

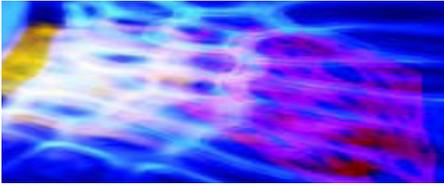
Identifying outcome focused indicators for use in Single Outcome Agreements

Summary Paper

By David Hume, Chief Executive Scottish Borders Council and Chair of Project Board, 'Improving Local Outcome Indicators Project'



- Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs) present major challenges in how the public sector manages and assesses performance concerning the delivery of outcomes. In particular, the shift from the traditional measurement of inputs, activities and outputs to a clear focus upon the achievement of outcomes requires the development of outcome-focused indicators for use across partnerships.
- To avoid the need for every local area to grapple with these issues, a project was established in 2009 to identify the most robust outcome-focused indicators available for use in SOAs.
- The project is led by SOLACE and is overseen by a Project Board, which includes senior representation from all statutory Community Planning (CP) partners and other key stakeholders involved in the development and delivery of SOAs.
- Under the project, an updated Menu of Local Outcome Indicators was published in November 2009. The updated Menu focuses on the broad outcomes contained in SOAs and identifies the most relevant and robust outcome indicators currently available nationally for tracking progress of those outcomes.
- The updated Menu is a significant improvement on previous versions, with many gaps having been filled, more relevant outcome indicators having been identified and more comprehensive metadata provided for all indicators.
- The development of the updated Menu followed extensive consultation with over four hundred individuals, including senior managers, policy officers and analytical experts, drawn from a wide range of organisations.
- In updating the Menu, decisions on the inclusion of indicators were based on how well they fitted a set of criteria agreed by the Project Board. The criteria included factors such as availability of data at local authority level, timeliness of data publication, statistical robustness, consistency over time and relevance, in terms of being genuinely outcome-focused.
- The Menu of Local Outcome indicators is not prescriptive. There is no expectation that every SOA will use every indicator contained in the Menu. CPPs can select from the Menu those indicators that are most relevant to the outcomes that they have prioritised locally. CPPs are also free to use indicators not included in the Menu if they are considered appropriate to local priorities.
- In accordance with the SOA Guidance, SOAs should be high level, strategic documents, with a relatively small number of priority outcomes and a relatively small number of outcome indicators



used to track progress. Such an approach will help to provide clarity of focus across the partnership, both on the priority outcomes sought and on the progress being made in achieving them.

- In line with the SOA Guidance relating to continuous improvement, it is important that SOAs continue to develop and adapt, and are refreshed to take account of changing circumstances. As part of this, it is suggested that the indicators currently contained within SOAs should be reviewed by each CPP in light of the updated Menu. CPPs can select those indicators from the Menu that are most relevant to the outcomes that they have prioritised locally. Where appropriate, less robust / relevant indicators can be removed and replaced with indicators from the updated Menu.
- The development of robust local outcome indicators is an ongoing process and there is still more work to be done. The project identified a number of gaps where there are currently no nationally available outcome indicators suitable for use in SOAs. The second phase of the Improving Local Outcome Indicators Project has focused on consideration of how such data gaps can best be addressed. Version 5.1 of the Menu was published in January 2011, reflecting a number of further additions and improvements. Continued support and feedback from stakeholders is extremely valuable and suggestions for additional outcome indicators to be incorporated within future updated editions of the Menu can be sent to listen@improvementservice.org.uk
- The majority of the indicators contained within the Menu can be accessed via the Local Outcome Indicators reporting tool, contained within the Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics portal. By putting all of the key outcomes data together in a single place, the intention is to make it easier for local partnerships to access the data. www.sns.gov.uk/Reports/PerformanceFramework.aspx (Click on 'Performance Framework report', then choose 'Local Outcome Indicators' from the drop down menu. A report on 'Local Outcome Indicators by Equalities Characteristics' is also available.)
- The Scottish Government has agreed to provide a help facility for queries about indicators, data, target-setting and wider analytical issues associated with SOAs. For assistance, please e-mail:- analysts.network@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Further Information

For further information on the 'Improving Local Outcome Indicators Project' please visit www.improvementservice.org.uk/local-outcome-indicators/ or contact andrew.mcguire@improvementservice.org.uk