

Evaluation of Local Strategic Partnerships

Mapping approaches to integrating performance indicators across local strategic partnerships

Case Study 2 – Wigan Leader's Forum
September 2003

Contents

[Introduction](#) _____ 1

[Development of the Community Plan](#) _____ 1

[Choosing indicators and performance managing the plan](#) _____ 2

[Priorities for the future](#) _____ 3

[Sources](#) _____ 3

[Further Information](#) _____ 4

Introduction

The Leader's Forum was established to help coordinate and provide leadership for Wigan's partnerships framework. Building on the Council's strong and effective approach to performance management, the Forum is in the process of implementing a rigorous system for the LSP. Key features of the Leader's Forum approach to performance management have included:

- The development of an inclusive process to map the causal links between goals, objectives and actions
- Use of a sophisticated and flexible ICT system for tracking and reporting progress
- Development of some imaginative new indicators that reflect local people's priorities.

Development of the Community Plan

Wigan does not yet have a fully completed Community Plan. However, an interim plan is in place, setting out key actions in areas where early progress can be made. The Leader's Forum is committed to further consultation and visioning with local people before the interim plan is finalised.

The overall direction of the Community Plan was devised by the Leader's Forum, taking into account a wide variety of considerations including: existing information about the condition of the Borough, the results of previous consultation such as the Residents' Survey, existing and future plans, programmes and resources, and government and regional policies and requirements. The Leader's Forum identified three important vision themes – people, place, and lifestyle/image, which were tested with the various strategic partnerships and through a series of consultation events with local partnership groups.

Under the three vision themes sit 8 goals and 34 objectives. A mapping exercise was carried out to determine the interrelationships between these. The first step comprised a day-long 'revolving door' workshop hosted by the Council. All parties with an interest in a particular goal were invited to discuss the range of factors that might contribute to achieving it. Data from this workshop was then further refined and some 40 key strategies and plans were identified as feeding into the achievement of the goals. The Head of Policy and Performance Management Data then met with the owners of these plans individually, to discuss and test out the causal links between existing strategies and actions, objectives and goals in the Community Plan. The mapping exercise revealed that rather than a simple hierarchy of goals and objectives these were better understood as a network or web, with the achievement of some goals and objectives linked to the achievement of others.

Seven thematic partnership groups sit under the Leader's Forum. Progress has been variable across the sub partnerships, with the Crime and Disorder partnership widely recognised as having made particular progress.

The Council has taken the opportunity of moving to an executive political structure to reorganise cabinet portfolios to match the responsibilities of these sub partnerships.

Choosing indicators and performance managing the plan

The process of thinking about performance management and the development of indicators has deepened understanding of priorities and actions and in some cases has led to the merging or simplification of Community Plan objectives and measures, thus ensuring that the plan is more manageable.

In determining indicators, there was a clear commitment to starting with what the LSP was trying to achieve and then identifying or developing indicators that would enable the Forum to track progress toward this end. However, in the first instance the owners of the 40 plus existing strategies and plans were asked to highlight which measures they were already using. A range of possible indicators were then identified from these strategies and plans and from other available national indicator sets e.g. BVPI, PAF, QOL.

There have been some difficulties with existing indicator sets, however. With Quality of Life indicators, for example, available data is often quite out of date. Frequent changes in the indicators used by central government departments have also caused some difficulties at a local level – for example, changes in the indicators used to track crime rates. In response to these challenges, Wigan is planning to develop its own local crime index, which will allow more stable tracking of performance over time. The Forum has taken other steps to compensate for perceived shortcomings in some indicator sets. In education, for example, the LSP has chosen to make use of the LSC's PIs, which measure level 2 and 3 NVQ for adults, rather than the standard 5 passes at GCSE, as this is thought to be a better indicator of the impact of education over time.

To complement national indicator sets, indicators have also been developed specifically for the local Wigan context. In some instances, these local indicators are quite novel – for example, following public consultation, the LSP is tracking train times for major routes between Wigan and certain key cities.

Around 30-50 indicators have been identified to date – with some still to be developed. Indicators will be identified at every level of the Plan, from the overarching goals (which will have 2-4 each) to the specific objectives. This web of objectives will facilitate 'below the horizon reporting' – allowing the Forum to identify where underlying problems might be occurring, even when higher-level indicators suggest that overall performance is satisfactory.

The Council's sophisticated performance management software package was adopted for use by the Leaders Forum in 2002. This software allows the Forum to track progress down to the level of each individual task. It uses a traffic lights system to track progress against up to nine plan lines. Target parameters are configured by users, but will typically be +/-5-10%. The parameters

include guidance on which direction of travel is desirable. Traffic light symbols can also be displayed as summaries of performance for each objective in a causal map. In that instance, the symbol displayed is for the objective's status – a weighted average of the measures for that objective used as a kind of index value.

Standard reports can be set up in simple 'briefing books'. The PerformancePlus™ software enables standard views such as scorecards, tables, graphs and impact to be set up. Briefing books can also contain linked documents and report outputs from other systems. PerformancePlus™ runs a Microsoft SQL database in the background so any standard report writer can be used for non-standard reports.

Views within the system enable drill down to lower levels. For example, a user can drill down from a scorecard to an impact view to a time series in only a few clicks of a mouse. Briefing books can be published in a matter of seconds to web sites or intranets to allow more people access to reporting views, but these web pages do not allow drill-downs.

It is hoped that careful monitoring of indicators through this system will reveal patterns that will help to further refine the causal maps already developed through the community planning process. However, it is recognised that, ultimately, all computer generated information will still require good judgement to interpret it.

Priorities for the future

Although this work is relatively well advanced, over the next year Wigan will be further refining objectives and indicators, using existing causal maps as an input to workshops involving key people from the partnerships.

The Forum is working hard to encourage partners to provide data and share reports via the web. Starting with the police, who use the same software package, they will also trial shared access to the system across partner agencies. Work is also underway to capture data automatically, where data is output from another computer system, and trials appear to be working well.

Work will continue to maximise the alignment of agency strategies with the Community Plan wherever possible. The next step will be work to evaluate and adapt existing strategies in the light of evidence about what is working and why.

Sources

This case study is based on interviews with David O'Connor, Head of Policy and Performance Management, Wigan Council. In addition, it draws on a number of key documents, including Wigan's Community Strategy, and a paper on Performance Management of the Community Plan in Wigan, by David O'Connor and Vicky Hancock.

Further Information

For further information about Wigan Partnership's approach to performance management contact:

David O'Connor
Head of Policy and Performance Management
Wigan Council
Town Hall
Library Street
Wigan WN1 1YN

Telephone: 01942 244991

Further information about the partnership's approach to performance management can be found on the Wigan Partnership website www.wiganmbc.gov.uk/pub/partnership