

Case studies



# The Oldham Model for place-based integration

**Transforming outcomes for people,  
places, and public services**

A case study from the 2019 Public service:  
state of transformation report



## The headlines

- Multi-agency teams, physically based within communities, are key to transforming outcomes for people, places and public services.
- Our approach is firmly rooted in our Oldham Model (as outlined in our Oldham Plan 2017-22) where we set out how co-operative services need to work hand in hand with thriving communities and an inclusive economy to shift the stubborn inequalities within the borough.
- Figures from our Holts and Lees site have proved that this approach really does deliver impressive results against our Oldham Model, results which we expect to be matched or even exceeded in other sites:
  - Inclusive Economy – 44 per cent of the cases we have dealt with have resulted in an improved financial situation for individuals and families – with some being better off by up to £16,000 per year. Seventy per cent of the money saved by people is not ‘one off’ but will continue to be released year-on-year.
  - Thriving Communities – in 20 per cent of all cases people have become involved in activity helping to tackle social isolation and loneliness – a major public health issue proven to be as damaging as smoking 14 cigarettes a day and costing over £600 a year per person to the public services.
  - Co-operative Services – the team has moved 80 per cent of cases from ‘not coping’ to ‘adapted’. In other words, from higher-cost services into universal services, resulting in better outcomes for people and changing demand

and cost for the system. The systems savings amount to £3 million against an investment of £350,000.

- Multi-agency integration is not a ‘project’ unrelated to the way mainstream services are delivered. Rather it is the way mainstream services should be delivered across the whole system and in partnership with residents.
- What we have learnt so far from our early adopter sites is now informing how we scale up public service reform across the whole system and within all Oldham’s localities.

## The Oldham context

Learning, both locally within Greater Manchester and nationally, has shown the necessity to take a different approach to organising the public services. Previous approaches have tended to focus on specific organisations or specific issues; to be associated with particular programmes (e.g. Troubled Families); or linked to specific funding (e.g. New Deal for Communities). These programmes have often been too small-scale, too targeted, or too reliant on additional resources.

To achieve sustainable change, we know that we must fundamentally rethink:

- the way the public sector operates, and the relationship with communities;
- how we work with individuals and families with problems;
- how we engage with the community both to develop community connectedness and build confidence;

- how we have potentially challenging conversations that prompt a desire for change; and
- how we operate as a ‘system’ to unblock the barriers and system conditions that prevent people being able to make good choices and to live good lives

Fortunately, as long ago as 2016, there was an appetite across Greater Manchester to really test how agencies could come together in one team to help create a new model for public services. Oldham was therefore able to draw inspiration from and work alongside other early adopters such as Wigan and Rochdale.

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## The Oldham model



The Oldham model, as set out in the Oldham Plan 2017-22, outlines the transformational shifts we need to make as a partnership to shift the stubborn inequalities in our borough and achieve the shared goals of:

- an inclusive economy, where everyone has a fair chance to improve their living standards, wages and skills;
- co-operative services, underpinned by collaboration, integration and innovation, that improve outcomes for residents and create effective and seamless services; and
- thriving communities, where people have the power to be healthy and happy and can make positive choices about their lives

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## Our story so far

Currently there are four sites operating on our new model, based in some of our most deprived communities and involving 14 different services and agencies. In addition, we also have health and social care integrated teams working on a larger geography mirroring this learning. The most developed site is in Holts and Lees, a small community of 3,100 households, but with very challenging needs and high demand for services. The site has been operating for two years and delivering impressive outcomes for people, communities, the workforce and public services. The Holt and Lees 'hub' team has nine full/part-time officers from housing, police, the council, health, probation and the community and voluntary sector.

- It is creating a single front door – literally an old shop front on the street.
- It is truly integrated working across agencies and the community and voluntary sector through a 'key worker' model.
- It is getting to the root causes of problems – for people and communities – working with people to have challenging conversations and solve problems.
- It is wrapping services around the community assets that can help us unlock problems.
- It is using an evidence base (our Thriving Index – the first in the country) which provides insight at a really granular level, including insight into what drives behaviour (or in other words social norms), as well as data on reactive and non-reactive demand.

- It is challenging and changing how the 'system' operates. For example, how data is shared, or social housing is allocated or kids are excluded from school.

These small and focused sites are now informing how we will scale up public service integration and reform across the whole system, including how we will integrate with health and social care on a larger footprint in the future – moving this approach into mainstream delivery.

## What's been the impact of our work?

The data from the Holt and Lees site has demonstrated the following outcomes:

### People outcomes

The team gets to the root causes of people's problems and there is no 'refer on' culture. Levels of trust are high and enforcement is rarely used. Ninety-five per cent of individuals and families

stay engaged with the team, compared to around 70 per cent for other services.

The team has a clear route for escalating issues and blockages that stop people from leading good lives. For example, providing a 'second chance' for people with debt to access social housing.

What people have told us:

'I engage with the team who are helping me and I benefit from their help. Without the help of the team I am uncertain as to where I would be in my life.'

'I can't thank you enough. I would be dead within the year if I was still homeless.'

'I would have been locked up (sectioned) if it wasn't for this team.'

'I like the fact that I see the same people all the time so I don't have to keep telling different people my story like I have in the past. And I don't feel judged by any of the people in the new team.'

### Place outcomes

The community outcomes have gone from strength to strength as the team helps to build a thriving community alongside thriving individuals and families.

The Holt and Lees team continually has community conversations with over 100 residents to find out what people value and what issues the community wants to work on with the hub team.

The support and activity is co-designed based on what matters to local people (not to public agencies), such as tackling food poverty and holiday hunger, the 'state of the area', or helping the community to develop a café (essential in an area with very few local assets). The hub team has been successful in mobilising the community with support from borough-wide programmes including Oldham's Food Network and the Clean Streets programme. The development of a 'community pantry' has been hugely successful with 200 members signing up in the first two

## Place-based integration: focusing on people and place



months alone. The community has organised its own activities such as a Christmas parade and community clean-up.

The community identified negative social norms in its area such as alcohol misuse and illegal money lending. The hub team then worked with people to develop peer networks including local alcohol champions and credit union volunteers. This kind of peer activity was previously unheard of in the area.

The team has been successful in bringing £119,200 of external funding to support activities such as work on tackling holiday hunger and refurbishing the café into a community venue so that the area can continue to thrive.

### System outcomes

We are starting to see long-term cost savings to public services as a result of working in this way.

The cost saving to public services in preventing evictions, homelessness, hospital admissions, police and fire call-outs, prison sentences and mental health referrals, as well as increasing employment and training opportunities, is an estimated £3 million per year against a total partnership investment of £350,000.

### Staff outcomes

There has been an overwhelmingly positive impact on the staff involved and the learning we have developed from multi-agency sites is informing much wider models of workforce reform.

What staff say:

'The relationships I have developed in the team mean I can get things done so much quicker, what would have taken a phone call or a referral just gets done now.'

'It has enabled me to own issues rather than referring them on to someone else and I have so many more skills that I know how to approach problems like I never used to.'

## The key elements of our success

Our success has been based upon:

- a strong strategic partnership and culture that works from the strategic through to the tactical and delivery, with a set of committed partners determined to make the approach work;
- an Oldham model that all partners have signed up to; and
- good relationships and support from across Greater Manchester and a willingness to make this approach mainstream

## And if we were starting again...

If we were starting again, we would:

- consider the outcomes and evaluation process much earlier on (so that we spent less time 'proving' to the system that this approach works);
- consider the role of tactical leaders/middle managers earlier in the process; and

- have understood the need to focus on people and place outcomes earlier on and to ensure a strong role for the community and voluntary sector from the outset

## Our key contacts

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Vicky Sugars is Strategy, Reform, Partnerships, and Policy Manager at Oldham Council, where she leads a team that pioneers the council's co-operative approach and public service reform in Oldham. Vicky started her career working for the Electoral Commission and various governmental organisations before joining the London Borough of Newham to run an engagement programme with elected members before the 2012 Olympics. She has since built her career on collaborative working in Greater Manchester with a particular emphasis on integrated working across agencies, sectors and communities at all spatial levels.