers in other authorities and partner organisations: although this remains the least frequently conducted activity from the list, there has been an increase since the baseline survey (58 per cent compared to 38 per cent in the baseline).

**Table 8: Please indicate which steps, if any, your adult social care department is taking to understand performance and drive improvement<sup>8</sup>**

	Doing this currently or have done in the last 12 months	Not doing this currently but plan to within the next 12 months	No current plans to do this	Don't know
	%	%	%	%
Sharing information and innovative practice with others	96	4	0	0
Analysis and benchmarking of performance data	96	4	0	0
Participation in regional activity	95	5	0	0
Self-assessment activity (in addition to ongoing audits)	88	9	1	1
Developing leadership skills	75	18	5	1
Involving citizens in improvement activities	74	21	4	1
Involving councillors in improvement activities	72	17	9	1
Challenge from peers in other authorities and partner organisations, for example via an LGA peer challenge	58	36	7	0

Base: all respondents (76 respondents)

Respondents were then asked what, if any, positive outcomes these activities had in terms of enabling their adult social care department to improve the services they provide to adult social care service users and carers. Fifty nine respondents (78 per cent) provided examples and these are summarised below:

- Respondents commonly stated that these activities had improved their **strategic planning**, impacting on improvement plans, performance frameworks, action planning and helping to identify and focus on priorities. Some examples include:

“We have used the use of resources audit tool to do a joint audit with the clinical commissioning group (CCG) on its key lines of enquiry (KLOEs) and as a result have a jointly agreed improvement plan.”

Unitary, East Midlands

<sup>8</sup> The full question text was: “In the context of a reduced burden of inspection and the absence of top down performance management from central government, please indicate below which steps, if any, your adult social care department is taking to understand performance and drive improvement.”

“Enabled us to focus on what is important for customers more than we were previously able to do so under the old regime.”

London borough

“Through internal review of performance (the authority) has developed an Outcomes Framework on which to build all savings programmes that will secure value for money and improved outcomes.”

County, West Midlands

“Benchmarking across local authorities has improved south west regional understanding of performance and therefore [enabled the targeting of] service improvements.”

Unitary, South West

Respondents also provided examples of where these activities have resulted in **improved outcomes for service users**, for example:

“Regional work on learning disability services leading to improvements in reducing use of institutional care. Use of regional contract monitoring tool leading to higher quality.”

Unitary, East of England

“Through working closely with health colleagues across [the authority] and benchmarking with other local authorities in the North West we have been able to deliver real improvements in the numbers of people delayed in hospital.”

Metropolitan district, North West

“Increased user take-up of individual budgets/self-directed support.”

London borough

Other respondents said that these activities had helped to identify **new activities or improvements in existing practice**, for example:

“We are currently redesigning the 'front door' by looking at innovative practice in other local authorities. The 'model' chosen will provide more focus to ensure a preventative based service which signposts people to the information/advice that they need. It will promote "self-help/wellbeing" and support carers who continue to provide natural support, whilst assessing the needs of those who are vulnerable in a timely manner.”

Metropolitan district, North West

“Co-production with service users has led to us creating different services, via models of personalisation, with improved outcomes and service user/carers satisfaction.”

Unitary, South East

“From benchmarking of data we have changed the way we commission services.”

London borough

Other positive impacts identified from these activities were:

- **Developing the skills of staff**, for example:

“Senior managers in the team have attended training in order to be able to take part in Peer Challenge teams. The spin-off is to the internal team also who benefit. I have led a Peer Challenge and found it immensely useful and positive.”

Unitary, East Midlands

- **Learning from other’s good practice**, for example:

“We regularly share practice and data on key topics, such as reablement and residential care. This has enabled us to develop our approach... by incorporating best practice and setting targets for internal improvement based on what we know others in the region have managed to achieve (both in terms of impact of services and cost).”

Metropolitan district, North East

- **Assurance/validation of existing approaches**, for example:

“The self-assessment and peer review process was very beneficial for us in that it enabled us to take stock of where we were in our improvement journey and evidence this. It also gave us an external validation process which was useful in demonstrating the improvements made to internal and external partners.”

Metropolitan district, North West

## Local accountability

### Levels of local accountability and engagement

A key aspect of sector-led improvement is engagement with and accountability to local people as a useful way of informing them and allowing them to influence the drive for further improvement. Respondents were shown a scale depicting different levels of local accountability to and engagement with adult social care service users and carers. They were asked:

- first, to indicate which of the options most closely describes their local authority in terms of political and senior level ‘buy in’ to local accountability and engagement activity with adult social care service users and carers
- secondly, to indicate which of the options most closely describes the level to which their local authority aspires.

The scenarios are laid out in Table 9.

Table 9: Local accountability and engagement scenarios
<p><b>No 'buy in'</b> to local accountability and engagement activity in adult social care from politicians and senior staff.</p> <p>In general, no activities to achieve local accountability and engagement are undertaken.</p>
<p><b>Low level</b> of 'buy in' to local accountability and engagement activity in adult social care from politicians and senior staff.</p> <p>Very few activities to achieve local accountability and engagement are undertaken.</p>
<p><b>Moderate level</b> of 'buy in' to local accountability and engagement activity in adult social care from politicians and senior staff.</p> <p>Activities to achieve local accountability and engagement are undertaken, but on an ad hoc basis.</p>
<p><b>High level</b> of 'buy in' to local accountability and engagement activity in adult social care from politicians and senior staff.</p> <p>Local accountability and engagement are seen as important and efforts are made to ensure that a variety of steps are taken to achieve this.</p>
<p>Local accountability and engagement in adult social care are seen by politicians and senior staff as <b>strategic issues of high priority</b>.</p> <p>Local accountability and engagement activities are integrated throughout the department's operations.</p>
<p>Don't know</p>

Figure 1 shows the level that respondents think their authority is currently at, as well as the level that they think their authority aspires to be at. In terms of current local accountability and engagement with adult social care service users and carers:

- Respondents most commonly identified their authority to be at the 'high' level of local accountability and engagement (58 per cent).
- Twenty two per cent selected the 'highest' scenario – i.e. they stated that local accountability and engagement with adult social care service users and carers are seen as 'strategic issues of high priority' in their authority.

The results suggest that councils have maintained their level of local accountability and engagement with adult social care service users and carers, with no significant difference compared to the baseline survey.

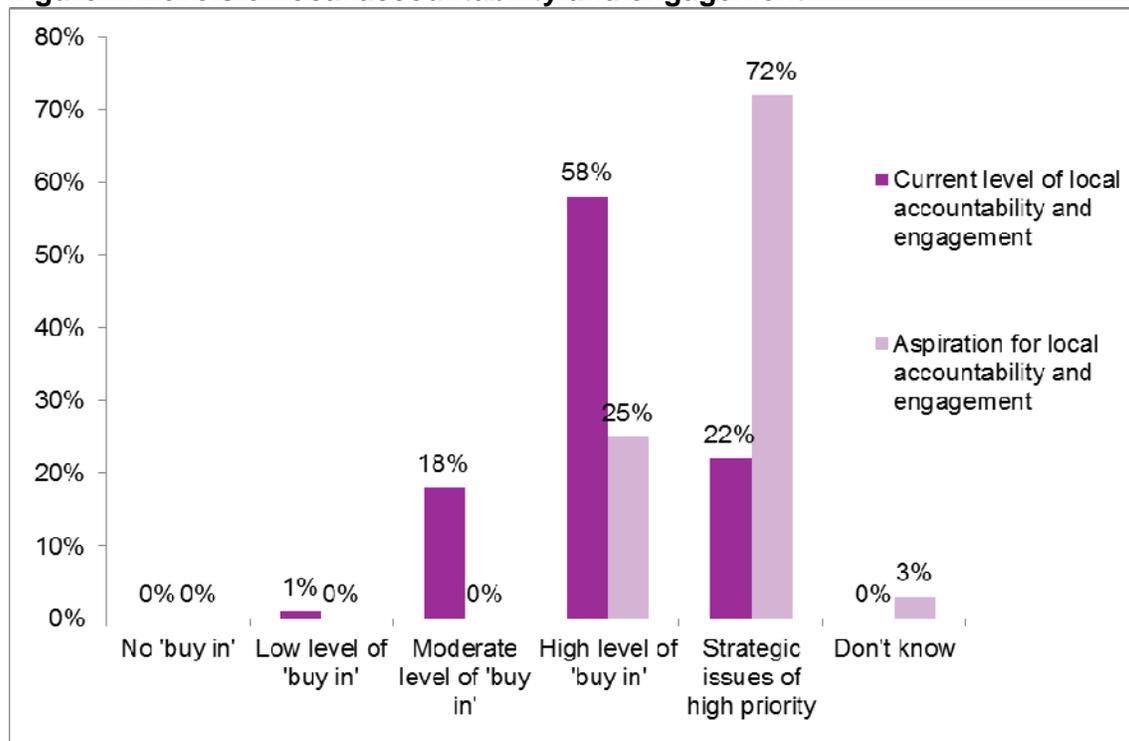
Looking at the level of accountability and engagement with adult social care service users and carers that respondents thought their authorities aspired to:

- The majority of respondents (72 per cent) indicated that their council aspired to the 'highest' scenario laid out in the survey – i.e. that local accountability and engagement with adult social care service users and carers are 'strategic issues of high priority'.
- Twenty five per cent stated that their council aspired to be at a 'high' level.

Aspirations were also similar to the baseline survey, with no significant difference between the two surveys in the level of accountability and engagement with adult social care service users and carers that respondents thought their authorities aspired to.

An analysis of individual responses shows that 33 per cent of respondents thought their authority was at the level it aspired to be at, whilst 64 per cent of respondents' authorities aspired to improve their level of accountability and engagement.

**Figure 1: Levels of local accountability and engagement**



Base: all respondents (76 respondents)

### Local accounts

Respondents were then asked if their council produced a local account for 2011/12 and/or 2012/13. Ninety one per cent (69 respondents) had done so. These respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about their local account, and the results are outlined in Table 10.

Respondents were positive about all of the statements, but the highest levels of agreement were with:

- “My council’s local account acknowledges the areas requiring improvement and describes the actions to be taken” – 94 per cent agreed or strongly agreed
- “My council’s local account is based on a robust and reasonable self-assessment” – 94 per cent agreed or strongly agreed.

The lowest level of agreement was with the statement “My council’s local account was informed by engagement with local people”; whilst 78 per cent agreed or

strongly agreed with this statement, 16 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed, and four per cent disagreed.<sup>9</sup>

**Table 10: Local accounts form a key part of the work of councils on accountability. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:**

My council's local account...	Agree or strongly agree	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
... acknowledges the areas requiring improvement and describes the actions to be taken	94	38	57	4	0	0	1
...is based on a robust and reasonable self-assessment	94	33	61	4	0	0	1
...provides an authentic and insightful description of the quality of adult social care provided	91	29	62	6	1	0	1
...was informed by engagement with local people	78	28	51	16	4	0	1

Base: all respondents whose authority had produced a local account for 2011/12 or 2012/13 (69 respondents)

### Further comments on sector-led improvement in adult social care

All respondents were then invited to provide any final comments they had about the general approach to sector-led improvement and accountability in adult social care and the Towards Excellence programme. Nineteen respondents (25 per cent) provided comments.

- **General comments about the approach** included:

“In general we are very supportive of the sector-led improvement approach and feel it will support improvements in adult social care, particularly with the changes outlined in the care bill. A common approach that shares good practice and builds strong relationships will provide for a healthier care system.”

Metropolitan district, North West

“Provides opportunity for strengthened local ownership of improvement. The underpinning TEASC programme is vital to co-ordinate and support improvement within and across local authorities.”

Unitary, South West

“It is more coherent now that all sector-led improvement strands have been pulled together under the TEASC banner. The resources are helpful and will certainly help inform improvements on our own self-

<sup>9</sup> A full evaluation of local accounts was conducted in June 2013, and the results can be found here: <http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/11663/Local+accounts+national+overview+report+2013/7ed04bd6-eda7-4dc5-a8d2-b610884144e8>

assessment going forward. TEASC will need to ensure the balance is right between approaches being prescribed and enabling innovation and creativity to flourish.”

London borough

- A small number of respondents also made comments about the **resource issues** that adult social care departments are currently facing, and the interaction of this with sector-led improvement:

“...local authorities may have the skills and capacity to monitor performance but may struggle to improve because of resource constraints. Not all performance improvement has a direct link to resource levels but quite a lot does. I think TEASC needs to be sighted on the link between the two.”

Unitary, East Midlands

“The approach depends on a significant degree of regional and local co-ordination which is unfunded. At a time when most councils are reducing their staffing across managerial and back office services the lack of a funded infrastructure means that the requests for information and activity returns can feel onerous.”

Unitary, North East

Other comments covered a variety of issues:

- **Concern about local accounts:**

“In practice, local accounts in all areas which we are aware of do not appear to be of widespread interest to service users or the general public, and there will be a need at some point to review approaches to accountability.”

Unitary, North East

- Questions about the **effectiveness of the approach for poor performers:**

“There is a question in my mind about "its teeth" - do we know which councils aren't performing so well? Are we identifying and working with them? This may be known at a national level but I don't see it being acknowledged in the region.”

Unitary, East of England

Finally, some respondents made positive comments about **improvement work within their own regions**, for example:

“We have taken this approach very seriously in the region and every area has supported the approach and contributed. This overall has given us a very strong foundation to build on and a general willingness to learn from each other.”

Metropolitan district, Yorkshire and Humber

## Annex A: Questionnaire

### Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. You can navigate through the questions using the arrows at the bottom of each page. Use the back arrow at the bottom of the page if you wish to amend your response to an earlier question.

If you stop before completing the return, you can come back to this page using the link supplied in the email and you will be able to continue where you left off. To ensure your answers have been saved, click on the 'page forward' arrow at the bottom of the page that you were working on before exiting.

### Background

1. Please amend the details we have on record if necessary:

Your name:

Your council:

Role/job title:

Email address:

### Skills and capacity for sector-led improvement

The Local Government Association worked with councils on a successful campaign to reduce the burden of external inspection and assessment that councils face across a range of services including adult social care. Sector-led improvement follows the principles that:

- councils are responsible for their own performance
- stronger accountability to local people drives further improvement
- councils have a collective responsibility for performance in the sector as a whole.

When thinking about sector-led improvement, it is worth noting that improvement can include maintaining service levels or service user outcomes in the face of a reduction in resources, as this requires an increase in efficiency and productivity.

2. To what extent would you say you are confident that:

a) Your own council's adult social care department currently has the necessary skills and capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve?

b) The local government adult social care sector as a whole (i.e. across all councils) currently has the necessary skills and capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve?

	a) Your own council's adult social care	b) Adult social care across the local government sector
To a great extent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To a moderate extent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To a small extent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### **Towards Excellence in Adult Social care – awareness and impact**

The 'Towards Excellence in Adult Social Care' programme board is working with councils to support sector-led improvement for adult social care. Its core elements involve self-evaluation; regional work; robust performance data; and peer support and challenge.

3. How much, if anything, have you heard about the Towards Excellence in Adult Social Care programme and the approach it has developed to sector-led improvement in adult social care?

- Heard a lot   
 Heard a moderate amount   
 Heard a little   
 Heard nothing   
 Don't know

To everyone apart from those that answered 'heard nothing' in Q3:

4. To what extent do you think that the support and resources offered by the Towards Excellence programme have, to date, had a positive impact on:

a) the capacity of your own council's adult social care department to monitor its own performance and continuously improve?

b) the capacity of adult social care across the local government sector as a whole (i.e. across all councils) to monitor its own performance and continuously improve?

	a) Your own council's adult social care	b) Adult social care across the local government sector
To a great extent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To a moderate extent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To a small extent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

To everyone apart from those that answered 'heard nothing' in Q3:

5. To what extent do you think that the support and resources offered by the Towards Excellence programme have, to date, had a positive impact on:

a) the capacity of your own council's adult social care department to sustain its improvement work in the future?

c) the capacity of adult social care across the local government sector as a whole (i.e. across all councils) to sustain its improvement work in the future?

	a) Your own council's adult social care	b) Adult social care across the local government sector
To a great extent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To a moderate extent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To a small extent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

To those that answered 'to a small extent' or 'not at all' for their own council or the sector in Q4 or Q5:

6. Please use the space below to briefly outline any improvements or additional activity that you think the Towards Excellence programme should provide in order to further support your authority and/or the sector's capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve.

To everyone apart from those that answered 'heard nothing' in Q3:

7. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statement:

"The Towards Excellence programme approach to sector-led improvement in adult social care is the right approach in the current context"

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know

To those who selected 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree':

8. Please use the space below to briefly explain why you disagree that the Towards Excellence programme approach to sector-led improvement in adult social care is the right approach in the current context.

## Driving improvement

To all:

9. In the context of a reduced burden of inspection and the absence of top down performance management from central government, please indicate below which steps, if any, your adult social care department is taking to understand performance and drive improvement.

Please select one answer option for each row

	Yes - we are doing this currently or have done in the last 12 months	We are not doing this currently but plan to do this within the next 12 months	No current plans to do this	Don't know
Challenge from peers in other authorities and partner organisations, for example via an LGA peer challenge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sharing information and innovative practice with others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Analysis and benchmarking of performance data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self-assessment activity (in addition to ongoing audits)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Developing leadership skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participation in regional activity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Involving councillors in improvement activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Involving citizens in improvement activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If 'yes – we are doing this currently or have done in the last 12 months to one or more option above:

10. Please briefly give examples of what, if any, positive outcomes these activities have had in terms of enabling your adult social care department to improve the services you provide to adult social care service users and carers.

## Local accountability and engagement

A key aspect of sector-led improvement is engagement with and accountability to local people as a useful way of informing self-improvement activity locally.

11. Please see below for a scale depicting different levels of local accountability to and engagement with adult social care service users and carers.

- a. Please tick the box that **most closely** describes your council in terms of political and senior level 'buy in' to local accountability and engagement activity with adult social care service users and carers.

b. Please tick the box that **most closely** describes what your council aspires to.

	Please tick the box that most closely describes your council	Please tick the box that most closely describes what your council aspires to.
No 'buy in' to local accountability and engagement activity in adult social care from politicians and senior staff. In general, no activities to achieve local accountability and engagement are undertaken.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Low level of 'buy in' to local accountability and engagement activity in adult social care from politicians and senior staff. Very few activities to achieve local accountability and engagement are undertaken.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Moderate level of 'buy in' to local accountability and engagement activity in adult social care from politicians and senior staff. Activities to achieve local accountability and engagement are undertaken, but on an ad hoc basis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
High level of 'buy in' to local accountability and engagement activity in adult social care from politicians and senior staff. Local accountability and engagement are seen as important and efforts are made to ensure that a variety of steps are taken to achieve this.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local accountability and engagement in adult social care are seen by politicians and senior staff as strategic issues of high priority. Local accountability and engagement activities are integrated throughout the department's operations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

To all:

**12.** Did your council produce a local account for 2011/12 and/or 2012/13?

Yes

No

Don't know

To those councils that have produced a local account:

**13.** Local accounts form a key part of the work of councils on accountability. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

My council's local account...	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
...was informed by engagement with local people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...provides an authentic and insightful description of the quality of adult social care provided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...is based on a robust and reasonable self-assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... acknowledges the areas requiring improvement and describes the actions to be taken	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

To all:

**14.** If there is anything else you would like to say about the general approach to sector-led improvement and accountability in adult social care and Towards Excellence programme, please use the space below.



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We consider requests on an individual basis.