

# The review of Area Based Grant (ABG) Frequently Asked Questions

If you have any questions about the review of area based grant, please contact the Oldham Partnership support team on 0161 770 3199 or [info@oldhampartnership.org.uk](mailto:info@oldhampartnership.org.uk)

## Why do we need to review area based grant?

The Oldham Partnership has produced a prospectus which sets out the clear priorities around which we will focus resources and activity as a partnership. These priorities are: towards a university town, great places to live and healthy lives. Accordingly, a review of area based grant funded activities is now required to ensure that activity is clearly delivering against this agenda.

Having clear priorities is critical moving forwards because, as you may have read in the press, the next few years are set to be extremely demanding on public sector finances. All public sector organisations in the borough are facing the need to make tough decisions about spending..

This factsheet tells you about a particular fund – area based grant (ABG) – that Oldham receives from central government. This financial year (April 2010 to March 2011) the grant we receive totals £27 million, and we use that to fund over 120 commissioned activities across Oldham.

We are now looking closely at all of the commissioned activities that we currently fund through ABG to have a clear approach moving forward. This factsheet will tell you about that review process.

## What are the objectives of the review?

1. To ensure that from 1 April 2011, we have a programme of commissioned activity that will concentrate on those priorities which will have a tangible impact and are in line with our sustainable community strategy ambition to transform the borough for the benefit of all its residents.
2. To measure the significance of the outcomes of currently commissioned activities, the level of impact, the cost/benefit of the activity and the potential implications if the activity was no longer there.

3. To recommend the decommissioning of ABG activity where the impact against the achievement of the priorities in the Oldham Partnership prospectus cannot be significantly evidenced.
4. To assess the activities that carry out key functions as stipulated by government and to review the efficiency of these activities and to recommend improved ways of working that will lead to increased efficiencies.

### Who agreed this review?

The Oldham Partnership executive agreed this process when it met in March 2010. This group includes the principal of Oldham sixth form college, the council leader and chief executive, the council opposition leader, the chief executive of NHS Oldham, Greater Manchester Police's chief superintendent for Oldham division and voluntary and community sector representatives. All members gave the review their full backing.

### What will the process be?

Because we may have less funding in the future, we need to be certain that we spend ABG on the interventions that will deliver our strategic priorities and improve the borough. We need to examine each activity that we currently commission.

An Oldham Partnership challenge panel will look at each of our current commissioned activities. The panel will

- look at the impact the commissioned activity is having against our prospectus priorities
- weigh up the cost of the activity and the benefits to Oldham deriving from it. For example, say it costs £3,000 to support a long-term unemployed person back to work, the panel will compare this to the potential cost of the person claiming Job Seekers' Allowance for many more months
- look at the implications of the activity no longer being there
- look at what government says we must deliver, and see if there are any ways of delivering such activities in a more efficient way
- look at the impact activity is having on partner organisations related agendas and outcomes

The panel will then

- recommend new programmes of activity or different ways of delivering
- recommend that certain activities are decommissioned

The panel is not a decision making group. It will make recommendations to the members of Oldham Partnership executive, who will then make the decisions regarding allocation of ABG, after full consultation with the accountable bodies to assess the impact of the recommendations made. Support will be provided to organisations whose activities are decommissioned.

### What is the prospectus and who agreed it?

Last year, the partnership anticipated that the current climate of recession and public funding cuts would require a small focused set of priorities contained within a prospectus to help ensure delivery of our long term vision for Oldham (the sustainable community strategy - see below). Therefore, the

prospectus helps the partnership to deploy all of its funding and resources where they will have the greatest impact.

So, the prospectus contains our 'must dos'; a limited number of carefully chosen initiatives that we simply must deliver.

The prospectus was agreed by the Oldham Partnership's public service board and you can read the prospectus here: [www.oldhampartnership.org.uk/prospectus-final-consultation-oct09.pdf](http://www.oldhampartnership.org.uk/prospectus-final-consultation-oct09.pdf)

## What are the prospectus priorities?

They are

1. Towards a university town
  - Addressing worklessness
  - Improving skills and educational attainment

This priority links closely to four strategic initiatives: The Greater Manchester Strategy ([www.agma.gov.uk/cms\\_media/files/final\\_gms\\_august\\_2009.pdf](http://www.agma.gov.uk/cms_media/files/final_gms_august_2009.pdf)) which was developed as a result of the Manchester Independent Economic Review (MIER; [www.manchester-review.org.uk](http://www.manchester-review.org.uk)) and the Manchester Area Agreement (MAA; [www.agma.gov.uk/cms\\_media/files/manchester\\_multi\\_area\\_agreement.pdf](http://www.agma.gov.uk/cms_media/files/manchester_multi_area_agreement.pdf)); and Oldham's Children and Young People Plan (CYPP; [www.oldham.gov.uk/children\\_and\\_young\\_people\\_plan](http://www.oldham.gov.uk/children_and_young_people_plan))

2. Great places to live
  - Reducing crime
  - Improving street cleanliness
  - Providing positive activities for young people

This priority links closely to three strategic initiatives: the crime strategic assessment, the Children and Young People Plan (CYPP; [www.oldham.gov.uk/children\\_and\\_young\\_people\\_plan](http://www.oldham.gov.uk/children_and_young_people_plan)) and the national Think Family programme ([www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/strategy/parents/ID91askclient/thinkfamily/tf/](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/strategy/parents/ID91askclient/thinkfamily/tf/))

3. Healthy lives
  - Active people
  - Reducing the harm done by alcohol
  - Helping people to be empowered; to increase their independence and aspirations

This priority links to three strategic initiatives: Oldham's alcohol strategy (in development), Oldham's joint strategic needs assessment (JSNA; [www.oldham.gov.uk/oldhams\\_joint\\_strategic\\_needs\\_assessment.pdf](http://www.oldham.gov.uk/oldhams_joint_strategic_needs_assessment.pdf)) and the Children and Young People Plan (CYPP; [www.oldham.gov.uk/children\\_and\\_young\\_people\\_plan](http://www.oldham.gov.uk/children_and_young_people_plan))

## What is the sustainable community strategy and local area agreement?

The sustainable community strategy sets out our shared long-term vision for Oldham. It's a description of what it's like now, what its strengths and challenges are and how we want it to be in 2020.

The local area agreement (LAA) is a plan of what we aim to do between 2008 and 2011 to make progress towards realising the sustainable community strategy's vision. The LAA is a combination of government's aims for the country as a whole and our local priorities as identified in the sustainable community strategy. It is agreed with central government, which then closely monitors our progress.

You can read the sustainable community strategy and local area agreement here:  
[www.oldhampartnership.org.uk/local-area-agreement](http://www.oldhampartnership.org.uk/local-area-agreement)

## What's already been done?

All commissioned activities will be considered as part of the ABG review process and their impact will be assessed and considered against our prospectus priority outcomes.

Oldham Partnership's support team have already collated information about each commissioned activity. The team are now working with thematic leads and block coordinators to align activity within the prospectus priorities, and to gather evidence and information against the review priorities outlined above.

## Who is on the partnership challenge panel?

The panel will be chaired by Nick Brown, the principal of Oldham Sixth Form College.

The other people on the panel are:

Elected member representatives

Safe and strong communities board representative – Tim Forber, Greater Manchester Police

Economy and enterprise board representative – Elaine McLean, Oldham Council

Health and wellbeing representative – Gail Richards, NHS Oldham

Children's Trust representative – Tim Mitchell, Positive Steps Oldham

Voluntary, community and faith sector representative – Liz Windsor-Welsh, Voluntary Action Oldham

Private sector representative – Dave Benstead, Zetex Diodes

They will be supported by Carolyn Wilkins, the council's assistant chief executive, and Alison Vaughan from the partnership support team.

## What are the timings of the review?

Date	Body	Role
17.5.10	Thematic block and key partner consultation	Review and understand their activity within the matrix Provide information and detail for the challenge panel
21.5.10	Oldham Partnership support team	Provide papers to the challenge panel members
27.5.10	First challenge panel	Look at all information. Make initial recommendations where possible about what we are happy to support and what can be decommissioned. Identify where further detail or consideration is needed
28.5.10 – 7.5.10	Oldham Partnership support team	Collate additional information as requested by the challenge panel
10.6.10	Second challenge panel	Look at recommendations from first panel to ensure they remain the same. Consider the additional information provided and look at resource implications. Confirm the recommendations and what further action needs to be taken and by whom
11.6.10 – 21.6.10	Thematic blocks	Make information checks and analyse recommendations. Make final risk scan and flag up additional risks or consequences. Appeals against recommendations are not to be made at this stage
24.6.10	Oldham Partnership executive	Consider recommendations from the challenge panels
25.6.10	Thematic blocks and accountable bodies	Report approved recommendations and initial feedback. Appeals process to be implemented if required
September	Accountable bodies (Oldham Council, NHS Oldham and Greater Manchester Police)	Report recommendations to partner boards. Consult with accountable bodies for further identification of opportunities and implications
23.9.10	Oldham Partnership executive	Consider final recommendations
October	Proposals implemented	

Throughout the process of the review, the partnership's public service board will provide ongoing guidance and direction and will receive regular briefings.

### What's happening to activities that are currently commissioned through ABG while all this happens?

All existing commissioned activities will carry on as normal until the end of the review. There will be no new commissions during the review. For activities that are on annually renewable contracts, the

contract will be renewed and the delivery agent will be informed of any changes to this, once the outcomes from the review have been approved.

### **What's happening in other areas?**

Every other area in England faces exactly the same challenges as Oldham. This process is not unique to Oldham but we are endeavouring to ensure we continue to provide vital, value for money services and activities that are needed in Oldham in the most efficient way.

### **Where can I get help?**

Oldham Partnership is absolutely committed to this ABG review being an open and public process. The partnership's support team fully understands that this is a challenging period, and can offer support every step of the way. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to call Alison Vaughan on 0161 770 3199 or John Eley on 0161 770 5254.

We will continue to keep you informed through out the process and information will be available on the partnership's website [www.oldhampartnership.org.uk](http://www.oldhampartnership.org.uk).

Thank you for your support.