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Linda Sanders
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Dear Linda

Firstly, big congratulations on the recent OFSTED report! Great news for Wolverhampton and for the West Midlands

Thanks for inviting myself and Pete Jackson back to follow up the Peer Challenge that I led in March 2015 as part of the West Midlands sector led improvement programme. Clearly there has been considerable action that has taken place over the last twelve months and the focus, energy and momentum that has been built to move adult social care services forward in Wolverhampton was clear to see and hear during the visit.

Inevitably, in the time available we were only able to get a very general feel for the current position, but the comprehensive pack and action plan that you provided us with assisted greatly in getting a feel for how proactive you have been in using the recommendations from the peer challenge to drive improvement and change.

From the information provided, there were several themes that emerged - that your refreshed vision for the city is having a demonstrable impact, the adoption of a thematic commissioning approach is embedded in day-to-day activity and is being used to influence activity of the council and partners as part of delivering better care through integrated approaches and your work on personalisation and customer engagement remains an area where you are aware of the challenges that you still face.

There were several examples that stood out reflecting improvements that had been made since March 2016:

- The confidence of the Managing Director and Leader in recognizing and owning the improvement that you have set out based on the *'we deliver what we say we are going to deliver'* approach

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- The production of a vision for ASC as part of the council's approach to *'Building a modern council'* which aligns the values, culture and principles which gives the council a whole different feel twelve months on and is reflected in the physical and customer facing changes to the civic offices, the strong involvement of social care in contributing to the economic regeneration of the city and the work being done on property and estates to rationalize and modernise local care facilities .
- The new appointments to the ASC senior management team and the succession planning put in place to ensure future strategic leadership changes are managed with a view to sustaining the improvement changes implemented. Also the recognition of the importance of identifying capacity to assist with the action planning and oversight to ensure focus is retained on the improvement journey
- The embedding of the case file audit process that was used as part of the peer challenge has been well adopted, used to influence and consolidate good practice and the involvement of the MD in undertaking a review of a sample of case files is to be commended.
- The production of the commissioning strategy and the 'Care and the local economy' report are examples of work that other councils regionally and nationally will be interested in as examples of using strategy to influence outcomes for citizens and are of note
- The production of the improvement action plan that the team have all contributed to and which has been shared with your scrutiny panel is to be commended as it introduces a degree of rigor and accountability which wasn't seen following the Peer Challenge undertaken in 2013.

We heard about a lot of activity that is underway and several initiatives and plans that all indicate a desire to improve services and performance at pace. These are still at early stages of implementation specifically in relation to the work on personalisation and your approach to locality working where you have set out where you would like to get to but still have some way to go to implement

Inevitably it isn't possible in the time constraints provided to do full justice to reviewing all the activity that has been undertaken since the peer challenge but I would like to confirm that:

- You have provided evidence to indicate that you shared the outcomes with your strategic executive board, cabinet performance panel and have used your action plan to monitor progress through the regular meetings of your people leadership team
- The action plan provides a wealth of evidence to indicate that the recommendations made by the peer challenge team have been embedded in your day to day management activity
- Your openness about discussing the challenges that are still in front of you and your sense of what more there is to do in Wolverhampton is also commendable and will require the whole organization to remain focused on sustaining your improvement journey
- The active involvement of you and your management team to the regional sector led improvement programme has contributed to improvement in other councils in the region as well as your own

We would recommend that your cabinet member takes a paper to your cabinet to update your members of the progress that has been made since the peer challenge and to share the feedback that you have received in the follow up visit

If there any areas where you would like further clarification or to talk over any of the points in the letter, please do not hesitate to contact me and I am sure you will remain in contact with Pete as part of the regional improvement programme that I know you are committed to.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Peter Hay', written over a horizontal line.

Peter Hay
Directorate for People

