

When submitting their projects, applicants should pay particular attention to the following **general criteria** used for the selection of the best projects:

- *Innovation*: novelty of the solution; degree to which the case shows a leap of creativity in public administration progress; something different that goes beyond what currently exists;
- *Public concern*: degree of addressing a pressing need or important problem of public concern; the project topic is high on the agenda in European public organisations;
- *Significance/Relevance*: the project deals with a sufficient number of public sector bodies; a critical mass of actors is tackling the issue;
- *Impact*: the realisation of planned objectives and activities; the provision and illustration of proven evidence and benefits; results demonstration;
- *Learning capacity and transferability*: with lessons of potential value to other entities; the project provides the potential for successful replication by other governments; it stimulates improvement in its application and provides mutual learning perspectives.

Applications submitted under **THEME 3** will furthermore be judged against following **specific criteria** under this topic:

- *Demonstrated benefits of the partnership when compared to the alternatives*;
- *Appropriateness of partner selection process*;
- *Effective governance arrangements, including for management of risks*.

Background (e.g. grounds/reasons for the project idea, max. 5000 characters)

A local strategic partnership is a single body which brings together different parts of the public sector, community and voluntary sector organisations, health, fire and police services and private businesses to enhance services and work together to better meet the needs of neighbourhoods at a community level.

The Oldham Partnership is our local strategic partnership and provides the mechanism for uniting Oldham's strategic leaders around a shared and ambitious vision for a thriving town. The Oldham Partnership was formed and accredited in 2002 and is at the centre of a network of thematic groups which encompass a wide variety of organisations. This network of groups is led by an executive and a steering group.

In 2001 the significant social and economic challenges that Oldham faced manifested themselves in high profile civil disturbances. The town was thrown into the limelight as being at the centre of the worst racially motivated riots the UK had seen in over 15 years. Lack of joint working at a local level was highlighted as being one of the key reasons why there has been little sustained improvement of social and physical regeneration or improved public services which actually met the needs of local people, and this was at the heart of the civil disturbances. Whilst marking a low ebb in the history of the town, the events also signified a change in the nature of the relationship between partner organisations in the borough, and ushered in a new era of ambition. Oldham recognised that it needed to accelerate the pace of change. A dedicated and talented team of community leaders grasped the nettle, driving forwards an ambitious programme of strategic change in Oldham by combining a culture of partnership working with clarity, ambition and effective management to improve the social and economic environment of local residents.

There was also a real pressing need to work together to address some of the inherent problems that Oldham faced. In the late 19th century, Oldham produced 30% of the world's spun cotton and whilst other industries were prevalent, Oldham firmly

had its roots in the cotton industry and was wholly dependant on just one industry - manufacturing. Historically borne out of the industrial revolution, Oldham has been a town of relatively low skilled and low waged economy with the local economy dependent on a manufacturing business base, with low levels of business formation. 'Income deprivation' has been a persistent feature of the area for many years. With the exception of occasional 'boom periods', the manufacturing industry of Oldham has declined severely in past years and it has remained a relatively poor town to live and work in despite being highly affluent in the more rural areas of the borough. More recently it has become even more marked, and its concentration in Oldham's most deprived areas has increased.

The scale of Oldham's housing issues distinguishes Oldham from most other places too. The area has an unusually high proportion of small densely packed terraced houses, which were originally built to house mill workers. This means we have homes that don't match our residents' needs and some of our housing provides very poor living conditions by 21st century standards.

Health and well being in Oldham has been improving for many years, with life expectancy steadily increasing. However people in Oldham are not as healthy as people in the rest of England – in particular there are higher levels of heart disease, all cancers, notably lung cancer, and respiratory disease.

Oldham is home to people from many different cultural and social backgrounds, with a wide variety of experiences. We celebrate our rich diversity, but also bring people together to create a strong and cohesive society where people from different backgrounds live side by side in peace and safety.

The challenges are such that we can only succeed in making Oldham a place where everyone is proud to belong if we work together in partnership. In March 2005 the Oldham Partnership produced the Community Strategy 'Planning for Sustainable Communities 2005-2020' and in March 2006 agreed its Local Area Agreement (LAA) 'Increasing life opportunities for all 2006-2009'. Both the strategy and the Local Area Agreement were revised in 2008 and produced as one joint document outlining our vision for Oldham, and how we will get there.

Through the Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement, Oldham Partnership is driving change and improvement in Oldham by 'Increasing life opportunities for all' to make 'Oldham – a place where everyone is proud to belong.'

Main and specific objectives (max. 2500 characters)

The partnership's main and specific objectives are outlined in two important documents for the partnership, The Local Area Agreement (2008 – 2011) and the Sustainable Community Strategy (2008 – 2020). To achieve the objectives set out in these documents, the partnership has agreed terms of reference, as follows:

- To identify and address the strategic priorities both for Oldham and the priority issues for neighbourhoods and groups of greatest need, and ensure that these priorities are effectively managed through the appropriate partnerships and organisations;
- To provide a cohesive and overarching structure of organisations which will work together to implement the Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement;

- To bring together in a clear, accountable and action-orientated structure, the leaders of the key organisations and partnerships from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors;
- To ensure that the work and resources of organisations and partnerships in Oldham is aligned with strategic priorities;
- To monitor, review and facilitate delivery of the Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement;
- To deliver on key targets aimed at narrowing the gap between the most and least deprived neighbourhoods and groups within Oldham, and between Oldham and elsewhere;
- To reduce the bureaucratic burden by rationalising partnership structures and working processes to ensure maximum efficiency and impact;
- To provide a forum for creative thinking innovative problem-solving approaches;
- To publicise the change taking place in Oldham and to demonstrate that this includes all our communities and individuals;
- To ensure the sustainable development of Oldham;
- To promote community development and cohesion;
- To manage risk to the delivery of strategic priorities;
- To provide an accountable structure for delivery of the Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement.

The sustainable community strategy contains a vision for Oldham. All partners agree to work towards a commitment that by 2020 we will have transformed our town for the benefit of all its residents. We intend to make Oldham a place of choice, where people choose to live, work, visit and invest, as a matter of preference.

Our local area agreement is a more detailed blueprint for how we'll work towards our vision. Local area agreements are written contracts between local areas and the government in England. They allow partner organisations in each particular area to decide their priorities for improvement in that area, and lay out targets for that improvement.

The agreement includes 29 targets for improvement over three years. Targets include reducing the serious violent crime rate in Oldham, reducing the level of teenage pregnancy, reducing the number of primary fires, reducing the number of people who smoke in Oldham and reducing the number of people not in education, employment and training.

Input/resources utilized/allocated to the project (max. 2500 characters)

The Oldham Partnership does more than just formulate strategy: it is the key driver for multi agency service delivery. Recognising the need to share priorities and resources, the Oldham Partnership is supported by a small independent team of staff responsible for supporting and administering the Oldham Partnership, co-ordinating and negotiating the LAA, performance and programme management, marketing and communications, and commissioning functions, giving autonomous control to the transparent and sustainable allocation of LAA resources.

Managerial control over the LAA is particularly effective. On an annual basis the Oldham Partnership regularly reviews its terms of reference, provides reports on progress to the public through a formal annual report and conference and actively pursues opportunities for joint working and sharing best practice with other local strategic partnerships. The Oldham Partnership also produces quarterly performance

and risk management reports to the partnership executive and the steering group. These reporting systems have been developed with the overall aim of enhancing management control whilst minimising bureaucracy. Previously, the support systems in the local authority have been slowed down by bureaucratic processes, the new systems developed aim to create greater management control.

The reports produced inform the executive, steering group and the Oldham Partnership support team, which monitor performance against the targets set out in the LAA. The reports are placed on the LSP website (www.oldhampartnership.org.uk/laa_performance).

Quarterly performance reporting ensures that any underperformances are identified early on and appropriate interventions are put in place to ensure potential slippage is addressed. Because the delivery of activity is done at a local level, the partnership can easily put into place measures to pick up any underperformance and where applicable de-commission or re-commission activity to ensure targets are continually met and the services provided to the local community meet the needs of residents.

The results of this are realised quickly for example, when a local privately owned business made 250 staff redundant, the executive group was able to utilise underspend from the previous quarter and re-direct funding in order to commission activity which would enable job clubs to be set up in localities to assist people into other employment or further training, thus reducing the impact that the redundancies had on the local labour market.

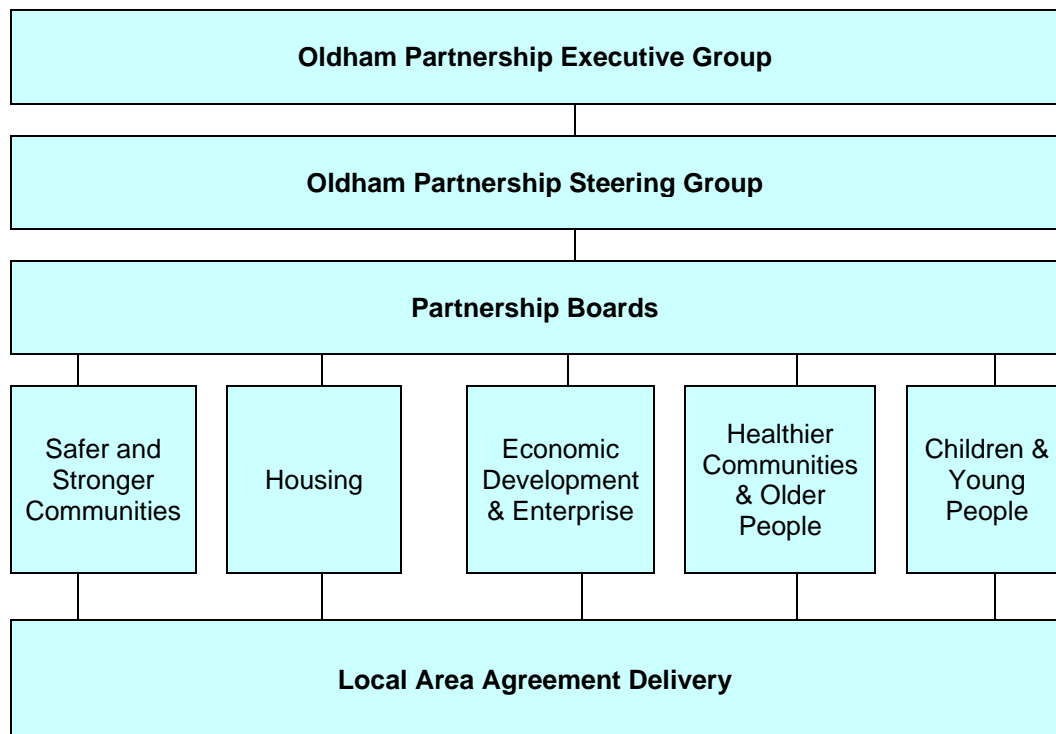
Implementation (e.g. structure, processes, management, communication, max. 6000 characters)

The Oldham Partnership has a clear vision and strategy for place-shaping a more prosperous and cohesive Oldham.

The Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for 2008-2020 provides the strategic context for building a more cohesive town. This is accompanied by our regeneration strategy 'Oldham Beyond' and by the local area agreement (LAA) which comprises our service delivery contract with Government for 2008-2011. The LAA was developed as a contract of delivery which would build community cohesion and address Oldham's socio-economic priorities by 'increasing life opportunities for all'.

Pockets of Oldham's population have acute and long-term problems with health, housing and economic well-being. In the reports which looked at the civil disturbances in 2001, one of the conclusions was that inequalities between neighbourhoods and communities were a root cause of tension and poor levels of "community cohesion". A key success of the Oldham SCS, LAA and Oldham Beyond has been the development and implementation of strategy through multi-agency bodies with shared leadership. This has resulted in unique drivers such as higher education and culture becoming integral to our strategic planning. Our approach in Oldham has been to connect our major capital programmes with the LAA and SCS.

Structure



The partnership has an executive group of around 15 members, including the police divisional commander, council chief executive, local councillors and representatives from the voluntary and community and business sectors. They meet four times a year and ensure that the strategic priorities for Oldham are addressed and takes formal accountability for their delivery.

They also take overall responsibility for the allocation of Oldham's LAA funds.

Given the challenges that Oldham has faced around inclusivity, it is imperative that members of the local community are able to participate fully in the area's decision-making process.

The Oldham Partnership steering group is the inclusive, policy-making forum of the partnership structure, which has twenty-five places reserved for representatives of the community, local voluntary sector, and elected members (over 70% of the total membership). This includes members of the public who are co-opted onto the steering group to represent their ward, neighbourhood and community, as well as the residents of the borough as a whole. These people are elected by their area and specially supported by partnership staff.

The steering group is unique – it's the only place where residents can have a direct say on pieces of work affecting the whole of Oldham. In fact, a local resident chairs the steering group. Bill Edwards was born and raised in Oldham, and has been playing an active, and non-political, role in the area's developments for over twelve years.

The steering group looks at important decisions that need to be made about Oldham, gives its views and makes recommendations to the executive. For example, they recently looked at the provision of centres for young people across Oldham.

Working with Oldham Council, the partnership has shared scrutiny arrangements for areas of concern. Interventions in areas of poor performance have been successful. Our systems of managerial control have been widely recognised for their effectiveness.

Reports from Overview and Scrutiny and from the Oldham Partnership are available as public documents and are posted on both Oldham Council and the Oldham Partnership website.

A new element was recently added to the structure of the partnership: a local public service board (LPSB). This is a very small group comprising the council leader and chief executive, the chair of the partnership's executive and steering group, the police divisional commander and the head of NHS Oldham.

The LPSB provides enhanced infrastructure, leadership and really increases the speed at which Oldham changes for the better. This is not about a process but about the way in which we can deliver noticeable improvements that will be recognised by the population of Oldham. We need to deliver even more improvements – and quickly – and the LPSB will make sure that we do.

As the area which provided the engine to England's industrial revolution, Oldham has always enjoyed close relationships with the private sector. The Oldham Partnership has harvested this link, with private sector representation on both the Executive and Steering Group and respected businessmen such as David Benstead, Director of Zetex Semiconductors (an international electronics firm based in Chadderton) are helping to shape the borough's economic resurgence.

The executive and steering group are supported by five partnership boards, one for each block of Oldham's LAA. The multi-agency boards are delivery focused structures, with membership given to partners who can contribute to the delivery of the outcomes in that block. The voluntary, community and faith sector and the private sector play an important role on the partnership boards, identifying issues and initiatives based on their specialist knowledge which are turning the vision of the SCS and the LAA into tangible results. Underpinning these structures has been Oldham Council - providing high-quality support across the partnership.

All elements of the partnership adhere to long-standing partnership protocols that set out terms of reference.

In terms of membership, there are clear protocols stating that there must be elected members and representatives of the voluntary and community sector on each partnership within our structure, so ensure that local people and their needs are kept at the heart of everything we do.

The partnership has clear lines of communication, including its own website, and minutes from meetings are publicly accessible.

Innovation features (max. 2000 characters)

Oldham Partnership has delivered major improvements in health and safeguarding but has also, in the field of skills, pioneered innovations that are likely to become national models.

Oldham has traditionally under-performed when it comes to educational attainment and skills development. This has had a knock-on impact with Oldham's economy being characterised by low-skill, low-wage opportunities.

The borough's economic restructuring will see a net loss of 10,000 jobs from the manufacturing sector over the next ten years. Oldham is proving that we will be able to break the cycle. At the heart of this is the belief that Oldhamers have immense potential to have a high skills base, but they have never had the opportunities.

The corner was turned with the establishment of Oldham Sixth Form College, which sat alongside Oldham College to provide opportunities for students to climb the skills ladder, either through academic studies or vocational qualifications. By working in partnership with other stakeholders in the borough, the two institutions began to wake the potential within the population.

The Oldham Partnership enabled the two institutions to expand their ambitions by identifying the issues which had to be addressed to affect long-term strategic change in the borough. These included improved educational attainment throughout all stages, a package of academic and vocational options which aligns with the needs of local businesses, and the re-skilling of Oldham's workforce.

The most notable achievement was the opening of University Campus Oldham (UCO) in 2005. UCO has been consistently oversubscribed, illustrating the talent and desire of the local population if they are provided with the right opportunities. Over 2,000 students have signed up and have been retained in UCO.

As well as increasing higher education (HE) participation rates, UCO has counter balanced the skills exodus of people who have left the borough to pursue their ambitions elsewhere.

Many of Oldham's residents were unable to attend HE provision outside the borough due to family, economic, or social ties. This restraint has now been removed, and has been a particular benefit to the borough's most disadvantaged groups - notably Bangladeshi girls who are now over represented at UCO and achieving excellent results.

Information relevant to the theme specific criteria (max. 5000 characters)

The Oldham Partnership has evolved along inclusive lines with shared leadership across public organisations, elected members, and community representatives. All of these individuals form part of a collective endeavour to change Oldham for the better.

The LAA has enabled Oldham to accelerate its partnership working and transform service delivery in a co-ordinated and collaborative manner. At the same time, it has retained an approachable and inclusive style where individuals are more concerned about getting things done than rank or status;

The LAA has whetted Oldham's ambition, confidence and dynamic for change. The LAA has helped Oldham to move its focus from 2001 to proactively shaping its future both in terms of physical regeneration and transforming public services. This means that local decision makers in Oldham cannot be complacent as expectations rise and standards increase;

Partnership governance, commissioning, performance, finance, programme and risk management systems have been developed as 'fit for purpose' multi agency systems with the overall aim of enhancing LSP managerial control whilst minimising bureaucracy. A Partnership Support Team which undertakes these core functions has helped develop a professional and collective ownership of the LAA and LSP;

Success has enabled the Oldham Partnership to be more outward facing in both sharing best practice and learning from others. We are proactive within the sub-region/ region as well as nationally.

Results (e.g. evidence of impact) (max. 5000 characters)

All partners in the Oldham Partnership agree that we simply could not deliver improvements at the speed that we have done without working together.

The LAA has been rated by Government as green (in a scale of red – amber – green) for both service delivery and direction of travel.

We also evolved a much more effective communication and meeting structure focussed on delivering a shared agenda devoid of negativity and factionalism. By the end of 2007 we had produced one of the best LAAs in the country and a partnership that had the intellectual and emotional support of the partners.

In the following years Oldham's partnership progressed from one of the weakest nationally to one of the strongest and the LAA was regarded as a role model.

The Oldham Partnership is making a positive and sustainable impact on the quality of life for local people. Through the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Oldham Beyond regeneration vision the partnership was able to identify the long-term goals for the borough.

The Local Area Agreement enabled the partnership to break these down into short-term goals, against which definable progress could be mapped. The first year of Oldham's LAA - a year that national research illustrates is traditionally blighted by problems of accountability and little delivery - gave extremely positive results.

In the policy areas where Oldham has often had a large gap between its performance and that of its national peers - housing, economic development and health - the figures demonstrate that the LAA is having a significant and successful impact.

The Oldham Partnership has also led the success of our strategic regeneration programmes.

By bringing a further education facility to the borough in the shape of University Centre Oldham (UCO), the Oldham Partnership expanded the horizon of possibilities for an entire generation. Various partnership programmes such as Junior University have supported this.

Since its opening in May 2005, UCO has been over subscribed, demonstrating the latent demand for such a facility in the borough. In addition to these initiatives, a host of other outcomes are improving the quality of life for local people - street cleanliness, arts participation, Higher Education, job creation, life expectancy and smoking cessation, older people supported to live at home, healthy schools and teenage pregnancies.

Commissioned activities have contributed to the following successful outcomes and results;

- The number of accidental house fires has been reduced and Oldham is predicted to achieve its challenging target of only 930 accidental house fires over three years
- Our 'Art for All' initiative has involved over 10,000 additional adults participating in performing and visual arts.
- A range of multi-agency health initiatives is improving life expectancy of males and females.
- Oldham has the 7th highest reduction in teenage conceptions in England, and is on course to reach a government target of halving teen pregnancy by 2010
- Only 15 cases of homelessness have been recorded in the last 3 months, making a total of 61 for 2008/09 to date.
- Many more older people have been supported to remain living in their community, where they are happy and comfortable, rather than moving to residential care homes. By the end of December 2008, Oldham Partnership had supported 3420 people to live independently.

These figures demonstrate that the LAA is having a significant and successful impact on the lives of the residents of Oldham.

Oldham's Local Area Agreement was negotiated solely through the structure of the Local Strategic Partnership, giving a genuine sense of shared ownership across all partners. The initiatives above are just some of those which are now helping to improve the quality of life for local people, and have come about as a direct result of the LAA negotiations and the commitment to partnership working in the borough - a fact that the Oldham Partnership is particularly proud of.

Oldham encountered significant regional and national opposition to the inclusion of a participative arts target within the LAA. This target is now exceeding even the most optimistic of predictions. The sub-indicator monitoring participation from Black & Minority Ethnic communities is even better, with the three year target having been exceeded by 37% within the first twelve months.

The LAA was the catalyst to a change in the approach to service delivery in Oldham with preventative action taking priority and improved service coordination between partners. Many of the measures around the health of local people is focused around the lifestyle choices that people make on a daily basis which combine to give a long term picture of health and mortality.

For years Oldham has run a successful smoking cessation campaign, but the LAA has targeted this at the groups who have not engaged with this service previously, namely males aged 16-34 and members of the Black and Minority Ethnic community.

The success of the Oldham Partnership has largely been due to collaborative partnership working and maintaining a clear vision for a more prosperous Oldham. Identifying key partners early on in the process and ensuring representation from all sectors have been represented on both the executive and steering groups has ensured continued success. Best practice is regularly shared with other organisations, a number of prestigious awards have been secured including Academy for Sustainable Communities and Local Government Chronicle awards. Senior officers are regular guest speakers at national and regional events and the partnership has emerged as a national model of best practice for local area

agreements and local strategic partnerships. Seven years down the line individuals from organisations are still delivering change and supporting the goals of the Oldham Partnership and the outcomes of the LAA.