

Partnership commissioning

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A guide to Oldham Partnership and how we spend our funds

This factsheet will help you to understand how Oldham Partnership spends a government grant called area based grant.

What is Oldham Partnership?

Oldham Partnership is a local strategic partnership (LSP). The partnership brings together the public services in Oldham - for example the police, council and health services - residents, business and community and voluntary groups. These people and organisations work together to make major decisions and to combine our skills to make more impact in Oldham.

The partnership isn't a statutory organisation, which means we aren't obliged to have a partnership at all. However, most areas of the country have an LSP because by working together we can make better use of our money and can make bigger improvements.

Area based grant

Oldham Partnership receives money, called the area based grant, from central government. This year (2010 – 2011), this totals 27,450,157. Area based grant is made from what used to be many different government funds which all came with particular conditions on how they should be spent. Government created one single fund because it's much easier for us to manage. It also allows local areas to decide how funds can be spent to best effect.

Because the partnership isn't statutory, Oldham Council is ultimately responsible for overseeing area based grant.

The area based grant is divided up into five themes: safe and strong communities, health and wellbeing, economic prosperity, children and young people (the Children's Trust) and partnership support.

The Oldham Partnership executive discuss and agree this division of the grant. This year it was divided like this:

Safe and strong communities

Safe	£2,391,743
Strong	£976,035
Housing	£150,000
Health and wellbeing	£ 12,461,172
Economic prosperity	£2,485,300
Children and Young People	£ 7,949,337
Partnership support	£1,036,570

This leaves a small amount of unallocated funding.

What is commissioning?

Each of the five themes then commissions activity with their area based grant through their commissioning board. The commissioning boards are made up of staff from partner organisations, councillors and members of the voluntary and community sector.

Commissioning is described as ‘making the best use of all available resources to produce the best outcomes’.

Through research and consultation, we know what the big priorities are in the borough, and what will make the biggest improvements in people’s lives. These priorities are set out in our sustainable community strategy and local area agreement. When we take a commissioning approach, we use our funds on projects, activities and services that we can be certain are helping us deliver these priorities and will meet people’s needs. This is different to how we have worked in the past, when any organisation could make a bid for some funds without us necessarily knowing whether their plans would make a difference to Oldham.

So, this approach enables us to make the very best use of valuable public funds.

Our commissioned activities have led to – or contributed to - some significant results:

- 358 incapacity benefit claimants have been helped, 156 of whom were in sustained employment in June 2009
- the Passport to Summer programme of activities helped reduce antisocial behaviour by 26%
- we supported 3420 people to live independently in their own homes by December 2008
- young people have been encouraged to achieve highly: 250 Oldham College students went on to higher education in 2006, in 2009 this figure was 450

What happens if the money isn’t spent?

Oldham Partnership’s support team work closely with around seventy organisations who have been commissioned to deliver activities with area based grant.

We closely monitor how much of the money is spent. Occasionally there is money that we won't spend by the end of the financial year. We refer to this as underspend, and it becomes spare money for the financial year we're in. This is because we can only carry a small amount of area based grant into the next financial year, so it's better to gather up what we won't spend on our planned activities and reuse it elsewhere, rather than lose it completely.

The partnership's public service board (PSB), which is a smaller group of partners who meet monthly, agree how the underspend is used. The PSB have been delegated by the executive to do this because sometimes an urgent decision is required. The underspend gives us flexibility to respond to situations we may not have predicted when the area based grant was allocated. For example some underspend is being used to help Oldham through the credit crunch.

When we redeploy this money, it must still contribute to our major priorities for Oldham and this is rigorously checked.

Find out more

The partnership tries to be as open as possible. On our website, you can find lots of information about how we work and the decisions we have made. Go to www.oldhampartnership.org.uk, call us on 0161 770 5256 or email info@oldhampartnership.org.uk

Contact

You can access fact sheets in a number of ways:

Download: www.oldham.gov.uk

Tel: 0161 222 6644

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Write to: Contact Oldham, PO Box 196,
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