

Use of the LGBF

Embedding Benchmarking and Self-Evaluation in to Service Improvement

Falkirk Council

Background

Falkirk Council is developing a new approach to using performance information that brings together service planning, self-evaluation, transformation activity and benchmarking. While performance information has traditionally been reported through quarterly reports and committee processes, there was recognition that performance data was not always being used consistently to drive improvement activity or support decision making across services.

At the same time, the introduction of the National Framework for Self-Evaluation created an opportunity to review how improvement activity is identified, managed and monitored. The Council also wanted to strengthen links between performance reporting and its wider transformation programme, Council of the Future.

Key activities

Redesigning service plans around improvement

Falkirk Council is revising its service planning process so that service plans become practical improvement documents rather than primarily reporting documents. Existing service plans are being strengthened to include self-evaluation, performance information, improvement actions and transformation activity within a single framework.

The intention is to create clear links between performance information, identified improvement priorities and future actions. This allows services to use performance information more actively and supports a more structured approach to tracking improvement over time.

Integrating LGBF data into performance reviews

The Council is embedding LGBF indicators within regular service reviews and performance discussions. Benchmarking information will be considered alongside local data and family group comparisons to provide a broader understanding of service performance.

This reflects the Good Practice Principles of supplementing with other information and taking a holistic picture of improvement by bringing together multiple sources of evidence rather than relying on a single dataset.

Linking benchmarking with self-evaluation

LGBF information will be used alongside self-evaluation activity to help services identify strengths, areas for development and potential improvement priorities. The Council intends to use

benchmarking information as part of a wider evidence base alongside customer feedback, staff feedback and local performance information.

This supports a more rounded understanding of performance and helps services move beyond simple reporting of results towards understanding what needs to change and why.

Supporting service-led improvement activity

Rather than setting improvement priorities centrally, the Council is working with services to identify areas where action is needed. Analytical support is to be provided to help services understand performance trends, explore benchmarking information and develop realistic improvement actions.

This approach aims to create local ownership of improvement activity while providing services with the evidence and support needed to make decisions.

Developing analytical capacity

The Council has expanded its analytical capacity and established a Data Analyst Network to bring together staff with performance and analytical responsibilities from across all council services. This is helping shift activity away from simply producing reports and towards generating insight that can inform improvement.

The team are also looking to simplify reporting processes and make better use of existing tools and automation so that staff can spend more time analysing information and less time producing routine reports.

Benefits and impact

Stronger links between performance and improvement

The main benefit of the new approach is the connection it creates between performance information and improvement activity. By embedding LGBF indicators within service planning and self-evaluation processes, the Council is creating a clearer route from performance evidence to practical action.

Rather than identifying an issue through reporting and then leaving services to respond separately, improvement actions can be developed, monitored and reviewed through existing management processes. This helps make performance information more relevant to day-to-day service management.

Better use of benchmarking information

The Council is encouraging services to see benchmarking as a tool for learning rather than simply a mechanism for comparison. LGBF data is being used to identify areas that warrant further investigation and to explore how other councils have achieved improvement.

This reflects the principles of using data as can-openers and learning from others. The focus is on asking questions about performance and identifying opportunities to improve rather than concentrating solely on rankings or league table positions.

More complete understanding of performance

Bringing together local indicators, benchmarking information, cost data, customer feedback, staff insight and self-evaluation findings allows services to develop a more complete picture of

performance. This supports the Good Practice Principle of taking a holistic picture of improvement. It helps services understand performance in context and reduces the risk of decisions being based on a single indicator or dataset.

Greater engagement with data

The Council hopes that integrating performance information into regular service planning and management discussions will increase engagement with data across the organisation. Analytical support is helping services move beyond simply receiving reports towards understanding what the information means and how it can be used.

Over time, this is expected to strengthen the performance culture within the organisation and increase confidence in using evidence to support decision making.

Strong corporate support for change

The approach has benefited from support from senior management and aligns with wider organisational priorities around transformation, self-evaluation and performance improvement.

This reflects the Good Practice Principle of corporate and political leadership. Having support at a senior level has helped create momentum for change and provided a platform for embedding the approach across services.

Learning and reflections

Embedding benchmarking in everyday processes is important

Falkirk Council recognised that benchmarking information has greater value when it forms part of existing service management processes. By integrating LGBF information into service plans, self-evaluation and improvement discussions, benchmarking becomes part of routine conversations rather than a separate reporting requirement.

This demonstrates the value of embedding performance information within local processes and structures.

Benchmarking should prompt questions

The Council sees benchmarking information as a starting point for discussion rather than a definitive explanation of performance. Services are encouraged to explore what the data may be indicating and use that information to identify areas for further investigation.

This reflects the Good Practice Principle of using data as can-openers. The focus is on understanding performance and identifying opportunities for improvement rather than seeking simple explanations for differences between councils.

Local context still matters

The Council recognises that benchmark indicators are most useful when considered alongside local information. Customer feedback, local performance data, self-evaluation findings and operational knowledge all help provide context and improve understanding.

Combining different forms of evidence supports more informed decision making and helps services understand what is driving performance.

Ownership supports improvement

A key lesson has been the importance of involving services directly in identifying improvement priorities and actions. While analytical support can help interpret information and identify opportunities, services need to retain ownership of improvement activity if change is to be sustained.

This approach supports stronger relationships between performance teams and operational services and helps build confidence in the use of evidence.

Cultural change takes time

The work is still at an early stage and the Council recognises that changing how people use performance information will take time. There is already strong support for a more improvement-focused approach, but embedding new ways of working across services will be an ongoing process.

The Council's long-term ambition is to create a culture where performance information is routinely used to support learning, improvement and transformation, helping services make better use of both local data and LGBF benchmarking information.

Contact for enquiries

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