

## **Memorandum of understanding: taking forward children's sector-led improvement agreed by LGA, ADCS and SOLACE**

### Aims and key principles

1. All three associations will work to improve outcomes for children and demonstrate the capacity and capability of the sector to achieve a coherent and consistent self-improving system. This will include a commitment to work with other sector led improvement boards and with regard to the context set by national government and regulatory bodies. In this endeavour:

- **The role of the LGA** is to maintain an overview of the performance of the local government sector in order to identify potential performance challenges and opportunities, and to provide tools and support to help councils take advantage of the approach
- **The role of SOLACE** is to ensure the engagement of the professional leadership of local government in sector led improvement and inform its work from their unique perspective of the full extent of corporate and partnership activity
- **The role of ADCS** is to provide the reservoir of critical sector expertise and engage the leadership of children's services in sector led improvement

2. The key principles behind programmes of activity in common with those for all sector led improvement are that:

- **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** 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

It is recognised that central government through statute and regulation may also seek to hold councils to account through inspection and in some cases through intervention.

## Local, Regional and National

3. Sector led improvement will be delivered operationally at the local, regional and national level. Each level will need to be inter-related and mutually supportive as the success of the programme will be dependent on all three levels working together.

Locally: LGA, SOLACE and ADCS will encourage:

- Lead Members, Chief Executives, Directors of Children's Services and Chairs of Local Safeguarding Children's Boards to create a self-aware and learning culture, which is driven by improving outcomes for children and families.
- Councils to choose to engage in sector led improvement.
- The routine use of self-assessment and external challenge to validate quality assurance, particularly in safeguarding and care
- Councils make information available to the public including benchmarking data to strengthen local accountability
- Upholding the principle of listening to the voice of children and families in shaping their own journey and in influencing the provision of services for them
- Working in close partnership with other organisations and agencies in a manner that is transparent, accountable and effective in delivering measurable improvement

Regionally: Lead Members, Chief Executives and DCSs will work collaboratively through their own agreed governance and self-funded arrangements to:

- Provide leadership and drive in the collective improvement of children's services within the region and support other sector led national and regional Boards in their endeavours to do so
- Establish a culture of honest and constructive dialogue and challenge within and between authorities
- Work with regard to other established bodies (including OFSTED and DfE) to ensure the most efficient and effective approach to working with councils
- Deliver a system of peer scrutiny and challenge which supports the self-awareness and continuous improvement of councils, along with a collective understanding of both risk and the journey to "good" and "excellent"
- Encourage the use of, or develop where appropriate, diagnostic tools to help councils understand their own performance
- Make arrangements for the timely brokering of support with a priority on preventing service failure or inadequacy

- Offer to work with Councils prior to and during in the initial phase of DfE intervention in a manner which is supportive, without duplication of the role of the DfE Improvement and Intervention team or OFSTED
- Contribute to the identification and dissemination of good practice and development of sector leadership and peer support capacity.

**Nationally:** the LGA, SOLACE and ADCS will continue to work together through such governance arrangements as they jointly agree to:

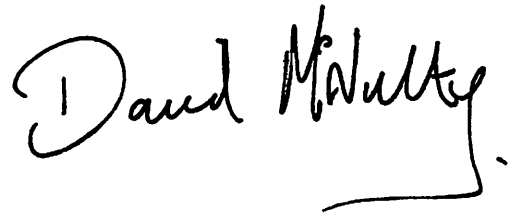
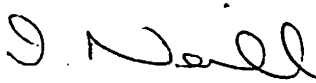
- Have an overview of the whole system drawing upon the direct work with regions and authorities through LGA Principal Advisers
- Support the governance and engagement of regions in the development of a coherent and integrated approach to sector led improvement
- Work as three partner organisations to support sector-led improvement on the basis of honest and constructive dialogue and challenge
- Work at a national level with DfE Improvement and Intervention Team and with OFSTED in establishing agreed roles and boundaries in relation to the improvement of children's services
- Provide support in collaboration with others for authorities receiving an inadequate OFSTED judgement or authorities who are at risk to enable them to commission initial sector support
- Provide an active and readily available platform through the web site and LG Inform, as appropriate, which supports activity that drives improvement at the local and regional level including the effective dissemination of information
- Commission work between LGA, SOLACE, VSC and the LSCB Chairs' Association on integrated leadership development focused particularly on quality assurance and whole systems improvement across the sector to include formal training, facilitated observation and mentoring
- Provide nationally accredited and quality assured courses for practitioners and associates engaging in peer review, challenge or diagnostic activity and maintaining an availability register of the same
- Run a Leadership Academy for lead members
- Develop and/or broker, where need is evidenced, a flexible and responsive offer through the LGA to provide a range of bespoke diagnostic or review tools either to individual authorities or as part of a regional offer or as may be commissioned by DfE for authorities in intervention. These may be offered on a whole cost, subsidised or free basis.

**Signed:**

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**Mark Rogers, SOLACE**



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