Towards Excellence in Adult Social Care

Welcome to the fifth bulletin from the Towards Excellence in Adult Social Care Programme Board for September 2012.

The programme board is working with councils to improve performance in adult social care. The key emphasis of the programme is on collective ownership of improvement and its core elements involve regional work, robust performance data, self evaluation and peer support and challenge.

Most of the solutions to key issues and challenges will continue to be found locally and regionally - the model is being developed with the ADASS regions and networks, supported by the LGA’s and the Department of Health’s (DH) regional presence.

Please let us know your views on the bulletin and keep us in touch with what you are doing in sector led improvement by using the contact details at the end of this bulletin.

Update from Oliver Mills, National Programme Director, Towards Excellence

The meeting of the TEASC board on 13th September was something of a watershed as important decisions on all the key components the model of sector led improvement in adult social care were made:

1. A national overview review of local accounts has been carried out. Local accounts are not mandatory but most councils have now produced their first account as a prime mechanism to engage with local citizens and for driving further improvement through enhancing local accountability. A conference will take place on 12th November to share learning and to explore the possibilities for local accounts in the future. A further joint letter from LGA and ADASS will be sent out in the light of the outcomes from the conference. A summary of the recommendations from the review and details of the conference on 12th November are given later in this bulletin.

Sector led improvement
Update from Oliver Mills, National Programme Director, Towards Excellence continued

2. Publication in October of the first report on progress in adult social in England, using data supplied by councils to the Information Centre for 11/12 and other published evidence. This previously had the working title of a “narrative of progress”, and will provide a baseline picture and tools which councils can use to analyse and benchmark data. It is inevitably limited by the remaining data collections, which will be replaced from 2013/14 by a new set of measures following the Zero Based Review of data, but will be a major step forward. A scoping report on future options for a sector led approach to bringing together the information needed to support improvement was presented, with work already underway to build on the initial baseline report in order to maintain momentum.

3. The ADASS Mandate for sector led improvement has now been approved. It emphasises the commitment to work together as peers to support each other’s improvement in line with the principles set out by the LGA. Work is underway to finalise arrangements for providing early support and to manage the risk of underperformance.

4. Guidance is being prepared on peer challenge, and the range of approaches to challenge from ones peers, which are developing in each of the nine regions. Combined with a straightforward process for monitoring region's delivery plans, the guidance will be attached to the allocation of £17,000 to each region in early October, following on from the allocation of £25,000 in the spring.

5. Work has now started on updating the DH 2009 ‘Use of Resources’ publication to pull together current evidence on use of resources and the opportunities for delivering sustainable savings, led by the Think Local Act Personal partnership. It will pick up emerging learning from the LGA Adult Social Care Efficiency programme, and develop tools and processes to support delivery of the efficiencies identified which will form a key part of local sector led improvement work.

Overall, these separate components are on course to be assembled to create the final model of sector led improvement in adult social care, by March 2013

Spotlight on regional work: London

London ADASS has made a commitment to progressing sector led improvement in conjunction with LGA partners. A working group of senior managers from across London, chaired by the lead DASS, has developed a comprehensive programme which is being piloted this winter. The lead Chief Executive from the London Councils Improvement Board ensures close alignment with wider corporate improvement initiatives in London.

The programme is managed by the JIP, which is the ADASS branch delivery mechanism, utilising TEASC funding and has the following elements:

- Light touch regional ‘peer challenge’
- Training for the ‘peer challenge’ reviewers
- Peer support and experience exchange
- A Timebank to enable matching and reciprocation of those offering peer support, peer challenge and experience exchange
London ADASS/JIP has agreed that all Boroughs will participate, every three years, in a light touch regional ‘peer challenge’ review of an aspect of their Adult Social Care. This peer challenge by “critical friends” focuses on issues of current concern to individual boroughs. The approach is based on the LGA review methodology and standards but with a pared down, bespoke scope for each Borough. The byword is “keep it small and simple” but we believe that working in partnership with a review team of local peers will add value by giving time for external review, reflective discussion and lead through to solution focussed planning.

There are already offers of practice sharing and experience exchange between senior management teams for example regarding re-ablement and self directed support. There are also DASSs and senior managers offering 1-1 mentoring in relation to issues such as managing the twin hatter role and integrated commissioning with health partners.

There is wide ownership of the programme and the initial training course for senior managers who have agreed to undertake peer challenge was oversubscribed by 300 per cent.

**Pilots**

Five London boroughs have agreed to pilot the process between October 2012 and March 2013. Each peer challenge team will be led by a DASS, with three senior managers from different boroughs and with a review manager from the LGA to co-ordinate the process. Teams could also include council members, or other professionals.

Each review will last up to three days and be completed by succinct feedback focussing on the key themes. Consideration will be given to solutions through exploration of barriers to and levers for change, supports available, action planning, Timebank offers etc.

All staff are freely giving their time on a reciprocal basis thus keeping costs to a minimum and during the pilot other ways of reducing future costs will be explored. There are some understandable anxieties about issues of risk management, boundaries and accountability which will be addressed within the evaluation.

The review team will operate within a code of confidentiality and there will be an agreement about the terms of engagement. It is envisaged that the peer challenge review will provide the opportunity for external scrutiny in the spirit of mutual challenge and support. The brief highlight report will be owned by the review borough and any publication will be at their own discretion.

In addition to the evaluation there will be a learning workshop in March 2013 for all participants to share their experiences. The future programme through to April 2016 will be re-designed, if necessary, in the light of all the feedback.

The wide engagement of London Boroughs has ensured a positive start has been made to this sector led improvement programme which promises to further build a supportive shared learning ethos in Adult Social Care across London.

For further information please contact:
Elizabeth Lowe,
London JIP Associate-sector led improvement
Email: Elizabethloweltd@gmail.com
Telephone: 07779 252910
National Overview of Local Accounts

The Programme Board commissioned an independent national overview on local accounts to inform the work of local authorities who were considering undertaking them. This does not aim to be a highly prescriptive set of guidance but seeks to supplement local and regional activity that aims to assess and develop local accounts. As noted in a recent letter to Directors, this initial summary of the key findings will be followed by more detailed information, based on the 12 November event highlighted above.

This national overview was carried out by Jonathan Phillips and David Walden, both of whom are familiar with sector led improvement in adult social care and the role local accounts can play in this. The report acknowledged that the Local Accounts produced so far were effectively beginning a process which has been acknowledged as needing refinement over time. The report also noted that it was a challenging task to produce a Local Account in the context of major and unexpectedly severe budget reductions and other pressures; and with fewer sources of information from which to draw. Overall, it was felt that those councils which produced a Local Account delivered creditably against that challenge, resulting in some highly accessible and informative documents.

By their very nature of responding to local circumstances, local accounts are not easily comparable - there is a wide range of types, length, format and coverage of Local Accounts. However, the production of local accounts were all rooted in a wish to enhance local accountability. As well as being a potentially very useful means of reporting back to citizens on performance in adult social care, the programme board believes that local accounts have the potential to be a key accountability mechanism to the public, a means of engaging with citizens and consumers around priorities and outcomes and a useful way of informing self-improvement activity locally.

Key findings
The Programme Board outlined some key issues for councils to consider when developing local accounts in its July 2011 letter, and the overview of local accounts was based on these key questions:

- Do they provide an authentic and insightful description of the quality of adult social provided?
- Do they build upon a robust and reasonable self assessment to present that assessment?
- Do they demonstrate engagement with local people to inform that account?
- Do they acknowledge the areas requiring improvement and describe the actions to be taken?

In the light if these, in terms of the process of producing future Accounts, the report concluded that the key issues could include:

- Undertaking thorough engagement with local interested parties - users and carers, partners, the public, etc - in developing the approach to be taken locally to the Local Account
- Being clear about the purpose, audience and appropriate style for the Local Account – and tailoring it accordingly
• Assessing how best to undertake a co-production approach to future Accounts
• Determining the most appropriate timing for production and publication, so that Local Accounts are better aligned with councils’ planning and budgeting cycles
• Ensure that the report is easily accessible on the website – get this independently checked

In terms of **content**, it was suggested that local accounts could:

• Use an outcomes framework which makes sense locally and interpret data in the local context
• Use a balanced approach to benchmarking data to include the positive and the negative
• Employ peer challenge approaches to test and validate what is being said to the public
• Use case examples to bring the report to life
• Quote the public’s views, combined with an indication of how this was responded to
• Make plans for the future SMART, and sum them up

In terms of the **substance** of future local accounts, Councils may wish consider:

• User and public engagement was widely accepted as an area for more work and could be highlighted in any report back to councils, as could equalities and diversity issues
• Similarly, the need for robust self-assessment and external/peer challenge was generally accepted in order to boost public confidence in services and in the Local Accounts themselves
• Councils could consider how far related council services, for example, housing and employment, and partner services, especially the NHS, should be included in order to give a fuller picture
• The role of elected members in the production and promotion of Local Accounts could be further strengthened
• It was suggested that further work is required as to how best to integrate the aspirations behind both *Think Local, Act Personal* and its *Making It Real* markers of progress

**National Conference on Local Accounts, 12 November, Local Government House**

Aimed at a range of officers at all levels in local authorities, the day aims to share current practice but also look to the future of developing a local account in an integrated system and one that has a real focus on real citizen and consumer engagement. For more information and to make a booking, please contact events@local.gov.uk

For more information on the Towards Excellence programme please contact:
Oliver Mills
National Programme Director, Towards Excellence in Councils’ Adult Social Care
Local Government House, Smith Square, London SW1P 3HZ
Email: oliver.mills@local.gov.uk
Telephone: 07881 820895

Further details on the programme and the previous bulletin can be found via www.local.gov.uk/topic-adult-social-care