

PUBLIC SERVICE BOARD – 5 SEPTEMBER 2007

**GOVERNMENT OFFICE SOUTH EAST HIGHLIGHT REPORT ON
OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT (LAA)**

ANNUAL REVIEW APRIL 2006 – MARCH 2007

OVERALL PROGRESS: SUMMARY

There is much excellent work in progress in Oxfordshire. Of note is the strengthening of partnership arrangements and the leadership by two of the districts on two key targets. This has included the establishment of new partnership arrangement for the delivery of affordable housing in the County .

Good progress is being made across many outcomes and there is a clear self-assessment system in place. However, there are a small number of outcomes where we have concerns as to their achievement by the end of the agreement. These are smoking cessation, young people and enterprise, crime, and teenage pregnancy. These have also been highlighted as of concern by partners and action put in place to address these. GOSE has asked, following the review ,for clear plans to be developed that involve a wider range of partners to address the risks associated with one key enterprise outcome along with the major crime outcome. There is also a need to ensure - for some areas - that strong, cross-agency performance management arrangements are in place to support action being taken for those indicators where action is required across a range of partners to achieve results.

Looking to the future , it is probable that the key issues around underperformance in smoking cessation, young people and enterprise, comparator crime especially wounding, criminal damage and violence against the person, and teenage pregnancy will need to be considered for inclusion within the new LAA.

RISKS TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF OUTCOMES

1 Children and young people

1.1 Teenage Pregnancy

The target reduction in teenage pregnancy is the main outcome in this block that is at risk of not being achieved. The rate is not decreasing and the interim target has been missed. However, the rate is still quite low: 34.1 per 1000, but it is unlikely that the highly ambitious target of 17.3/1000 by 2010 will be met.

The Partnership has put in place appropriate actions. Following reorganisation of the TP board there is now more effective support for the TP lead officer alongside strengthened and improved links with locality teams. The Children and Young People's Board has endorsed proposals for integrated commissioning of services. Self-assessment of the TP strategy is underway and due for completion with peer review arranged with East Sussex.

The Action Plan is also being reviewed. The decision is being made on how activities and posts currently funded by the TP grant will be met in 2008-9 when it is anticipated that the TP grant will be subsumed within the overall LAA Grant.

Oxfordshire consider that the target is about a long term strategy that will focus on improving aspirations of a small proportion of the population and hence have made strong linkages to the school improvement programme and the drive to raise expectations. The CYP partnership will review progress on this.

GOSE is confident that the actions taken by the partnership at this stage are appropriate but there remains a risk that it may not lead to the step change in performance that will be needed to deliver this target.

1.2 Minor amendments to wording of indicators on stretch targets

There were some minor changes to wording of indicators proposed by Oxfordshire at the review that relate to stretch targets on the CYP block. Although these are to align current reporting arrangements in Oxfordshire with the target, these will need to be formally agreed with CLG through GOSE. As we are now aware of these, we have started to request this change.

- GOSE notes that the wording on CYP1 indicator is now the “% of year 11 pupils achieving 5 GCSE’s” and the change proposed is the removal of the wording “or equivalent” because this is not appropriate to the use in reference to A* - C grades. However, our records show that this is how this target is currently specified.
- Outcome CYP2: GOSE notes the proposal is that the wording on CYP2 be clarified to read “% of children leaving care achieving 1 GCSE A* - G (or GNVQ)” and removes “(or equivalent)”
- Outcome CYP2 – the proposal is that the indicator “ % of children in care achieving 5 GCSE’s A* - G should be amended to include “ 5 GCSE’s A* - G or equivalent”

2 EDE Block

2.1 Main outcome at risk:

There is high risk of one outcome in this block not being met. This is the outcome “ increased employment and increased levels of business start up”. The risk to delivery is mainly around the setting of baselines and ownership for delivery of this outcome.

The target set an increase from 2006/7 of 4.5% by 2008/9. Research has been commissioned but not yet been completed. Also, activity on this target has started with teachers being trained to encourage pupils to consider enterprise as a career option. But GOSE considers that the weakness to delivery in this target is that the activity as presented at the review was solely within schools and there is no focused work for 19-25 year olds, who are also included in this target. Also there is no way at present to measure their consideration of enterprise as a career option either post 16 or post HE and whether this has increased. We also discussed at the review the need to be able to measure pre-starts and as yet this data is not available.

We discussed and agreed at the review that there was an urgent need for action to be taken to set a baseline and to encourage a wider focus on this target. A further risk is that

there are no specific action plans in place at present relating to delivery of this outcome and GOSE recommended that the PSB reviews progress on this target at their next meeting.

2.2 Further data gap on EDE

There is also a time lag in the setting of targets for EDE outcome 3 “ increase Oxfordshire’s GVA by developing tourism” However, this risk is likely to be mitigated as there is considerable activity by partners to set a baseline and propose targets. We agreed at the review that these would be presented to the PSB in September.

2.3 Finalisation of Change to wording on stretch target

We have now agreed the 13 SOAs and the wording for the EDE target on adult skills. We agreed at the review that GOSE would write to formally confirm this, which we have now done. . Good progress is however, being made on this outcome and the amendment required has not delayed progress by partners on this outcome.

3 Environment

3.1 Main outcome at risk: affordable housing

The main outcome at risk in this part of the LAA is the affordable housing stretch target. The target was agreed excluding all developments with a Section 106 agreement attached to it. There is a request to amend this. As a result, the target will need to be urgently reconsidered by GOSE and South Oxfordshire’s lead on behalf of partners engaged on this target. We will need to jointly revisit the stretch target and ensure that we have a common understanding that the target and baseline are still congruent with the suggested revised wording. GOSE will work with CLG and South Oxfordshire to mitigate this risk , as without GOSE’s and CLG’s reconsideration of this issue the target would not reflect partners understanding nor probably be achievable as either a local or stretch target.

3.2 Waste: There is strong performance on this target. However, it was agreed that although there was some degree of risk attached to the target relating to perceptions, this was not a serious risk to delivery of the outcome by the end of the agreement.

4 Health and Older people

It was noted that good progress was being made on developing a new Countywide Public Health Strategy by the new PCT to address key health problems facing the county. This will build on the recent Director of Public Health Annual Report.

4.1 main outcome at risk : smoking cessation

The main outcome at risk is HCOP4 “ reducing adult smoking and exposure to second – hand smoke in Oxfordshire”. Final data is not yet available but it is probable that the target will not be achieved at the end of the LAA. However, GOSE is confident that the weekly taskforce convened by the PCT is the appropriate vehicle for progressing this. They have agreed to do more to market the service, support advisers and ensure that recording and

monitoring are effective. They have also looked at the effectiveness of the service in the more deprived areas and have found that although there are more smokers, the uptake across all areas is proportional. A key challenge to this target that was discussed at the review was the fact that this target does not take into account quitters who access their own information and are self-reliant and self-motivated, as the measurement of this target is linked to service users. We also discussed the impact of the recent PCT re-organisation on the achievement of this target and felt that although it was likely that the upheaval had had an impact on achievement to date, this risk was now being effectively mitigated.

In conclusion, the risk is now being appropriately managed, but sustained effort by the task-force will be needed if the step-change in performance that is required can be achieved.

Increase the number of older people supported intensively to live in their own homes: this indicator currently flagged as 'amber', although it will not be until September that further definitive information will be available to determine if satisfactory progress is being made. The Partnership Board will need to ensure that it reviews progress on this important target post-September.

4.2: Data issues

Outcome HCOP8 “ establishing a countywide common referral and assessment and preventative services” has suffered from a severe delay in setting of baselines, due to resource issues in the PCT arising from their recent re-organisation. The PCT assured GOSE at the review that these were now being addressed.

4.3 New Ways of Working Arising out of the LAA

This outcome (HCOP8) has however been the catalyst for some new and innovative working to establish a countywide referral and assessment process for preventative services. The working together which has started as a result of this target has highlighted anomalies in coverage and services and although progress is patchy at present, there is great potential for enhanced partnership working which would result in real improvements in the quality of life for some of Oxfordshire's most vulnerable people.

5 Safer Communities

5.1 main outcome at risk: reduction of crime as measured by the British Crime Survey comparator of crimes.

There is a significant risk that key targets set (including the overall(nationally based) crime reduction target SSC10]. will not be met within the lifetime of this LAA. Progress on wounding and criminal damage are all off trajectory. Violence against the person, which is not a comparator crime is also of concern. It was suggested at the review that two out of the five districts were unlikely to meet their individual targets. The risk is being compounded by the setting of lower targets than the LAA by the Thames Valley Police Authority. At present this has not affected the resources deployed, but may do so over the coming year. However, it is likely to mean that additional emphasis will not be placed on meeting the targets.

In addition, the review process identified a further risk to delivery. At present only the police are scrutinising performance monthly and there is a need for the individual CDRPs and the county-wide safer partnership to develop robust action plans, that involve all partners if they are to mitigate the risk concerning under-achievement of this outcome.

GOSE offered to provide support to the partners through their link officer, Anne Taylor who would be able to provide advice on best practice. GOSE also has a criminal damage checklist which is designed to help partnerships identify gaps. This may be of particular interest to partnerships struggling to meet their targets. For copies of this or for other support contact Anne Taylor. She can be contacted on anne.taylor@gose.gsi.gov.uk. Tel 01483 882336.

5.2 There was some discussion on the impact of neighbourhood policing. GOSE was concerned that there had been no significant progress on developing a performance framework to measure effectiveness of neighbourhood policing and PCSO's, which was one of the targets listed in the agreement. This will be crucial if the changes to people's perception that was envisaged by this programme are to be met.

6 Stronger Communities

6.1 partnership development

GOSE was pleased to hear that Colin Fletcher, Bishop of Dorchester was chairing the new partnership that had oversight of these outcomes, the Oxfordshire Voluntary Community Development Partnership. There were no identifiable risks to delivery within the current LAA. However, this is an area where the LSP, Local Authority and their partners will wish to consider further what they would like to achieve on this agenda and ensure that it is considered as part of the development of the new LAA.

7 THE IMPACT OF THE LAA AND STRONG PERFORMANCE

There is much excellent partnership work in progress in Oxfordshire. Of note is the strengthening of partnership arrangements and the leadership by two of the districts on two key targets. This has included the establishment of new partnership arrangement for the delivery of affordable housing in the County .

There had been considerable progress made during the past year on performance management . The PSB have been considering how to improve the process, especially that of robust challenge. They have concluded that it would be helpful that as well as quarterly monitoring on stretch targets and high level exception targets that they looked in detail at a major block each quarter. GOSE consider that this would be a helpful development.

8 ISSUES FOR GOVERNMENT

There is a need for awareness by the Home Office that the setting of lower targets by a regional police authority is undermining to the LAA process.

The Oxfordshire Partnership Team requested information on best practice on performance management and benchmarking, of for examples resources required for delivery of LAAs.

GOSE agreed to investigate this. It would be helpful if such examples were available nationally.

9 Looking ahead

Oxfordshire is currently developing its new sustainable community strategy. Their approach is to identify shorter term (LAA targets) as part of the development of their longer term vision. This should be very helpful to the LAA process as it will identify the key issues for improvement in the County as viewed by Oxfordshire partners. It is expected that close involvement in the process by GOSE as the strategy develops should ensure that the LAA negotiations build on this. There are key issues around underperformance in smoking cessation, young people and enterprise, comparator crime especially wounding, criminal damage and violence against the person, and teenage pregnancy that will probably need to be considered for inclusion within the new LAA.