

Children's Services Lead Members

A summary of LGA support available



October 2020

The LGA offers a range of support to members in lead roles relating to children's services – whether portfolio holders, members of improvement boards, or overview and scrutiny chairs. This note provides a summary of this support.

For more information about these support offers, or to discuss how we can help on issues not covered below, please contact:

- Mona Sehgal, LGA Principal Adviser for the South East (Berkshire, East Sussex, Brighton and Hove and Surrey) (mona.sehgal@local.gov.uk)
- Will Brooks, LGA Principal Adviser for the South East (Buckinghamshire, Hampshire & Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire and West Sussex)
- Alison Michalska, LGA Children's Improvement Adviser for the South East 07920 727626 / [alisonmichalska @icloud.com](mailto:alisonmichalska@icloud.com)

Guidance and information – a range of information available online

- Children and Young people hub on the LGA's website, including briefings, publications and toolkits: <https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/children-and-young-people>
- 'Must know' guide for lead members - <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/our-improvement-offer/childrens-services-improvement/must-knows-lead-members-childrens>
- New lead members guide (first 10 days) - <https://www.local.gov.uk/your-first-ten-days-lead-member-childrens-services>
- A guide to the 10 questions to ask when scrutinising looked after children (LAC) services - <https://www.local.gov.uk/10-questions-ask-if-youre-scrutinising-services-looked-after-children>
- A link to the corporate parenting resource pack - <https://www.local.gov.uk/corporate-parenting-resource-pack>

Learning and development support

Leadership Essentials – A two-day development programme for new lead members from across the country to build an understanding of the role and form networks with other councillors. Delivered by experienced lead members. This offer is usually delivered as a residential programme but is currently being reshaped so that it can be delivered virtually.

Leadership Essentials Plus – At the request of lead members we are developing events and activities for more experienced members that want to come together and discuss key issues, policy change, challenges and opportunities. This offer is in development and has potential to be available to cluster of councils, regions or on a national footprint.

Peer mentoring – linking experienced lead members (and other councillors with a responsibility for children's services) with lead members that are either new to the role and are experiencing new and difficult challenges. The experienced lead member is able provide

a listening ear, support and guidance, share their experiences and provide a safe space to talk through concerns and challenges.

Bespoke training and development – able to offer a range of inputs for example 1:1 with the lead member, for cabinet as a whole, or all councillors. This support is tailored to the needs of the council and the lead member and is delivered through experienced lead members and/or officers from other councils. Examples of work delivered in other places include 'Members role as a corporate parent', 'Understanding Performance Data', and 'Effective Scrutiny'.

Broader support available for lead members

The scale of the challenge that councils are currently facing requires strong, responsive and resilient leadership. To address this, the LGA is refocusing our leadership offer so that senior councillors have access to learning resources and the ability to share their experiences with their peers. This includes ensuring that councillors have access to online leadership tools that support their vital community leadership role in their national effort to respond to COVID-19, including through neighbourhood and community engagement.

This support includes the following:

- **We've upgraded our [councillor e-learning platform](#)** and made it easier to access. A new module "Holding council meetings online" has recently been added.
- **A series of webinars to support councillors and political leaders** – The first in series will be on the role of the ward councillor in responding to the COVID-19 crisis. Moving forward, there will be specific focus on the roles of the Cabinet Member and of the Finance Portfolio holder. The webinars will combine pre-recorded short videos and live discussions with Q&As.
- **[A private KHub group](#)** – This has been set up to provide remote online networks, where councillors can share their learning, practice and experiences on themed portfolio areas. The group is being facilitated by LGA staff and will continue to build content over time. Intelligence will be used to inform future initiatives for councillors as they manage the COVID-19 outbreak and its consequences. Please note that a simple sign up/login process is required to ensure the privacy of the group.
- **A guidebook on 'Being an effective cabinet member'** – This guidebook is being written to support cabinet members in their role, including decision-making, whole cabinet working, leadership styles in times of crisis and officer/member relationships.
- **One-to-one leadership development** – For the next few months, councillors in leadership positions are able to access one-to-one development conversations with Leadership Academy Facilitators. These sessions will be focussed on helping councillors adapt their leadership style through three structured coaching calls. To find out more, please email grace.collins@local.gov.uk
- **Other resources** – This range will include a new mental health hub for elected members and an e-learning unit on handling intimidation. These resources and others will be available to support councillors as part of [the LGA's civility in public life programme](#).