

making successful change happen

council organisational
development in action



Improvement and Development Agency for local government (IDeA)

The IDeA works for local government improvement so councils can serve people and places better.

Our offer is built around the real issues for local people, focusing on partnership working, place-shaping and tackling cross-cutting issues.

We use experienced councillors and senior officers, known as peers, who support and challenge councils to improve themselves.

We enable councils to share good practice through the national Beacon Scheme and regional local government networks. The best ideas are put on the IDeA website.

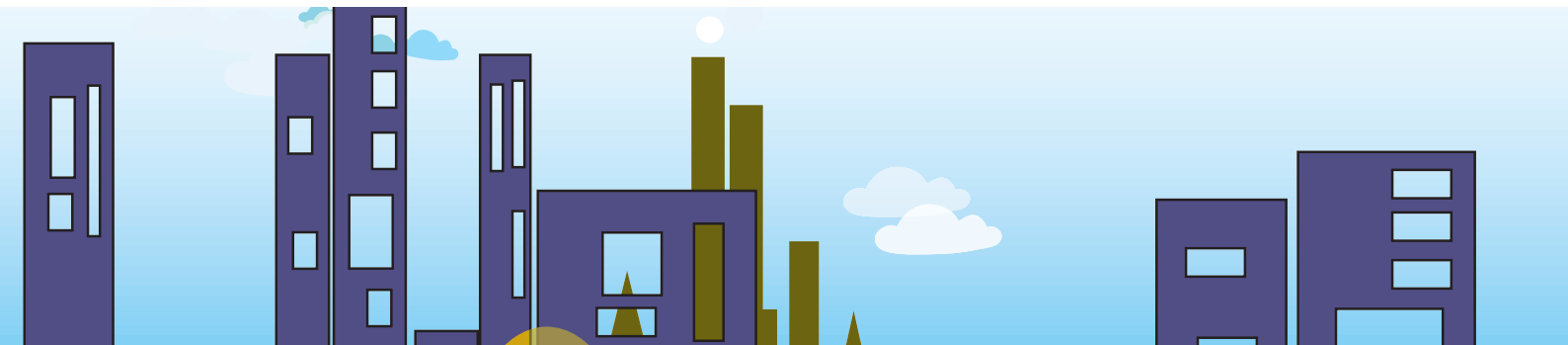
Our Leadership Academy programmes help councillors become better leaders so they can balance the diverse demands of people living in the same community.

Working with our national, regional and local partners, we help councils work through local partnerships to tackle local priorities such as health, children's services and promoting economic prosperity. We advise councils on improving customer service and value for money. We also promote the development of local government's workforce.

The IDeA is owned by the Local Government Association and belongs to local government. Together we lead local government improvement.

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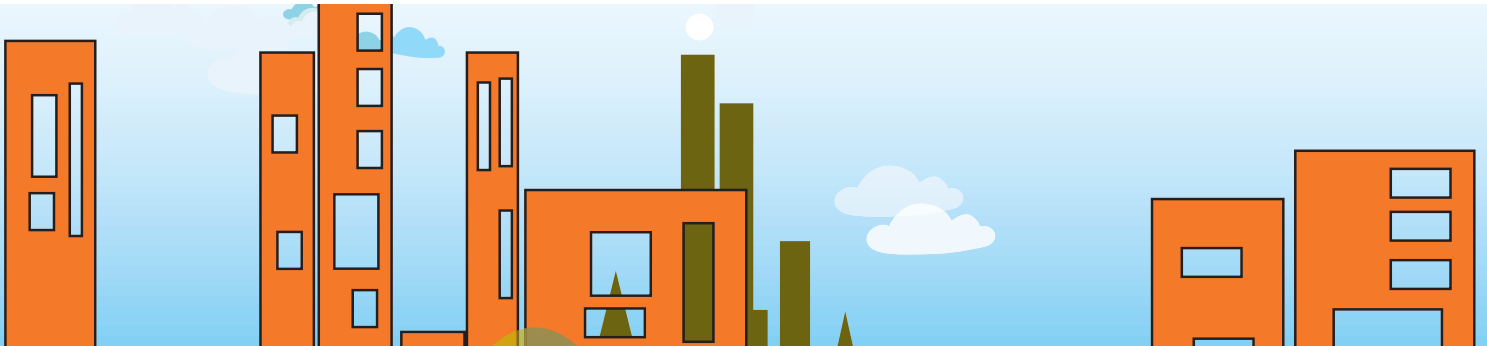


Organisational development (OD) is the process of planning and implementing strategies to create interpersonal, group, inter-group, and organisation-wide change. As the pace of change accelerates, councils are taking steps to make themselves more nimble and responsive to external demands. OD is playing an increasingly important role in helping councils improve and change by providing them with the tools to assess themselves and their environments and to revitalise and rebuild their strategy, structure and processes.

We spoke to six senior managers from five different councils, each facing different situations in a variety of contexts. Each of them, though, has one thing in common – they are successfully using OD mechanisms to drive forward change in their councils. We look at what has worked for them, the learning and insight they have gained along the way and the tips they would pass on to others.

Fundamental structural and cultural change is particularly challenging in local government because councils are such complex and mature organisations. We preface each interview by looking at one perspective of how change happens within an organisation. It highlights the importance of leadership, the need for people to understand why change is happening and for everyone to be able to understand how they can be part of it. The case studies highlight these factors at work.

The Local Government Pay and Workforce Strategy Survey in 2006 found that OD/change management was the biggest occupational skills gap in the sector. The Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), in partnership with others, is delivering a national programme of support to address this gap and support



the sector in this area. This publication is part of that programme. As well as shared learning through publications, events and on our website, we have brought together a cohort of OD professionals that are on hand to provide support across the sector and to individual councils with major change initiatives. Discover more on the 'workforce improvement' pages at www.idea.gov.uk and in the 'sources of support' section at the end of this publication.

what makes organisations change?

Change only comes when natural resistance (R) is overcome by the urgency of dissatisfaction (D), the power of personal vision (V), and the tangible signs of initial change (T). $D \times V \times T > R$.

D = the urgency of dissatisfaction. Typically, it may be prompted by an organisation's realisation that it is losing customers, failing in some way, falling behind its competitors or is going out of business. In other words, a feeling of 'we can't go on like this, otherwise we will be out on our ears at worst or relative failures at best.'

V = the power of personal vision. It comes from good leadership, e.g. a new leader or chief executive taking up the challenge of getting greater value out of a council or reshaping service delivery.

T = tangible signs of initial change. These are the signs that signal to a leader and their staff that change is possible and within their grasp. It is an important factor in neutralising inertia and adding momentum to D and V. Even if the D and V forces are really strong, they would get nowhere if people did not see that change is possible and feel able to make it happen.

staying ahead of the curve bolton metropolitan borough council



For Chris Hyams, Assistant Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development at four star and 'improving well' Bolton Council, a council that does not have good OD processes is simply not equipping itself for the future. "OD is not about today's programmes, it's about the programmes for tomorrow. It is looking ahead to what we want to achieve in future years and making sure we have the skills and capacity in place to do it."

Hyams cautions against the trap that some people fall into: "It's not a HR/OD thing, it's a leadership thing. Our chief executive is leading the launch of this year's OD programme next week. Considerable time is spent by our top team and managers developing the programme." She also points out that councillors have a part to play in the sense that, "while they don't need to speak the language of OD, in many ways they understand it better than others because they understand vision, strategy, delivery and outcomes."

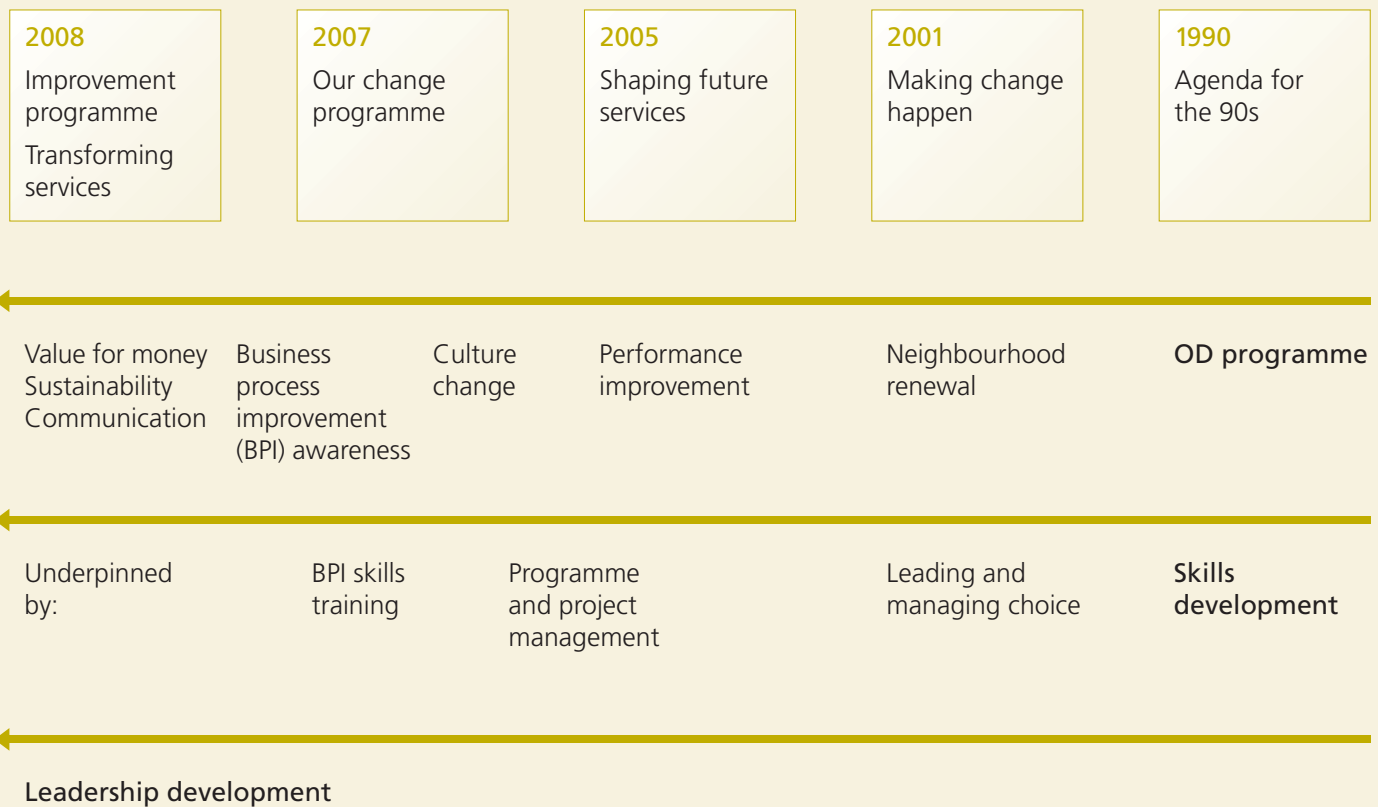
Members set the vision, the pace and ask the questions and we need to find ways of delivering. That is what OD is about. We need to be anticipating and working alongside each other, building capacity for the future."

The forward-looking nature of OD in Bolton Council is reflected in the way in which the council has been ahead of the curve on many issues. "When we started we set what we called 'an agenda for the '90s'," says Hyams. "That was about raising the sights for us to make a difference in the town by working effectively with our partners. So we started talking about partnership working, what it would look like and what it would mean in terms of changing roles for our leaders, managers and people." OD has evolved and grown to reflect the challenging priorities of the council, including a change programme to deliver a more effective customer relationship strategy, an overall realignment of the council structure as part of shaping future services, and

a programme of culture change. All of this has been underpinned by the leadership development programme and targeted skills programmes such as programme and project management.

The outputs of these initiatives are reflected in the ability of the council to recently peg council tax while also delivering key outcomes such as cleaner, greener neighbourhoods and improving crime levels. The current OD priorities revolve around the three aims of narrowing gaps that exist in health, quality of life, environment and educational attainment, using the unique opportunity of economic development and growth to transform Bolton and transforming services. "Our improvement programme focuses on 'value for money', 'sustainability', 'communications' and 'reputation management'," says Hyams. "This is to ensure that we are in the best possible position to deliver value for money services and meet our key aims."

The OD journey in Bolton Council



snapshot

Bolton: value for money strategy

what?

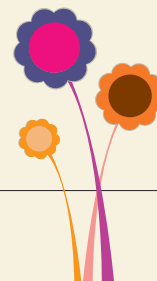
An improvement programme, starting in 2007/8, that has evolved out of the council's focus on transforming services. Around ten key corporate projects are identified and teams examine business processes, systems, people issues and other factors that will deliver better value for money from each project. In parallel, workshops take place with senior managers to build awareness and understanding of what 'value for money' (VFM) is and the implications for culture and ways of working. The council is looking to follow this up with skills training for managers so that they can contribute to the key corporate projects, identify VFM project contenders for next year and, also, apply VFM in their own service areas. The programme will also link to delivering services and working in a sustainable way.

why?

Chris Hyams, Assistant Director Human Resources and Organisational Development, says: "We need to achieve year on year savings of 3-4 per cent, but we want to avoid managers having to deliver year on year cuts in silos. By looking at it in a more integrated way, we can focus on real outcomes for the customer. For example, we are conducting an overall review of libraries rather than merely asking each library to reduce their individual budget."

outcomes?

"Our change programme has achieved efficiencies worth nearly £3 million" says Hyams. "We expect to continue to achieve year on year efficiencies – by remodelling services, delivering more sustainable services, process improvement, maximising systems and people working in a more flexible and integrated way. Our customers should feel that, while they might be receiving services in a different way, the impact of those services is as effective as ever."



push coming to shove boston borough council



“We are in the middle of a very significant change programme,” observes Martin Rayson, Director of Resources at Boston Borough Council. “The financial situation had focused people’s minds. There was a realisation that the organisation couldn’t carry on in the way that it had been and something had to be different. For a very small local authority, such as ours, the crucial issue is capacity. We need to maximise what we have and find different ways of creating extra capacity to deliver a very challenging agenda.”

The change programme in Boston has a number of elements but Rayson identifies four vital success factors: “First, it’s about being clear in terms of understanding what the organisation’s seeking to achieve. Alongside the vision and the objectives for what the council wants to achieve, we’ve looked at what kind of organisation we need to be. Second, we are seeking to align activity to these goals and develop the organisation in ways

that fit in a coherent whole. Third, so much comes back to good leadership and having people who are able to articulate a clear vision and direction of travel. The fourth element is about understanding the capacity of the organisation to move forward and absorb new things.”

This last element can make the difference between success and failure. Says Rayson: “So many OD programmes fail because they are trying to do too much at once and the organisation doesn’t have the capacity to take it all onboard and really embed change. It’s about finding the most important levers and focusing on them first.” A key lever in Boston was enabling people to raise their sights. “We’d had a period when everyone was focused on the here and now and a zero-based budgeting exercise, which consumed a lot of resources, but did not, in the end, provide all the answers”. The first vision phase of the change programme enabled people to look up from that, recognise some

of the significant changes we could make in the future and be part of that change.”

Another key change was delivering a more cohesive and focused organisation. “We needed to create a greater sense of common purpose and common direction as an organisation,” says Rayson. “We needed to give people a sense of where we are trying to get to and what we want to become.” The organisation vision and decisions about how the future organisation needs to be structured are key parts of this. Other elements include a revamped service delivery strategy, a more robust performance management system, new ways for staff to contribute ideas and inform decisions and initiatives to strengthen corporate managerial skills.

snapshot

Boston Borough Council: organisational vision

what?

An initiative to define the kind of organisation Boston Borough Council needs to be in the future to deliver its community plan objectives within a significantly restrained resource base. It defines the shape, style and values of the council and provided a roadmap for change.

why?

Martin Rayson, Director of Resources, says: “We needed to deliver a strong unifying focus and avoid the danger of too many initiatives and activities taking place. We had a situation where there had been a plethora of action plans that never actually got delivered. Now everything is in the one improvement plan. It delivers a very simple framework for the organisation.”

outcomes?

“We’ve created a common language, which is important and there is a greater sense of common purpose and coming together,” says Rayson. Having put the foundations in place, the change programme is being rolled out in phases. A priority for the next immediate period is speeding up and making decision-making more efficient in the council.

snapshot

The Boston Manager

what?

Defining the expectations the council has of its managers at all different levels in the organisation. Putting definition on their corporate role and the skill-sets they need to fulfil that role.

why?

“There was evidence that corporate skills, such as strategic, financial and people management, were just not there. This was inhibiting our ability to maximise our capacity as an organisation,” says Martin Rayson, Director of Resources.

outcomes?

The initiative was delivered in a participative way through a series of workshops with managers. The outcome is a set of accountabilities and skill-sets that are now an integral part of job descriptions, appraisal and development programmes. A priority is being placed, in particular, on the need to promote leadership through ‘emotional intelligence’ – self-awareness, managing emotions, motivating one’s self and others, and managing relationships.



case study

people not process london borough of croydon



Organisational development will not deliver if it doesn't look at the "human side of organisations," says Hayley Lewis, Organisational Development Manager at Croydon Council. "A lot of councils tend to focus their OD energies on processes, technology and systems. In Croydon, we very much look at how to make human beings work in a more productive way. Always we have a business focus but we come at it from a human perspective."

Taking the human perspective is translating into tangible culture changes in Croydon. Pamela Parkes, Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development, highlights dramatic reductions in sickness absence. "We have been able to coach the organisation and individuals to examine where change is needed. Early intervention and proactive prevention work has been used to identify how teams and individuals need to work with each other and to look at individual interactions. We have tackled sickness, not with a stick, but by promoting a

culture of attendance. Sickness levels have plummeted from around 14 days per annum to just six."

Parkes also points to an increasingly strong customer service ethos: "We're seeing more and more staff recognising they need to serve customers, even if they are not front-line facing. Staff surveys show a ten-fold increase in the number of staff understanding and being aware of who their customer is. They are recognising they are not just in a job collecting a wage and delivering those processes and systems Hayley talked about but the really important thing is that they are delivering to the community."

What does taking the human perspective mean? "At an individual level we do a lot of coaching of managers, helping them through sticky issues around their staff or managing upwards, dealing with difficult customers or, in their relationships with the politicians," say Hayley Lewis. "That's having a significant positive impact on

transforming how people deal with difficult issues. So rather than go to grievance or just bury their head in the sand, people are dealing with issues in a more proactive way. At a team level, each of my OD consultants is aligned with specific departments, acting as a business partner and working very closely with the departmental management team to identify issues that need to be acted upon."

Transformational change is happening at different levels. At the top level, the council is restructuring to be better equipped for the future but, says Lewis, "it can happen on a smaller scale as well." She highlights the example of a planning team: "they've moved from a team with unprecedented numbers of complaints to a situation where they've won a 'best in borough' award and get praise and accolades from customers. That has come from working with the team to explore how they work with each other and how they work with their customers."

snapshot
**A Leadership Academy
for Croydon**

what?

A year-long programme focused on the potential leaders of tomorrow. Launched in January 2008, the academy got underway with its first intake in March. There are four intakes each year with 25 people on each, attending one module per month. The academy also requires them to put their learning into action through an initiative that improves customer service, productivity, efficiency or some other tangible improvement.

why?

Hayley Lewis, Organisational Development Manager, says: "there's a need to invest, not just in future leaders, but also in what leadership means in Croydon. The course has two cornerstones – place-shaping, with a focus on Croydon the place not Croydon the organisation, and emotional intelligence, encouraging people to think about how they impact on others. Key content on the course covers how people lead change, effective community engagement and effective partnership working."

outcomes?

It is in its first pilot year covering just staff at the moment but, says Lewis, "the intention is that it will extend to cover elected members as well and other potential leaders in Croydon – in local businesses, the PCT, health, police, fire services, and schools."

snapshot
Developing Croydon's values

what?

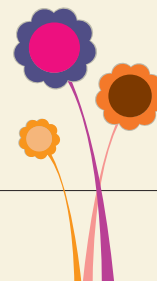
In 2007, Croydon Council ran a series of workshops enabling staff and partner organisations to identify the values that define the 'lifeblood' of the council. The exercise used a technique called 'appreciative inquiry' where participants were encouraged to look at problems from a positive perspective. "It can be really life-changing for people and certainly the energy in the workshops was palpable. Lots of high energy, music and colour – very 'non Croydon' in a sense. We created rooms that were almost like play rooms not traditional council offices."

why?

The initiative followed the arrival of Jon Rouse, the council's new chief executive. Hayley Lewis, organisational development manager, says: "Jon saw it as an opportunity to get everyone in the organisation looking in the same direction. Before, there was no common sense of purpose and each department was going off doing their own thing in very different ways."

outcomes?

The values will be central to performance appraisal and are already embedded in 360 degree feedbacks so managers are measured in how they are delivering them. The 'one team' value is already having an impact on creating a better service for customers.



it's nothing without leadership somerset county council



For Richard Crouch, Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development at Somerset County Council, leadership is critical for effective organisational development. "You can't deliver OD unless you've got strong leadership and one of the main requirements of today's leadership is to deliver OD. One is very dependent on the other." Crouch's perhaps contentious view is that the way to make OD least productive is having it seen as a discrete function. "Sure, someone has to facilitate it and get things moving, but the responsibility for implementing OD needs to sit where the OD is happening. For us in Somerset, it's across the whole of the organisation. As such, all of our senior officers in our leadership group have an OD responsibility."

Equally important, says Crouch, is not getting bogged down in navel gazing and detail: "Some might think that having a 50 page-long OD strategy with a two to three year implementation plan and a whole series of 'change' plans is important. In Somerset we don't think like that. That's not to say we don't plan and we're not strategic but, as far as we are concerned, OD has to be instinctive, we run with our instinct and we continuously evolve. Our needs for tomorrow will most likely be different to what we thought our needs for tomorrow were yesterday. Instead, we have a whole series of initiatives that intertwine amongst each other. For us, transformation is the golden web and OD is the thread that holds it together."

This leadership/OD approach has paid dividends for Somerset. The council has moved from being a fair two star authority to a strongly improving four star performer. Part of that change, says Crouch, has been brought about by "identifying what we mean by leadership, identifying who our leaders are and what their leadership responsibilities are." The council reduced the size of its senior management group by some 30% – from a 120 strong 'senior management group' to around 85 in a new 'leadership group'. "The crucial difference is everyone in the leadership group is a contributor to the corporate leadership agenda. That was quite new for Somerset – hitherto all the senior managers, apart from the chief executive and senior directors, were service managers with no corporate responsibility."

A key priority now is to look at the psychology of achieving further improvement. Crouch states, "We spent five years trying to get four star. We've got it. Where do you go now? So we are saying we're going for the fifth star, which we view as something akin to 'true excellence' rather than just simply 'CPA excellence'. We're also trying to change the way we work and recognise that mindset change will be a key ingredient."

Part of this 'mindset change' will come from looking afresh at work/life balance. "We want to bring a little more humanity back into the workplace," says Crouch. "We seem to be in a position when 'work' and 'life' has been artificially separated.

Surely 'life' happens at work as well and vice versa? We want to break through those 'nine to five' boundaries that can restrict people. We want to say it's ok for people to think about work outside the office and email colleagues out of hours because they've suddenly thought of a good idea or something. The converse, of course, is that, if they think of something they need to get done at home while they are in the office, then it is fine to pick up the phone and sort it out. You can't have a 24/7 approach to work if you don't allow a 24/7 approach to life."

snapshot
Somerset Council guiding principles

what?

Four principles that guide the leadership of the council – 'can do'; 'customer service'; 'collaboration'; 'care and respect'. They were the outcome of around 20 workshops with managers, councillors and others.

why?

"We'd had an old set of values and behaviours knocking around for quite some time," says Richard Crouch, Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development. "They were what I call 'laminated' – people just didn't know what they were, let alone how they could make a difference to their work."

outcomes?

The 'four Cs' permeate everything the council does with managers and staff being measured on them in their annual appraisals. Staff surveys indicate that staff feel the principles are important and are making a difference.

snapshot
Somerset Council: regaining impetus after a setback

what?

A half-day workshop opportunity for senior managers and members to dream about their future aspirations for the council. The emphasis was on individual dreams, team dreams and organisational dreams undertaken in an open space format facilitated by themselves – participants were encouraged to think and interact informally.

why?

"We'd bid for unitary status and were among the frontrunners right up to the end," says Crouch. "Then we didn't get through so you can imagine the deflation after all the impetus that had been built up. The workshop allowed us to rearticulate our direction of travel, regain momentum and forget the unitary issue."

outcomes?

"There was a tremendous amount of joined-up-ness," says Crouch "with a focus on something very simple – 'local services for local people'. It's giving impetus to our emphasis on area working. Instead of backbench councillors, we've now got 'frontline councillors' who may not be on the executive but have a lead role in the various wards and districts, including them having delegated budgets that they can spend in that area."



'soft skills' for the future
tameside metropolitan borough council



Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council has developed an extensive range of organisational development initiatives that have played their part in delivering year on year improvement and securing a four star 'improving strongly' rating for the last two years running. However, Assistant Chief Executive, Mirriam Lawton, warns:

"It is not a quick fix. The best place to start is with very solid performance foundations and build up layers, putting the 'soft skills' on top. If you try to do everything at once it is too daunting for people. It probably took us ten years to embed the systems culture and it might be another ten years to really embed the 'soft skills'."

Nurturing 'soft skills' on top of a solid performance base has been the focus for much of Lawton's and Chief Executive Janet Callendar's recent work: "We'd already built up a strong culture of performance management and continuous improvement. Janet's arrival five years ago introduced a

further focus on the staff and their skills and a realisation that we needed to do more than work just on the systems part of the organisation." The result has been a strong OD emphasis on "developing managers to lead through engagement, becoming a 'coaching organisation', letting people be creative and innovative, working in partnership, respecting diversity and being an organisation that constantly learns and innovates."

The emphasis on 'soft skills' is partly a response to the changing expectations of a new generation of talent. "Local government needs to embrace the whole cultural change that is going on with younger people and their view of the workplace," says Lawton. "Traditional, hierarchical command and control doesn't fit with the citizens and staff of the future. So we've been looking hard, for example, at how our managers involve others in decision-making, about the freedom people have to voice ideas,

encouraging managers to listen to and value contributions from others thus allowing them to develop."

Finally, Lawton stresses that the scope of these initiatives should not stop with the council's staff. "We need to work with our partners to engender the same belief, attitudes and behaviours that are central to delivering key priorities for the people of Tameside. That is going to be increasingly important and will be reflected in the 'comprehensive area assessment' style of inspection and regulation. So our OD strategy is also about finding ways in which our partners can engage and learn with us and how together we can deliver great lives and excellent services."

snapshot

Tameside Council: leadership through engagement programme

what?

At its core it is the development of a 360 degree appraisal programme for all middle managers, but it brings with it a range of other things that are seeking to free people up to manage more innovatively and flexibly. The focus is personally customised to promote their ability to be coaches and facilitators. Participants have two coaching sessions and attend a two-day 'leading engagement academy'. Techniques such as using an online 'Mind Gym' are being combined with action learning sets and opportunities to work together on the council's key transformational programmes.

why?

Miriam Lawton, the council's Assistant Chief Executive, says: "we want to shift from an earlier leadership style of being a boss, controlling people and micro-managing things to one where managers are more facilitative, team orientated and people learn from their own mistakes. That is a huge shift and requires people to use different skills to empower their teams."

outcomes?

"It is early days," says Lawton. "We're on a journey beginning with the first phase which started in 2007. People are excited by the idea of thinking and working differently. It is a shift to people being managed on their performance and outcomes and not simply on the fact that they are present behind a desk."

snapshot

Tameside Council: a focused approach to customer service

what?

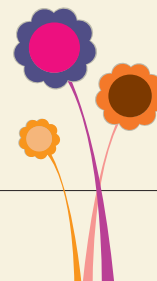
'Think customer' is the term Tameside Council has adopted to embody the principle of putting the customer at the heart of everything they do. Other benefits, such as efficiency gains are also a key objective, but ensuring the delivery of high quality services, developed around the needs of the customer and not the council is central to the 'think customer' vision.

why?

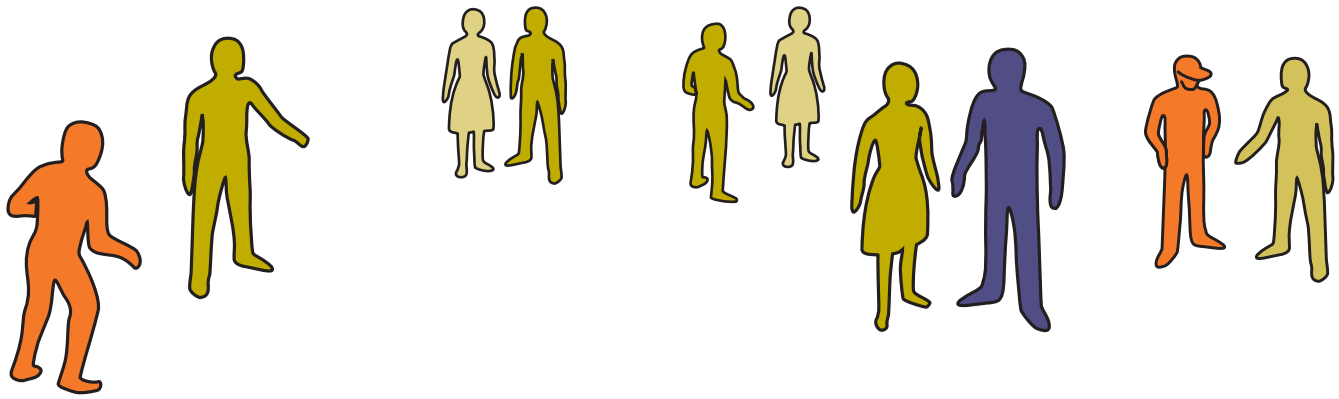
A residents' survey conducted in 2003/4 revealed one in four people could not access the right person; four in ten were dissatisfied with the way they were dealt with; eight per cent of the public's calls were going unanswered. In response, the council made changes with the aim of handling all enquiries at the first point of contact – including eight 'one-stop-shops' around the borough; the delivery of customer services from all libraries; a 'contact centre' for handling telephone enquiries; and an award winning website. The Institute of Customer Services accreditation was used as the basis for overarching professional training.

outcomes?

By 2007, the same residents' survey was showing much greater satisfaction levels. "We have transformed the way in which we deliver services to make it easier for our customers," says the council's Assistant Chief Executive Mirriam Lawton. For example, applicants for free school meals now have the choice of applying online with a same-day decision instead of having to fill out a paper form, visit the job centre to get it stamped, then return it to the council and wait for a decision. "We are pleased but never satisfied," says Lawton. "The future will bring more challenges for us. We intend to further transform customer care by using methods such as 'customer journey mapping' to deliver customer-centric services around customer needs rather than an approach structured around the organisation."



six tips



A central concern for those involved in practising organisational development (OD) is the planning and management of changes in belief, values, cultures, social interaction and behaviour in order to achieve organisational effectiveness.

OD recognises that it is not sufficient to analyse an organisation's environment and then set out the series of planned actions logically required to achieve its goals. What actually happens does not depend on rational considerations alone – it depends just as much on behavioural factors.

Here are six tips from our case study examples that help demonstrate this.

“Be bold, brave and be different. No one size fits all. If I was in a different council I would probably do something completely different.”

“Don't forget the opposition. If I could do it again, I would have got more participation and buy-in from the opposition. They're important in terms of scrutiny and, in the future, they may be in power so need to buy into the changes that are being made.”

“Make sure you understand your council's business, vision and strategic imperatives. Remember it is benefits and outcomes that are important not the OD models that get you there.”

“Don't get bogged down in restructuring. If it needs doing then create a real sense of urgency and really push it through at a pace. Crucially, don't put things on hold – it is the other things that, at the end of the day, will bring about more benefit than restructuring.”

“Be savvy. Choose to focus OD on the initiatives that will make the most difference and in quick-time. It is important to win people over by enabling them to see the results it can achieve.”

“Remember the timing has to be right. You may be all too aware of the many things that have to be done but start from where the organisation is at and pace it in a way that can be challenging but achievable as well.”

The IDeA works with councils to offer a number of national programmes of support for organisational development (OD), workforce and people management issues.

The National Organisational Development Programme is a unique series of workshops that provide a learning environment to facilitate knowledge sharing and deepen understanding of how to structure and deliver effective OD and change management.

The nationally delivered programme aims to:

- help change managers influence and lead change within their own organisations and collaborate more effectively across the wider public sector
- shape the future of organisational development, raising the capability of local government as a whole
- give those involved access to peer support
- expose participants to current thinking and research, focusing on international approaches and practice in other sectors.

A third national programme has been scheduled to begin in April 2009 for fire rescue services, police, and NHS, as well as local government.

Future programmes include:

- alumni and master class events
- the publication of case studies and 'how to' guidance.

For more information about taking part in any of the national events on OD or change management, visit www.idea.gov.uk, or contact:

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Local Government Association

The Local Government Association is the national voice for more than 450 local authorities in England and Wales. The LGA group comprises the LGA and five partner organisations which work together to support, promote and improve local government.



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