

Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru

Welsh Local Government Association



CLILC • WLGA

# Improvement Officer

## Recruitment Information Pack



**Closing Date:** 10<sup>th</sup> May 2021 (9:00am)

**Interview Date:** To be confirmed Week Commencing  
17<sup>th</sup> May & 24<sup>th</sup> May 2021

## Improvement Officer

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**Salary:** Grade 5 – SCP 33-41 (£36,922-44,863)  
**Term:** 12 months (scope for 3 year or permanent contract subject to confirmation of extended funding)  
**Reports to:** Head of the Improvement Programme  
**Based:** One Canal Parade, Cardiff & Homeworking

**Politically Restricted:** Yes

**Welsh Language essential:** No. The ability to speak and write fluently is desirable for this role.

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## About the Role

The WLGA improvement team is being funded through a Welsh Government grant for 2021-22. The Welsh Government has given indicative commitment to a three year programme of improvement grant funding to the WLGA from 2021-24, however, the grant is awarded on annual basis subject to submission and approval of an annual business plan. This post is therefore advertised on a fixed term basis, however, it may be extended or made permanent should Welsh Government commit to longer-term grant funding or should core improvement funding be provided to the WLGA through an RSG top-slice agreed via member authorities.

We are recruiting several exciting new roles to our expanding improvement team within the Welsh Local Government Association. The two new Improvement Officer postholders will work with two current Policy and Improvement Officers and report to a new Improvement Programme Manager. The new team will develop and coordinate an ambitious new programme of sector-led support to local government. You will be adaptive, flexible, innovative and responsive and sensitive to the challenges and political environment in which local authorities operate.

We are recruiting two Improvement Officer roles, who will lead on different projects and programmes but will be expected to be flexible and play a key role in peer challenge and panel assessment. The postholders will need to be confident and politically aware, being able to guide and work with senior members and officers as part of peer teams and panel assessment teams within authorities.

### Duties and Responsibilities:

- Advising, commissioning and delivery of the WLGA's improvement programme, including:
  - Corporate Governance and Performance;
    - Guidance and support around the establishment of corporate joint committees.
    - Guidance and support to authorities around the new statutory self-assessment and performance duties.
    - Supporting the delivery of statutory Panel Performance Assessments, including identification of the panel team, coordination of preparatory

- work and support to the independent chair and panel team, including drafting of reports.
- Guidance and support to authorities around corporate governance, performance and wider constitutional duties within the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.
- Corporate Capability; and
  - Coordination of corporate capability peer panels to facilitate open and collaborative discussion about corporate strategy and capability issues.
  - Corporate Capability Remote Peer Support (2 days remote support) to work with an authority on a specific aspect of corporate capability, particularly (but not exclusively) in respect of matters which CEOs must keep under review under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (i.e. financial planning, asset management, risk management and workforce).
  - Leadership development: working with SOLACE, Society of Welsh Treasurers and HR Directors Network to identify training and development priorities for local government workforce to help address skill gaps and succession planning needs. Establishment of a chief executive and senior leadership induction programme.
- Providing bespoke support for those councils who require more intensive and dedicated support.
- Promote and support innovation and transformation, facilitating networking, sharing of good practice and knowledge transfer.
- Develop and maintain constructive and effective relationships with WLGA political leaders and professional networks including SOLACE, Society of Welsh Treasurers, HR Directors, Lawyers in Local Government, ADEW and ADSS and ensuring their commitment and contribution to the sector-led improvement programme.
- Working with authorities and partners, maintain up-to-date knowledge about local government performance and ensuring proactive improvement support is available to authorities when required.
- Develop and maintain constructive relationships with senior political and professional leaders within local government and associate member authorities.
- Work closely with Data Cymru and the Chief Digital Officer for local government in providing a coordinated and complementary programme of improvement and transformation support to Welsh local authorities.
- Develop and maintain constructive and effective relationships with partners including the LGA, Audit Wales, Academi Wales and the Welsh Government.
- Provide advice and support to the WLGA's political leadership and WLGA Management Team.
- Deputise for the Improvement Programme Manager and undertake any other duties and responsibilities appropriate to the post.

## Person Specification

### Essential

#### Qualifications

- Educated to degree level or equivalent professional qualification.

## **Knowledge & Experience**

- Understanding of the political environment and the key issues, priorities and pressures affecting local government in particular the governance, improvement and/or policy agenda.
- Experience of working with senior officers, senior elected members or senior board members.
- Experience of leading successful projects/programmes, particularly within financial management, human resources, organisational development, governance, improvement or the transformation arena.
- Proven ability to collaborate, building and maintaining effective relationships and partnerships.

## **Skills & Abilities**

- Political sensitivity and the ability to exercise appropriate discretion and judgement when dealing with elected members and senior officers.
- Confident and resilient with excellent people skills, able to develop positive internal and external relationships.
- Credibility with senior elected members, senior officers and stakeholders.
- Ability to work on one's own initiative as well as part of a team and ability to manage a range of concurrent projects, programmes or priorities Excellent written and oral communication skills, with ability to draft reports and present complex concepts clearly and critical messages in a constructive and sensitive manner.
- Analytical skills and experience of applying these skills in practice.
- Intellectually agile and innovative, capable of translating new ideas into policy and practice and ability to influence and negotiate.

## **Attitude and Motivation**

- Understanding of and a commitment to diversity, equalities and local democracy.
- Commitment to personal and professional development.

## **Other**

- Willingness and ability to travel across Wales and other parts of the UK as necessary.
- Prepared and willingness to work weekends and evenings if required.

## **Desirable**

### **Skills and Aptitude**

- Welsh language verbal and written skills.
- Full UK driving licence.

### **Attitude and Motivation**

- Willingness to learn Welsh.
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## WLGA Improvement Programme

The Welsh Government has agreed to provide the WLGA with an annual grant of £800,000 to support sector-led improvement. The Welsh Government has a clear expectation that the 2021-22 grant will be used to support councils in the implementation of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. In addition, the Welsh Government provides WLGA with separately managed annual grants of £200,000 to support councils' decarbonisation activities and £500,000 to support digital leadership and transformation through the Chief Digital Officer and Delivery Unit.

The WLGA's approach to sector-led improvement has been endorsed by leaders and chief executives. Sector-led support is predicated on the concept of mutual aid, with political and professional colleagues within the sector providing capacity, support and constructive challenge to address improvement challenges or to support innovation and transformation. The benefits of peer challenge and support are twofold: an authority benefits from receiving expert and experienced peer perspectives in tackling a specific issue or undertaking an assessment/challenge process; and the participating peers are experience other organisations' approaches, cultures and solutions and brings back new organisational, personal or professional insights and learning.

The Welsh Government has a clear expectation that the 2021-22 grant will be used to support councils in the implementation of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. The improvement programme during 2021-22 will focus on corporate governance and capability, though there are ongoing discussions with Welsh Government departments about service specific support, for example in education and social services.

The improvement grant provides directly delivered support through the WLGA and Data Cymru and commissioned support through external deliverers or partners around four core themes, a universal offer available to all councils – focused on building strong corporate capacity and capability with councils under four interdependent priorities:

- COVID19 Pandemic Recovery;
- Local Democracy and Member Development;
- Corporate Governance and Performance; and
- Corporate Capability.

The WLGA also provides proactive and reactive support for those councils who need more intensive and dedicated support to help them improve aspects of their business.

The WLGA's improvement activities will be delivered through services provided by Data Cymru and an expanded improvement team of 6 members of staff, reporting to the Head of Policy (Improvement and Governance), including two existing Policy and Improvement Officer roles and four new posts of: Improvement Programme Manager; two Improvement Officers; and a Peer Coordination and Senior Support Officer.

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## About the WLGA

The Welsh Local Government Association represents the interests of local government and promotes local democracy in Wales.

Our aim is to **promote, protect, support and develop democratic local government** and the interests of local authorities in Wales.

We are a politically led, cross party organisation that seeks to give local government a strong voice at a national level. The WLGA is a membership organisation that represents all 22 local authorities in Wales, the 3 fire and rescue authorities and the 3 national park authorities as associate members.

We believe that services are best provided within a democratic framework of local accountability and that the people who use public services should have as much of a say in the way they are organised, managed and funded as possible. Local government is seen as being the tier of government closest to service users and best able to respond to their needs. We support the role of the Welsh Government in setting the strategy for public services nationally but believe that it is down to local government to interpret strategy to deliver services based on local circumstances and local priorities.

Much of our work is focused on the Senedd (formerly the National Assembly for Wales), the Welsh Government and other national stakeholders and partners. We also liaise with the Wales Office and UK Government and work closely with the LGA in London in seeking to influence non-devolved policies and legislation and, in particular, the recovery from COVID 19 and responding to developments around Brexit.

Our work involves engagement with Ministers, Members of the Senedd, and other national and governmental organisations. We promote the important role of local government to Members of the Senedd and seek to enhance and protect councils' reputation and secure positive change to legislation. The WLGA's lobbying work is therefore extensive.

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## Our Values

In working towards its primary purposes, we seek to be:

- **Ambitious** in our expectations and in our vision for local democracy and local services;
- **Accountable** to our members and member authorities;
- **Proactive** in our defence and promotion of local democracy, our policy development and our engagement with members;
- **Receptive** through listening to and considering the range of views of our membership, partners and stakeholders;
- **Responsive** through our services and support to our members and member authorities;
- **Collaborative** in our approach to governance and partnership working with Welsh Government and other stakeholders.

We also work towards upholding and promoting equality, diversity and human rights; including promoting diversity in democracy and supporting councillors in their role as democratically elected local representatives.

We are committed to equality and fairness and although we are not a statutory body, we operate in the spirit of legislation such as the Equalities Act, Freedom of Information Act and the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act.

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## Our Aims and Priorities

Our priorities are underpinned by our core aims to secure:

- **Reform, continuous improvement and a commitment to partnership** - we believe in local government reform and seeking continuous improvement as a process for delivering better outcomes and services for the people of Wales, and in ensuring that resources are used as effectively and as efficiently as possible;
- **Fair and flexible funding** – councils need greater fiscal autonomy and flexibility to respond to local needs and priorities. Specific grants should be transferred into the settlement, after an agreed period of time, and the Welsh Government should fully cost and fund any new national initiatives and/or legislation and should commit to multiyear financial settlements, so councils can plan more effectively;
- **Commitment to the principle of Subsidiarity** – the Welsh Government and the Senedd should commit to the European Charter of Local Self Government and the principle of subsidiarity, where the presumption is that power is transferred to the level of government closest to the people. The Welsh Government has a clear national strategic role, but councils want to see momentum behind the devolution of powers beyond Cardiff Bay to local government and to local communities.

We will also:

- **Promote the role and prominence of councillors and council leaders**, emphasising their equal democratic mandate with national politicians.
  - **Ensure maximum local discretion in legislation or statutory guidance** where councils and regions have flexibility in determining regional priorities, services and governance arrangements.
  - **Promote sector-led improvement**, with an emphasis around digital and innovation, supporting authorities in sharing best practice, developing workforce skills and developing a new corporate peer review programme.
  - **Encourage a vibrant local democracy, promoting greater diversity** and enhanced democratic engagement and supporting councillors' development and training.
  - **Support authorities to effectively manage their workforce** through our role as the Employers' Organisation.
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## Benefits: Working at the WLGA

The WLGA is an exciting place to work.

The WLGA is in the process of reviewing its office accommodation, with a view to retaining a Cardiff-based office with increased homeworking from September 2021.

We seek to offer staff a friendly, supportive and flexible working environment and staff are entitled to a range of benefits including:

- Incremental pay rises and contributory local government pension scheme
- 26 days annual leave, rising to 29 after 3 years then rising to 32 after 5 years of service, plus 8 days bank holiday
- Agile working policy which encompasses Flexitime, flexible working including options to work from home.
- Cycle to work scheme, travel loan facilities and free staff car park
- A range of supportive policies, including career breaks, job share, leave purchase scheme and other leave arrangements.
- Generous maternity, adoption, paternity and shared parental leave
- Centrally located office in the heart of one of the UK's most vibrant cities

### Terms of Employment

Association employees are employed on the conditions of service of the National Joint Council for Local Government Services, amended by local agreements. The principal provisions are outlined below:

#### Salary:

Salary is payable calendar monthly by bank credit on or about the 15th of each month.

#### Hours of Work:

The working week is 36 hours. Office opening hours are 9.00 am to 5.00 pm Monday to Friday although the demands of the post may necessitate a variable working pattern.

#### Flexible Working Time:

The Association offers a flexi time policy to all grades up to Head of Policy Level.

#### Travel and Subsistence:

It is a condition of appointment that staff will be prepared to work on occasion anywhere within Wales, the rest of the United Kingdom or Europe. Travelling and subsistence expenses will be payable, in accordance with the Association's scheme, when staff work away from their fixed centre.

#### Annual Leave:

The annual leave entitlement for a full year (the leave year runs from 1 April to 31 March in the following year) will initially be 26 days, in addition to statutory holidays. Existing local government employers may attract additional leave based on continuous local government service.

**Pension:**

The successful candidate will automatically be admitted to the Local Government Pension Scheme. This is a contributory scheme which has defined benefits for employees.

<https://mpfmembers.org.uk/content/members-currently-contributing-lgps>

**Period of Notice:**

The period of notice which staff are required to give is one calendar month, commencing on any day in the month. Staff will also be entitled to receive one calendar months' notice, or the current statutory notice period, whichever is greater.

**Terms of Secondment (if applicable)**

The successful candidate will remain an employee of their current employer which, will continue to pay their salary and the Association will reimburse the salary to the employer. In addition, their terms and conditions of employment will remain unchanged. The Association will reimburse business travel and expenses incurred on secondment. Interested applicants will need to be aware of their organisation's secondment policy and obtain prior approval of their employer.

**WLGA Politically Restricted Posts:**

The WLGA will not appoint as an employee or worker in any capacity, any Councillor who is currently a Member (including co-opted member) of a local Authority or any other member body of the WLGA e.g. National Park Authority or who had been a Member in the previous 12 months (s.116 Local Government Act (LGA) 1972).

The following posts are considered to be politically restricted (in line with those local authority roles as specified in Section 2(1) of the 1989 Act<sup>1</sup>:

- All members of Senior Management Team
- All officers paid above Spinal Point 30
- Other officers giving advice to local authorities on a regular basis
- Any officers with a role which involves speaking on behalf of the WLGA to the media.

The Association is an Equal Opportunities Employer.

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<sup>1</sup> Part I of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and Local Government (Politically Restricted Posts) (Wales) Regulations 2008

## Apply Now!

For an initial discussion about the role and the organisation, please contact Daniel Hurford, Head of Policy (Improvement & Governance) on 07900 240939.

To apply, please send a covering letter with a completed application form by the closing date of 10<sup>th</sup> May 2021 (9:00am) to:

HR Manager  
Welsh Local Government Association  
Local Government House  
Drake Walk  
Cardiff, CF10 4LG  
e-mail [recruitment@wlga.gov.uk](mailto:recruitment@wlga.gov.uk)

Upload directly to our Recruitment Centre – [Click Here](#)

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to interview via Microsoft Teams during weeks commencing 17<sup>th</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> May 2021 with date to be confirmed.

Shortlisted applicants may be requested to undertake a task before attending for interview, as well as pre-interview tasks on the day, followed by an interview with a selection panel.

## Apply Now!

For an initial discussion about the role and the organisation, please contact Dilwyn Jones, Communications and Public Affairs Manager on 07554056520.

To apply, please send a covering letter with a completed application form, by the closing date of 23 March 2021, to:

HR Manager  
Welsh Local Government Association  
Local Government House  
Drake Walk  
Cardiff, CF10 4LG  
e-mail [recruitment@wlga.gov.uk](mailto:recruitment@wlga.gov.uk)

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to interview via Microsoft Teams during the week commencing 29 March 2021 with the date to be confirmed.

Shortlisted applicants may be requested to undertake a task before attending for interview, as well as pre-interview tasks on the day, followed by an interview with a selection panel.