

Sector Led Improvement in London Memorandum of Understanding

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is between the 33 Local Authorities that make up the Greater London Region. It formalises the sector led approach that London Directors of Children's Services have been developing through the Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS). Boroughs are invited to participate on a voluntary basis and no authorities can be compelled to take part.
- 1.2 In October 2017, the Department for Education (DfE) launched a sector led improvement initiative for local authorities, backed by £20 million funding. This included an expansion of the Partners in Practice programme, as well as the testing of Regional Improvement Alliances. The DfE has since been working with the Association of Directors of Children's Services and the Local Government Association to establish Regional Improvement and Innovation Alliances in every area of the country. These alliances are intended to interface with the new Ofsted social care and SEND inspection frameworks and support local authorities to build a self-improving system.
- 1.3 This MoU updates the original MOU established in London in 2018 and sets out a framework for the Regional Improvement and Innovation Alliance in the Greater London Region – the London Innovation and Improvement Alliance (LIIA) - in response to the national expectation for regional sector led improvement work and reflects further correspondence and funding opportunities laid out, including the Regional Improvement-RIIA Sector-led Improvement Grants for SEND
- 1.4 ALDCS has developed the methodology to provide a rigorous model – however, participants will find the right balance in engagement with the process. It is acknowledged that this process will be part of a wider improvement journey for many boroughs, and that resources to engage will vary over time and between boroughs. Therefore, it is anticipated that in most cases individual boroughs will engage fully, but boroughs wishing to participate on a more limited basis are still, nonetheless, welcome and valued participants. It is also recognised that expectations of authorities which are in DfE intervention will differ and should be agreed on an individual basis between the sub-regional lead and the authority in question.

1.5 The MoU sets out the agreed areas and activities in which the Local Authorities will work together to support a pan-London Sector Led Improvement programme with the shared aims of:

- Securing a journey of continuous improvement to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people
- Building on existing capability in children's services, corporately and with partners to identify good practice, diagnose improvement challenges and identify risks to performance
- Systematically sharing knowledge about what works across the sector and ensuring that there is effective brokerage of best practice solutions.

2. Principles

2.1. For the duration of this MoU, each Local Authority agrees, insofar as reasonable and practical, to:

- Undertake annual self-assessment activity which is shared within each sub-region.
- Arrange for the submission of agreed data annually to London Councils and the LIIA data & intelligence team for analysis and benchmarking. Release colleagues who lead on data and performance/improvement activity as required to underpin the agreed regional processes.
- Share data on a quarterly basis on the agreed core children's services indicators which will be collated by the LIIA data & intelligence team and shared with all London authorities and the London Safeguarding Children's Board Executive. A sub-set of this data, the RIIA dataset agreed by the ADCS, will be shared with the DfE & agreed other organisations (please see more detail in Appendix A & B) by the LIIA data & intelligence team. The LIIA data & intelligence team will act on behalf of ALDCS and the LIIA programme in this and any other data matters as required.
- To designate the LIIA London benchmarking quarterly reports (as published and distributed by the SLI Data Analyst & London Councils for the LIIA programme), thematic data packs, briefings & other information produced to support the work on the LIIA priority themes and any peer group review reports as being for internal and limited use only. Such documents will only be shared in their published form with key staff within the authority, unless express permission has been received from the other authority(s) (or ALDCS on their behalf) before it is shared wider.

- Support possible future SEND data collection requirements to be confirmed with DfE.
- Share data in support of LIIA projects, initiatives and for the benefit of children, young people & families in London with the LIIA data & intelligence team & agreed other organisations (please see more detail in Appendix B).
- Participate in the LIIA peer challenge and review activities as is appropriate and based on the London Peer Review and Challenge Framework
- Contribute £5,000 pa to support the work of the RIA. This funding will be targeted at developing sector led improvement activity at a sub-regional level in the London quadrants and bringing this learning activity together on a pan-London basis.
- Share learning and improvement themes from the peer challenge sessions with the sub-regional lead to support the sub-regional and London Summits
- Share the findings of the Peer Challenge and agreed actions (development plan) with the Chief Executive and Lead Member.
- Contribute to a sub-regional activity to discuss priorities for improvement within sub-regions. Each sub-region will design and organise its own activity and develop up to five key themes for improvement across the sub-region.
- Share key themes from sub-regional summit with Chief Executive and Lead member.
- Participate in an annual pan-London summit to discuss priorities for improvement across the capital. Directors of Children's Services, Chief Executives and Lead Members from each Local Authority should aim to attend this summit.
- Contribute to discussions relating to the sector led improvement programme by attending ALDCS meetings or sending a representative to LIIA working groups as appropriate.
- Where good practice is identified, share this with regional colleagues.
- Consider how to integrate learning from the self-assessment process with Ofsted as part of the Annual Conversation process.
- ALDCS will consider how to share high-level regional and sub-regional improvement themes with key partners on an annual basis, including ADCS, DfE and Ofsted.

3. Governance and regional accountability

- 3.1. Oversight and governance of the programme will sit with the London Children's Innovation and Improvement Board (LCIIB). An annual review will take place to ensure that with each cycle the process is refined. National learning will also be considered as part of these reviews.

- 3.2. LAs will work together, directed through LCIB and DCS representation at the Association of London Directors of Children's Services and delivered through the infrastructure programme: London Innovation and Improvement Alliance (LIIA)
- 3.3. The payment process for DfE Sector-Led Improvement Grant and SEND Regional Support will be made from LB Camden (as the receiving LA for DfE funding) to London Councils or individual LAs where specified in grant conditions. LB Camden / London Councils will ensure LAs receive onward payment where agreed in line with sector-led improvement activities. LB Camden will be reimbursed for any services provided in the administration of regional funding.
- 3.4. London Local Authorities will support and encourage each other in their improvement journey. They will remain vigilant for behaviours or disengagement from the regional activities that might be symptomatic of pressure, denial or avoidance.
- 3.5. Local Authorities will share good practice and hold each other to account through peer challenge and through sub regional and regional groups.
- 3.6. If peer challenge identifies areas of practice which are concerning and for which there is not a strong enough improvement plan:
 - The Directors involved in the peer challenge should carefully record this on the peer challenge template with clear and specific evidence, including data.
 - A development plan should be devised / updated in respect of the areas of concern and agreed locally with the senior team, Chief Executive and Lead Member
 - Responsibility for improvement lies with individual councils and once concerns have been shared through the peer challenge process it will be for individual LAs to ensure appropriate action is taken.
- 3.7. Where Ofsted judges good practice, or DfE appoints Local Authorities as Partners in Practice or Improvement Partners, contributions to regional learning and improvement should be optimised.

4. Implementation of the MoU

- 4.1. Upon ratification by full ALDCS branch meeting, this extended MoU commences in June 2022. It will continue to remain in force until such time as it is revoked by the parties.
- 4.2. The MoU will be reviewed after June 2024 and may otherwise be reviewed at any time at the request of any party.

Appendix A

ADCS core RIIA quarterly dataset

Data shared with DfE will be shared using the standard CSV or other templates specified by DfE to allow for easier collation and analysis, observing the guidance that sits alongside the new dataset, accepting that there are some understandable variations in the local arrangement of services and therefore recording and reporting. Submission of data will be timely and in line with the ADCS guidance.

The Department for Education will share insights from these quarterly data with relevant policy teams to inform their work. The Department's CSC regional improvement team will act as the internal point of contact for any queries raised by policy teams. Ministers may also wish to see these data to get a sense of the overall pressures in and health of the system. By agreement, the Department may seek to share the insights from quarterly RIIA data more broadly across government departments. Good notice of these requests is required to allow regional groups the opportunity to fully consider and respond.

The RIIA dataset will also be shared 'Cross-regionally', facilitated by the Data to Insight Project (d2i), to allow smarter use of these insights e.g. via comparisons with national benchmarks and statistical neighbours rather than just neighbouring LAs.

ADCS, facilitated by d2i, will share data from these collections by agreement to reduce burdens on our members, particularly in relation to the bi-annual Safeguarding Pressures data collection. The main areas of note and interest being the aggregate national picture and overall trends rather than individual LA performance or metrics.

Appendix B

Share data in support of LIIA projects, initiatives and for the benefit of children, young people & families in London

Projects and initiatives such as the Child-level data (clid) project, Your Choice, MASH and Safeguarding datasets, Care Leavers Compact.

Other agreed organisations with whom data may be shared include the LGA, SOLACE, and pan-London or organisations involved in pan-London work including Health bodies, the Commissioning alliance, the GLA & related organisations eg TfL, the Metropolitan Police, the London Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) executive and Academic Institutions eg *The REES Centre, Institute for Fiscal Studies, Anna Freud Centre*.

No data sharing will take place without the authorisation of the London Children's Innovation and Improvement Board (LCIIB).