

Oldham Partnership Conference Report

Performance Management in Oldham: Responding to a new performance framework

4 November 2008

Best Western Hotel Smokies Park



Attended by 52 delegates from:

- Oldham Partnership
- Greater Manchester Police
- Voluntary Action Oldham
- Oldham Council
- Oldham Primary Care Trust (PCT)
- Audit Commission
- North West Improvement and Efficiency Partnership
- Government Office North West (GONW)

1 Key messages from delegates

1.1 On performance management principles

- Agreement and shared ownership across the partnership – ‘joined up approaches’
- Stop ‘silo mentality’
- Avoid duplication – ‘one entry, many uses’
- Strategic alignment across the partnership
- Partnership working to shape mainstream delivery
- Work with partners to understand the bigger picture
- Outcome focused working
- Clear accountability for each performance indicator
- Clarity of partnership roles
- Clear role for elected members
- Are organisational priorities public priorities?
- Effective communication between partners
- Consistent messages and joint publications - ‘many organisations, one message’
- Achievable targets, set locally
- Recognition of inter-relationships between targets
- Evaluation of interventions – ‘understand why initiatives are working well or not’
- Public feedback – understood, methods tailored to audience, coordinated, delivers change
- Engagement with front line staff
- Two-way dialogue with the public, not being ‘communicated to’
- Make use of complaints and positive feedback
- Effective use of inspection feedback
- Good planning and project management
- Better use of milestones and ‘quick wins’
- Common measurement system between partners – supporting comparison
- Robust risk management system/approach
- Responding to circumstances ‘beyond our control’

1.2 On performance management organisation and structure

- Culture change needed
- Calls for a single performance framework for the whole partnership
- Oldham Partnership Performance Team
- Public Service Board approach
- Integration of marketing and communication functions with performance management
- Neighbourhood agreements/contracts, local Public Service Board for each Area Committee

1.3 On performance management processes

- Better use of IT to simplify systems – concern that Oldham Council is not engaging partners
- Develop role of the Data Hub – could it become the sole local performance system?
- Single data quality process
- Better communication and feedback, including social marketing
- Co-ordinated media campaigns
- Make use of existing forums for communication, formal and informal mechanisms

2 Overview of presentations

Part 1: Mapping the new performance framework



In his introduction, Nick Brown (Chair of Oldham Partnership Executive) sent a clear message that with a new performance framework in place across the partnership, our priority must be to deliver on the targets we have set, and ensure that we maintain our strong reputation. This was a message reinforced by Jennet Peters (Government Office North West), who emphasised that performance management is first and foremost about shaping decisions to achieve outcomes – we mustn't do something just because it has always been done. Gillian Bishop (North West Improvement and Efficiency Partnership) provided information about how this new regional body can support partnerships to achieve this goal, while John Eley (Oldham Partnership) and Pat Johnson (Audit Commission) raised awareness of the strategic changes shaping the environment in which performance management now takes place (a new Local Area Agreement and Sustainable Community Strategy, and a new framework for assessment called Comprehensive Area Assessment, which is primarily outcome focused).

In the Q&A session, one delegate asked: 'Is now not the time to bring together all the commissioning and performance staff across the partnership?' John Eley responded that we need a serious discussion about the structure required going forward, and that we also need to be more intelligent in the way we work, as performance management will never capture everything. Nick Brown concluded that however our performance framework evolves, we then need a period of stability to focus on effective delivery.

Part 2: Responding to a new performance framework in Oldham



The key message from the second part of the conference was that we need to look at 'issues, not organisations', as Rob Haddrell put it, the Head of Overview & Scrutiny. Rob Haddrell and Cllr Ann Wingate called for a single scrutiny programme that will reduce the reporting burden. This built on Ian Flanagan Smith's (Oldham Partnership) argument that we need to align performance management systems across the partnership in order to capitalise on what is potentially a far more streamlined performance framework than localities have had previously, and Ian emphasised the importance of an intelligence led approach, which makes best possible use of performance data, research evidence and other sources of information. Michael Walder (Oldham Council) provided an introduction to Corvu, the performance management system currently being developed by the Council in consultation with the Oldham Partnership. It is anticipated that Corvu will be accessible to partner organisations, and Michael emphasised how that could help to reduce duplication.

3 Key recommendations for action

Oldham needs a single performance framework, and better coordination of all performance management activities taking place across the partnership. Performance management needs to be simplified, more responsive and outcome focused, and more relevant to communities

In other words, there was considerable consistency in the message sent by delegates. The above statement is an attempt to capture that message.

Several of the key messages from delegates could be classified as areas for improvement rather than transformational change (though no less important). In order to inform the change agenda, it is possible to identify five key transformational change issues that warrant further investigation:

1. **What would a single performance framework in Oldham look like?**
2. **What organisational structures would be needed for a single performance framework?**
3. **How can we enhance the role of elected members and the function of O&S?**
4. **What should be the role of Area Committees within the performance framework – should Oldham adopt the ‘mini LAA’ model for example?**
5. **How can Oldham make best use of IT to improve performance management processes? How can Oldham shape the development of the national Data Hub?**

So what happens next?

In his closing remarks, Nick Brown argued that it is important for something practical to come out of this conference. It was agreed that this conference report would be presented to the Oldham Partnership Executive and Public Service Board.

Since this conference took place, Oldham Council’s Improvement Team has initiated a review of the Council’s performance management framework. The Oldham Partnership is contributing to this review, and will be submitting the recommendations contained in this conference report. This conference report asks the Executive and Public Service Board to take note of the work already taking place in Oldham, and to provide any additional strategic recommendations about the development of Oldham’s performance framework in light of the recommendations contained in this report.

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