

Use of the LGBF

Making LGBF data usable to inform performance improvement activity across services

Highland Council

Background

Highland Council's Improvement and Performance team set out to improve how the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) is used across the organisation. At the time, only a limited set of indicators was used, with the wider dataset not consistently supporting decision making or improvement activity, limiting its overall value.

This work took place alongside changes to the Council's structure, creating a need for performance information that was clearer, easier to access, and aligned to how services are managed. Existing data was available but not always easy to navigate, and the team saw an opportunity to improve both how it was presented and how it was used in everyday discussions and decisions.

Key activities

Developing accessible reporting through Power BI

The Council created a series of Power BI dashboards to present LGBF data in a clearer and more user-friendly format. This will make it easier for users to access and explore data, supporting wider engagement beyond specialist teams.

Aligning data with service structures

LGBF indicators are organised within the dashboards to reflect the Council's service structure. This will help services quickly find relevant information and understand how the data relates to their areas of responsibility.

Expanding access across the organisation

Access to dashboards has been extended beyond the core performance team to include senior managers and services. This will support more consistent use of data in performance discussions and day-to-day activity.

Supporting performance discussions with data

LGBF data will be used within performance discussions with Chief Officers to provide context, highlight trends and prompt further analysis. This will help move from simply reporting figures to exploring what is driving performance and where action may be needed.

Building internal capability in data use

The team has developed internal skills in Power BI and data visualisation. This supports ongoing improvement in how performance information is presented and used across the Council.

Benefits and impact

More relevant and usable performance information

Reorganising LGBF data around the chief officer structure has made it easier for services to engage with performance information. Instead of working through a full dataset that can feel disconnected from day-to-day responsibilities, users can now focus on indicators that relate directly to their service area. This has made the data more meaningful and supports its use in practice.

Easier access to data and underlying detail

The move to an interactive report has improved how people access and navigate performance data. Users can move from high-level summaries into more detailed views, rather than relying on static reports. This supports a better understanding of performance by allowing users to explore trends, comparisons and underlying data in a more flexible way.

Greater confidence in the accuracy and timeliness of data

Introducing a direct connection to the LGBF dataset has reduced the need for manual handling of data. Previously, there was a risk that locally held data could be out of date or inconsistent. The automated updates provide a more reliable and up-to-date source of information, increasing confidence in the data and making it easier to use in reporting and decision making.

Stronger and more informed performance discussions

Bringing data together in a single, accessible report supports more informed discussion about performance. Users are better able to explore how indicators are performing over time and in comparison with others. This will support more analytical conversations, where data is used to ask questions, explore underlying causes and identify areas for further investigation.

Clearer link between data and service management

Presenting data to Chief Officers in a format aligned to their organisational responsibilities helps link benchmarking data to day-to-day service management. Rather than being seen as a separate reporting exercise, LGBF data will be more closely connected to how services understand and manage performance, supporting a more practical use of benchmarking information.

Better foundation for linking performance and financial data

The work has also begun to support closer integration between performance and financial information. Early exploration of linking LGBF indicators with financial data is helping to build a more complete picture of performance, allowing users to consider both cost and outcomes together. While still developing, this creates a clearer basis for understanding value and supporting more informed decision making.

Strong platform for further improvement

Although still developing, the approach has established a clear direction for improving how performance data is used. The report provides a foundation that can be built on over time, including extending integration with other datasets and strengthening how data is used in planning, reporting and decision making.

Learning and reflections

Relevance improves engagement

Structuring the report around the chief officer model has made the data more meaningful to users. This demonstrates how flexibility can improve engagement by ensuring performance information reflects local responsibilities and priorities.

Using data to ask better questions

The work shows the value of using LGBF indicators as can-openers. Rather than treating the indicators as answers, the Council will use them to prompt questions, explore trends and investigate underlying causes.

This is supporting a more analytical approach to performance and helping identify areas for improvement.

Combining data strengthens understanding

Linking performance and financial data highlights the importance of supplementing LGBF data with other sources. This supports a more holistic picture of improvement and provides greater context for decision making.

At the same time, the Council recognises that integrating different data sources is complex and will take time to develop.

Ongoing development and learning

The Council is at an early stage in this work and continues to refine its approach. There is a clear intention to build on the current report, extend integration and improve how data is used across the organisation. This reflects the principle of learning from practice and adapting approaches over time.

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