

Calderdale Forward Annual Report 2007/08

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This is the third annual report on the work of Calderdale Forward. It provides an overview of the progress of the District's local strategic partnership, presenting the key achievements of the partnership over the past year and looks ahead to some challenges and opportunities in the coming 12 months.
- 1.2. In 2007, after five years of operation, Calderdale Forward agreed to a new structure and changes to its working methods. New developments, such as Local Area Agreements, required the LSP to adopt a new structure and approach. Over the last year, the partners in Calderdale Forward have risen to the challenges presented by the new agenda and, as this report will demonstrate, have strengthened partnership working in the Borough. The accolade of receiving the Local Government Chronicle Award as the Best Local Strategic Partnership in the country is testament to Calderdale Forward's success.
- 1.3. A major indication of the successful transition to the new structure has been the way that Calderdale Forward has delivered on its targets in the Local Area Agreement agreed in April 2007, whilst at the same time developing a new LAA under the new arrangements to take effect in June 2008.
- 1.4. The key issue for the LSP and its partners is, however, the extent to which, it can achieve an improvement in the quality of life of local people by working effectively in partnership.

2. Background

- 2.1. The responsibilities of Calderdale Forward are to :
 - Set an overall strategic vision and ensure it is delivered;
 - Develop and implement a community strategy, the Futures Plan, and a Local Area Agreement;
 - Promote effective planning and partnership work;
 - Build relationships and understanding across different communities through the development of a community cohesion;
 - Promote the interests of Calderdale outside its boundaries.
- 2.2. In order to ensure that Calderdale Forward delivers on its responsibilities a review took place during 2006, with a new structure agreed and subsequently put in place in April 2007. This new structure has transformed the way we work and includes:
 - An extended Board providing wider and deeper representation from all sectors but in particular from the business, voluntary, community and faith sectors;

- A Delivery Group which meets regularly to drive forward the delivery, and manage the performance, of our LAA;
- The emergence of new partnerships and the strengthening of existing partnerships to deliver the Community Strategy and the LAA;
- An LSP Support Team jointly funded from a pooled budget of partners;
- Wide scale engagement across the partnerships with voluntary and community sector representation on all Theme Partnerships.

3. Progress and key achievements in 2007/8

3.1. The Role of the Board

Following last year's restructure the Board, acting at a strategic level, has adopted the following roles:

- To act as the policy development body of the LSP;
- To agree and steer the Futures Plan;
- To endorse the Local Area Agreement and its annual refresh;
- To monitor progress against the Futures Plan outcomes;
- To hold the Delivery Group to account;
- To ensure that the principles of sustainable development are at the heart of the LSP.

During 2007/08 the Calderdale Forward Board met on five occasions at which it discussed and considered policy around key issues affecting the District. These included the development of the Leeds City Region, the Calderdale Public Health Report, and securing Safer Communities through Community Cohesion.

The Board has played a fundamental role in the implementation of priorities set out in the Community Strategy, 'Calderdale's Futures Plan', through the delivery of our first Local Area Agreement (scheduled to run 2007-10). The Board has received quarterly updates on performance on the LAA outcomes and regular reports from each Theme Lead on progress. A key role of the Board has been to monitor and challenge the Delivery Group on its delivery of the LAA and it has scrutinised each Theme Lead through this process.

The Board has directed and approved each stage in the development of the new Local Area Agreement for 2008/2011, reviewing the Story of Place, agreeing the priorities, and determining the process for progressing the new LAA.

3.2. A more inclusive LSP

The restructure of the LSP last year has presented a greater opportunity for wider and more inclusive representation and engagement with public, private, and voluntary and community sector partners, both at Board level and through the Delivery Group and its Theme Partnerships. Increased involvement and engagement of private and voluntary and community sector representatives in all parts of the LSP has been achieved.

3.3. Our Local Area Agreement 2007-08 – Key Achievements

The Local Area Agreement we signed off with Government in April 2007 was originally developed as a three year plan. However, the introduction of new LAA arrangements has meant that the agreement only lasted for one year. Nevertheless, during that time, a number of successes against targets in our LAA were achieved:

- Over the course of 2007/08 there has been an excellent improvement in relation to the number of people achieving higher level skills, specifically in relation to level 4 qualifications. There has also been a higher than expected growth in the number of new businesses established including social enterprises, and targets have been achieved in relation to the proportion of new businesses surviving for at least one year.
- There has been a significant increase in the use of seat belts during the LAA 2007/08, thus contributing to our priority outcome of Calderdale's residents and visitors being safe on the District's roads. Good progress has also been made towards the reduction of CO2 emissions from Council operations, and specific work with schools has taken place around energy and water savings.
- There has been good performance in meeting targets in relation to a reduction in violent crime, a reduction in the number of young offenders who re-offend, an increase in the number of offences brought to justice, and a significant increase in the number of hazardous, harmful and dependent drinkers who have received brief interventions over the course of the year. In addition, actions taken to address fear of crime have resulted in residents in the Neighbourhood Management Areas being generally less fearful than they were at the beginning of the LAA.
- There has been a significant reduction in both smoking prevalence and in the percentage of new mothers smoking at delivery during the LAA 2007/08. There has also been a considerable improvement in breastfeeding rates across the District and within the most deprived areas.
- Older people have been supported to remain healthy and independent with a considerable reduction in emergency bed days and a decrease in admissions to residential and nursing care during the first 12 months of the LAA. Older people have also exercised more choice and control in the

management of their individual care needs, with a significant increase in the number of people receiving Direct Payments.

- Mental Health services for children and young people performed well in 2007/08 and standards of English in some key primary schools improved, as did achievement of five or more GCSE's by pupils in some secondary schools.

3.4. Developing our second LAA 2008-11 (LAA2) and Story of Place

Having agreed its first LAA less than 12 months earlier, Calderdale Forward developed a new LAA (LAA2) to support its original priorities for local people. Having developed robust partnership arrangements the LSP, through the Delivery Group and theme partnerships, has been in negotiations with regional and central Government to agree up to 35 key performance measures from the new National Indicator set. Calderdale Forward has also revisited and strengthened its Story of Place to better reflect the priorities and vision for the District over the period 2008-11.

3.5. Cohesion agenda

Calderdale Forward has supported the ongoing development of a Community Cohesion Strategy for the District underpinned by a programme of consultation events. The strategy comprises of four key strands: Community Engagement, Community Relations, Community Safety and Creating Opportunities.

A number of successes have been achieved during the last year indicating that community cohesion is improving. For example, in the Neighbourhood Management areas, particularly Ovenden and Park, more residents feel that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together. The evidence also points to a decrease in the number of people who feel that not treating each other with respect is a very big problem in their area. A decrease in the number of hate crimes recorded in 2007/08 is also a very positive development.

3.6. Forward for Business

Calderdale Forward's engagement with the District's business sector has continued through the year. Business representation is taken up through Forward for Business with four places on the Calderdale Forward Board. Forward for Business also engaged with the theme partnerships, with representatives on both the Economy and Enterprise and Safer and Stronger Communities Partnerships.

Forward for Business met quarterly in 2007/2008 at venues throughout Calderdale. A feature of the meetings has been presentations from key

speakers on a variety of topics, including: Business Link Arrangements; the work of Pennine Housing; the Regeneration of Calderdale; Automatic Identification and Data Capture Technologies; Environmental, Economic and Social Responsibility in Business; and Tourism in Calderdale. The Group also gave consideration to the delivery of the LAA 2007/10, and contributed to the development of the new LAA 2008/11.

3.7. Calderdale Community Forum

Calderdale Community Forum has been a vital contributor to the Local Strategic Partnership over the last year, with members on the Calderdale Forward Board, Calderdale Forward Delivery Group and Theme Partnerships. The Local Area Agreement is a key feature of Forum discussions and is a standing item on the agenda of Forum Management Group meetings.

In partnership with Calderdale Forward, the Community Forum hosted a Local Area Agreement Stakeholder Event on 20th February at North Bridge Leisure Centre. The aim of the event was to share information with a wider range of Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations across the borough about our current, and new, Local Area Agreement. The event, which was opened by the Chair of Calderdale Forward, included presentations and discussion groups around the LAA themes and was extremely well attended. It was felt to be a resounding success by all involved, presenting opportunities for groups and organisations to identify and discuss specific links to the delivery of LAA outcomes and priorities.

3.8. National Recognition

Calderdale Forward celebrated a major national success when it was named Local Strategic Partnership of the Year in the Local Government Chronicle Awards 2008 at an Awards Ceremony in March. Despite stiff competition from Gloucester City Council, Oldham Partnership, Ealing Council, Buckinghamshire County Council and London Borough of Croydon, judges felt that it was Calderdale Forward who demonstrated the best example of effective partnership working, with a wide range of partners from the private, public, community and voluntary sectors, reflecting the make-up of the District's communities. Positive feedback was received from all partners on winning the award.

3.9. Improved communications

During the last year Calderdale Forward developed a new and informative website for the purpose of improving its communication links both across the partnership and beyond.

The website provides:

- Information about Calderdale Forward's purpose and structure;
- Agendas, papers, and minutes of the Calderdale Forward Board, Delivery Group, and Theme Delivery Partnerships as well as dates of future meetings;
- Details of the Calderdale Futures Plan, Calderdale's Sustainable Community Strategy;
- Updates on the progress made in delivering Calderdale's LAA;
- Documents and links to a wide range of issues related to Calderdale Forward's work, including details of the new Performance Framework for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships and National Indicator Set;
- Contact details for the Calderdale Forward Support Team.

4. Priorities and Challenges for 2008/9

4.1. Delivering the new Local Area Agreement (LAA2)

Fewer performance measures in the new LAA will provide the opportunity for Calderdale Forward to focus its efforts firmly upon the delivery of improved outcomes for local people.

Under new Government requirements, named partners who sign up to the delivery of the LAA will have a duty to co-operate with the local authority and other partners: engaging in joint planning; sharing responsibility for delivering against relevant targets; and, working with other agencies on cross-cutting issues, such as climate change and healthier communities, thus forging stronger links and combining specialist expertise to deliver outcomes.

4.2. Delivering the reward targets

Although LAA2 has succeeded LAA1, there are 14 'Reward Element (Stretch) Targets' from LAA1 that will continue to be monitored, alongside the new LAA, until March 2010. Progress against these Reward Element Targets will be carefully tracked to ensure that the best possible support is given to achieving them and drawing down the maximum Performance Reward Grant.

4.3. Cross-cutting issues

The broader involvement of the LSP with LAA2 means that there will be a number of cross cutting outcomes that many partners can help to deliver. The challenge and focus will be on a more proactive approach by partners in working together to deliver actions designed to improve outcomes.

4.4. The Local Development Framework (LDF)

The LDF together with the Regional Spatial Strategy will determine how the spatial planning will help shape our community over the next 15 years. The challenge for Calderdale Forward will be to ensure that the LDF integrates with our Local Area Agreement to deliver the vision and outcomes contained within our Sustainable Community Strategy.

4.5. Review of the Sustainable Community Strategy for Calderdale (Futures Plan)

During the next 12 months Calderdale Forward will be reviewing its Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for the District. The challenge will be to ensure that the new SCS and the Local Development Framework jointly take forward the priorities and vision set out in the Local Area Agreement and its Story of Place. Consultation around the SCS will be fundamental to its development.

4.6. The role of Scrutiny

Named partners, who sign up to the delivery of targets in the Local Area Agreement, will be subject to Council scrutiny processes. Through the scrutiny system, Council Members will be able to call relevant partners and scrutinise their contribution to the delivery of the LAA and make recommendations to them. It is anticipated therefore, that there will be an increasing recognition of the role that overview and scrutiny will play in driving forward improvement.

4.7. Review of partnership working

Toward the end of 2007/08 the Audit Commission undertook a review of partnership working in Calderdale. The objectives were to assess whether Calderdale Forward was maximising the opportunities for joint working and whether as a result outcomes are being delivered to local people.

A number of recommendations for improved partnership working were identified by the review, and will be taken on board over the next 12 months. These included a need to communicate our vision, develop a greater understanding of and commitment to 'narrowing the gap', joint consultation and joint commissioning, more effective cross-theme working and stronger partnership with the private sector.

4.8. Reviewing the role of the Calderdale Forward Board

The Board has asked for an opportunity during 2008/2009 to review its role and give further consideration to how it might best support the achievement of key outcomes for Calderdale, informing both future policy and the direction of public service delivery.

4.9. Strengthening relationships with the Voluntary, Community and Private Sectors

There is a need to ensure that relationships with the VCS and private sector continue to be strengthened through effective consultation, communication and engagement. The LSP Support Team will continue to work to develop these relationships.

4.10. The Everyone Different Everyone Matters Campaign – a partnership approach to communication

Developing a partnership approach to communication with residents is a particular challenge. A partnership campaign around Everyone Different Everyone Matters will aim to establish a shared brand across Calderdale, enabling partners to collectively and effectively communicate relevant key messages, and develop a common vision for all communities throughout the District.

5. Conclusion

5.1. During 2007/08 Calderdale Forward continued to develop partnership working across the District to improve further the delivery of services and outcomes to residents. As this report has shown there are many examples of progress and achievement over the last 12 months that have taken place under the auspices of the LSP, but also many challenges in the months ahead as we strive to achieve even greater improvement for local people.