

CASE STUDY

Wakefield Metropolitan District Council

Increasing the pace of continuous performance improvement



There is no doubt that Wakefield Council have undergone a process of considerable change and improvement. But what has been key to their success?

Wakefield is one of five Metropolitan Districts in West Yorkshire, located on the edge of the West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire conurbations, with a population of 319,800. 2.3% are from ethnic minorities.

The District is located in the centre of Britain with excellent communication links. It is made up of over 40 towns and villages, covering an area of 336 sq. km. Over 2/3rds of the area is open countryside, surrounding the main centres of population.

With a budget of over £300m and employing more than 16,000 staff, the Council has set itself challenging local ambitions and targets. Wakefield continues to transform its services to meet the objectives set out in its 25 year Knowledge Communities Strategy vision, for a District where citizens:-

“Are safe and feel safer, are healthy and look after ourselves, are part of a dynamic local economy, are skilful and confident by investing in our people and live in attractive environments by improving our places.”

This progress is reflected in citizen perceptions. In terms of local satisfaction the Council achieved a 6% increase in its overall rating from 2005, against a declining national trend. Wakefield's high rate of improvement has also been recognised by its peers and government agencies with the Council winning in the 'Most Improved Council' category in the 2006 Local Government Chronicle awards.

Working Together To Make A Difference

The Council is committed to working with its local partners, including health, police and the voluntary community and business sectors, to transform the District and meet the issues of most concern to local people. Improving cross agency information sharing, area based performance management and agreed areas of lead responsibility are integral to this approach.

This is being driven through the shared priorities and targets agreed in the Wakefield Local Area Agreement – 'Families and Neighbourhoods' signed in March 2006.

This 3-year agreement brings together all key local partners to meet challenges around skills and enterprise, safer and stronger communities and cleaner and greener communities.



The challenge for local partners is not only working together, but also developing an approach that will maximise outcomes and the achievement of targets, whilst minimising duplication and ensuring value for money across a network of different agencies. The use of CorVu across local partners to manage the key delivery plans within the agreement is integral to the success of this joined up approach and will provide for better integrated Public Service delivery, whilst maximising efficiencies.

Driving Performance Via Priority Engagement With Partners & Citizens Of Wakefield

Mary Dowson - Service Director of Partnerships and Performance said:

“CorVu is a market leader with regard to performance management solutions and supports driving through real time improvements and value for money. Not only does CorVu meet our current needs but the system is designed in such a way as to ensure we have long term sustainable solutions to improvements across the District of Wakefield — stimulating debate and challenge across the Council, citizens, key stakeholders and partners.”

The Council has an integrated Performance Management Framework in place that builds good practice and drives service improvements. The quality of the framework has been recognised by a number of national bodies and Wakefield has been actively sought out by other Councils and organisations to provide advice and support in developing their approach to performance management.

The framework and structures to support it are designed to allow the sharing of information and good practice in terms of both strategic planning and performance management. The framework also supports elected Councillors, local partners and local people in identifying issues and measuring progress around the areas which affect them most. Clarity and transparency are at the heart of the framework and performance information and background on the issues is available in a clear and understandable form. Engagement with both local people and partners is used to identify issues and public feedback on outcomes is a vital piece of performance evidence.

Wakefield's vision is for 'citizen driven performance management' moving beyond the numbers and statistics to identify what local people need and expect, then working with local partners to efficiently meet those needs and expectations.

The City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council was awarded 'the most improved Council of 2006' by LGC Awards

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CORVU

Measuring Success Via Quantifiable Benefits & Initiative Management

Knowledge about performance continues to drive better outcomes for local people. Starting from a low base, the Council has delivered significant and sustained improvement during the last three years across a number of priority service areas such as housing, benefits, waste management and planning services.

Overall, 89% of Wakefield's national performance indicators showed improvement between 2003/04 and 2005/06. Other major successes include celebrating the best ever GCSE 5 A-C results, a top star rating for adult social care, proactive work with major impact on anti-social behaviour, neighbourhood action - a groundbreaking environmental and community safety initiative - and National recognition of excellence (through the Beacon awards scheme) for Procurement and Involving Young People.

The CorVu system allows the Council to effectively capture and disseminate performance management information across the Council, enabling leaders to both challenge underperformance and identify and manage breakthrough actions.

The Value for Money benefits of CorVu, implemented by Wakefield as an 'invest to save' project, are also clear. This has been estimated as a 60% reduction in the time spent in updating information, as well as a 40% reduction in support overheads, allowing resources to be redirected to service delivery and increasing the pace of continuous improvement - both within the Council and to help local partners.

The Wakefield Experience - Now & Beyond

Wakefield now leads by example, with a very strong corporate focus, high service standards and a rigorous performance management framework. This is a focused strategic approach built on engaging with staff at all levels and local people, to drive continuous improvement.

The strategic clarity and realism of the Council's ambitions has been recognised not just internally but also by key external partners including central government and the Audit Commission.

The transformation of the District is also being recognised by the level of inward investment, with over £400m alone being secured for developments in Wakefield city centre, developments which it is estimated will lead to over 200 new businesses and over 4,000 new jobs being created over the next 10 years.

Local citizens and partners are seeing real benefits and experiencing improved services. The Council has regained the trust and confidence of the people it serves and delivering accurate, relevant and timely performance information to taxpayers and service users via CorVu will only strengthen that trust.

The Council's challenges for the future are to continue to ensure that its improvements are sustainable and will position the Council and its partners to effectively meet the demands of the current and future generations, with high services that meet the differing needs of citizens and neighbourhoods across the District.

There is no doubt that Wakefield is a transformed Council, but what is key to its future is a total commitment to continuous improvement, both within the Council and with its service delivery partners. Its partnership with CorVu and the continued development of the Wakefield Performance Management System is integral to achieving this vision.



"It has been a real pleasure partnering with Wakefield on this project. There is a genuine drive for performance improvement, which has been evidenced by commitment of time and resources and underpinned by a detailed knowledge of what they want to achieve. Their clear vision and strategy will ensure that the project is successful and benefits the citizens of Wakefield"

Gary Wilson, Sales Manager of CorVu plc

CorVu accommodates initiatives (projects) and tasks (actions) as a standard feature into its data model, thereby allowing multiple-ownership, at every level. This is really the crossover point where performance measurement becomes performance management. One of the key benefits of a good performance management system is the ability to align activities, resources and budgets with strategic priorities.

Wakefield Metropolitan District Council has done this and more. They have successfully made transformational step changes in performance and have integrated performance management across local partners and the Council.

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