

many challenges...

one ambition

**Better Life Opportunities
for Oldham's Citizens**



Foreword

We are changing Oldham. We are redefining our borough as a high quality place in which to live, work and play. It is becoming renowned for its strong and engaged communities, cultural and educational strengths, increased life opportunities and growing economic prosperity and quality of life.

We are achieving transformational change through partnership working. **The Oldham Partnership** is committed to harnessing the full potential of local agencies and communities in taking our borough forward as a collective endeavour.

We are working together towards a common vision (the Sustainable Community Strategy) and, in collaboration with the government, to a common blueprint for change (the Local Area Agreement).

By utilising shared resources and expertise, and commissioning services and projects which are genuinely multi-agency, we are making Oldham a better place to live.

In recent years we have made significant inroads to improving outcomes for local people and in narrowing the gap between the most and least disadvantaged amongst our communities. There is still much to be done and our strong partnerships will be the key to success in meeting our overall aim of: **Better Life Opportunities for Oldham's Citizens.**



Howard Sykes
Leader of
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For achievements in relation to Children and Young People please refer to Joint Area Review

1.0

Introduction

1.1 The story of Oldham

The story of Oldham is described in the words of council Chief Executive, Andrew Kilburn.

Background

Oldham has been on a significant journey since 2001 when it faced the issues which came to a head with the civil disturbances of that year and were followed in 2002 by a highly critical Corporate Governance Inspection report.

We faced severe community cohesion issues and an immediate requirement to introduce effective and proportionate corporate governance arrangements. This was compounded by service performance failures that caused Social Services to lose its star rating and the loss of our reputation. There was no option but to tackle these issues head on, and our approach in doing this has been through strong leadership at member and officer level, early intervention and prevention, management focus and allocation of resources.

We focused our efforts in three key areas – **Regeneration, Community Cohesion and Service Excellence.**

The 2004 Corporate Assessment acknowledged the strides we had made in addressing the many challenges we faced. The story of Oldham today is how we have built on that early success to achieve measurable improved outcomes in relation to those priorities. Now in 2008 we have been shortlisted for the Local Government Chronicle's Most Improved Council award two years running.

"Oldham's improvement journey has accomplished many tangible positive outcomes for the people of the Borough in recent years."

LGC Judges 2007

More importantly we have delivered significant and measureable improvements for local people (see Section 2.5).

The journey has been long but the achievements are now tangible. Over the last four years we have grown in confidence and are now doing what we need to do to regenerate our borough.

Our ambitions could not have been realised without effective working between public, private, voluntary and faith sector partners.

There is a real strength in the partnership approach in Oldham. We have both led and facilitated our borough's development through these partnerships.

You will be able to judge the impact of our actions from the physical development that is taking place, from the achievements of local people, the strength of local partnerships and the realisation of large parts of our vision.

Our changes are sustainable because they are underpinned by a cultural transformation that favours innovation and anticipates success.

Regeneration

We recognised we needed to set out an approach to regeneration that underpinned our key corporate priorities around community cohesion and service excellence. **Oldham Beyond** set out our vision moving forward, and together with partners has been developed into the **Oldham Beyond Regeneration Strategy 2008-13**. Key successes in delivering on our regeneration priority can be seen in the recently published **Oldham Beyond 1,000 days Campaign Report** and in Section 2.5.1.

“There is more regeneration going on in the Borough now than ever before...”

Phil Woolas MP 2008

We have been at the centre of Manchester's campaign to secure a public transport network fit for a world class city. More locally we have accepted financial risk in implementing ambitious plans that will see Metrolink promoting investment in Oldham town centre and boosting the growth of our University Centre.

Our **Housing Market Renewal Partnership** with Rochdale is delivering a real change to the quality of accommodation and supporting our approach to building new communities.

High quality housing and good schools go hand in hand in achieving successful regeneration. We have a **£200m Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme**, which will radically transform secondary education in our borough, with the twin aims of improving attainment and creating more mixed schools to further promote cohesion.

The Oldham Partnership embraced a **Regeneration through Education strategy** which is driving transformation by increasing the opportunity to receive high quality higher and further education within our borough. The strategy is instrumental in driving up aspiration and in ensuring that more of our residents are equipped to take advantage of the higher skilled and higher paid employment opportunities emerging within our borough and in the city region.

We now have a University Centre with more than 1,000 students. In the last six months, the Oldham College and the Oldham Sixth Form College have both been rated by Inspectors as outstanding. These successes have been supported in part by the Junior University scheme, nationally recognised as best practice.

We are bucking the national trend in terms of students achieving maths and science A level. As a consequence discussions are well advanced to develop a Regional Science Centre, based on the Sixth Form College but which will also provide additional facilities for the University Centre.

Our strategy is therefore not only providing our borough and the city region with tomorrow's highly skilled workforce, it is also helping to transform the landscape of our town centre.

Community cohesion

Over recent years we have worked closely and effectively within all our communities to better understand and address the complexities of the cultural diversity of our borough, and we are now at the forefront of this agenda, with a national profile and model of best practice. These issues are of paramount importance in Oldham.

The additional strength of local leadership has been crucial to the progress that has been made on community cohesion (see Section 2.5.2).

Together with the Oldham Partnership we have continued to work to build on this very solid foundation, and this has recently been formalised in a new **Cohesion Strategy**. Regeneration is at the heart of this work, and there is clear evidence to show how the vision of Oldham Beyond is becoming a reality.

We have made cohesion a part of the way we work in Oldham (see Section 2.5.2). However, despite this, we are clear that the issue of community cohesion will need to be worked at over many years to come.

“Given the sheer scale of Oldham’s problems, few cities, towns or districts in other parts of the country have done as much as Oldham in seeking to build community cohesion. In short, Oldham has every right to be proud of its record to date and now needs to unlock and make its learning available to other communities.”

Ted Cantle 2006

Service excellence

We recognised that our service performance was not as strong as it needed to be. Starting at a low base we prioritised improvement of adult social care and safeguarding children and young people, and narrowing the gap in relation to crime reduction, teenage pregnancies, school attainment and resident satisfaction. Significant improvements can be demonstrated in these areas, and we are building on this to ensure all services are excellent.

We have many examples of excellent performance. One is our approach to individualised budgets within adult social care which is seen as ground breaking, and we are leading the way nationally in this field (see Section 2.5.3)

We also recognised that if we were to achieve excellent service performance we needed specialist input and expertise particularly around service and process improvement. We therefore began negotiations to enter into a strategic service delivery partnership in 2005, and the Unity Partnership was created in 2007 to bring in much needed capacity and technical support. This brought almost immediate improvement to the call centre and the benefits service through the application of lean systems thinking (see Section 2.3).

1.2 Context: Oldham the place

Population: 219,600
Households: 90,000
Area: 142.5 square kilometres

Demographics
BME: 16.7% in 2007
(predicted to increase to 24.6% in 2022)
Aged 65 and over: 31,600
Under 18s: 55,100
Working age population: 133,200 (60.7% compared to national average of 62.2%)

Oldham is the most easterly area of the Manchester conurbation, and is a place of great contrasts. The western part is densely developed, in part a legacy of the very rapid period of urbanisation when Oldham grew to become the world's greatest centre of cotton spinning. To the east are attractive Pennine villages set amongst some of the most dramatic natural landscape in the North West. Almost a quarter of our borough lies in the Peak District National Park.

Our borough is made up of several areas and communities, ranging from local towns and districts, to villages and neighbourhoods. Each has its own identity and character, which together make our borough a strong and vibrant place.

We see our borough as an integral part of the Manchester city regional economy with job and housing markets spanning district boundaries.

We are also very conscious of the importance of our cross Pennine links, exemplified by our partnership with Huddersfield University.

We have strong connections with our neighbouring boroughs, as evidenced by our collaboration on a number of successful projects currently underway, one example of which is our joint working with Rochdale on the Housing Market Renewal pathfinder project.

Our demographic profile brings specific challenges in relation to improving quality of life for local people, and we have identified these, together with our approach to addressing them and our achievements to date, in the relevant achievement themes in Sections 2.5.1 – 2.5.4.

Community leadership

The community leadership role is shared between the council, public sector partners and a vibrant voluntary, community and faith sector. The quality of individual contributions reflects a culture of mutual commitment to achieving our borough's ambitions.

The Oldham Partnership has been hugely successful in creating a climate for confident and effective partnership activity. Success has resulted from a well established culture of transparency and mutual support between partner agencies and the key individuals.

The political leadership of both major parties are now confident in stating the values and priorities that underpin what has become a highly successful partnership.

1.3 Context: Oldham Council

Political and managerial leadership

The council has no overall control, with the Liberal Democrats holding 30 seats, Labour 22, the Conservatives seven and one Independent member.

There is a **Cabinet** of 10 (nine Liberal Democrats and one Labour member). Cabinet is keen only to take business decisions and not to receive reports for information. It encourages delegation to officers in consultation with their Cabinet Portfolio Holder wherever possible, and shorter Cabinet agendas and minutes reflect this.

This is supported by a focused and highly skilled overview and scrutiny (O&S) function, currently comprising a Management Panel, a Performance and Value for Money Select Committee and a Project Board comprising four convenors who manage and undertake specialist project based scrutiny with elected members and external co-optees.

The entire scrutiny process is designed to be inclusive and joint scrutiny is undertaken with community councils and with the Oldham Partnership Steering Group.

A consistent emphasis on personal development for the dedicated councillors concerned, an open approach to the compilation of the work programme and a willingness to innovate have generated highly influential reports that have strongly influenced the Cabinet.

Closing the circle (overview and scrutiny of place)

To inform the 2008 refresh of the LAA and Sustainable Community Strategy, joint scrutiny by members of the Oldham Partnership Steering Group, local non executive Councillors, Community Council Co-optees and Oldham Youth Council Members was undertaken to determine the priorities for the new LAA and to consider the actions and barriers that will need to be addressed if successful outcomes are to be achieved.

Strong political leadership and cross party collaboration are central to the delivery of change and improvement. "Oldham First, Politics Second" is our approach.

"There is cooperation between leadership and opposition, including regular joint-leadership meetings. A good example of this constructive relationship was demonstrated in discussions in 2006 about the call-in procedure, which has led to a more focused approach to scrutiny."

IDeA Peer Review 2007

Management and leadership at officer level is provided by the **Strategic Management Team** (SMT), comprising the Chief Executive and five Executive Directors together with the Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer.

Services are delivered through **five directorates**, together with a number of key service delivery partnerships – the Unity Partnership, First Choice Homes (FCHO), Housing 21 (H21) and Oldham Community Leisure (OCLL).

2.0

Corporate

assessment

2.1 Ambition for the community:

What is the Council, together with its partners trying to achieve?

Self Assessment Score 3/4

We have a full appreciation of the combination of challenges which face our borough and which distinguishes it from other places. Many places are focusing on quantitative change – increasing their population and attracting extra jobs. Our emphasis is different. We believe that the priority for Oldham is qualitative transformation.

Whilst we are predicting only a modest rise (of about 4%) in our borough's population in the period to 2022 from its current 219,600, the distinctive geography of our borough limits the amount of land available for new residential and commercial development.

Our emphasis in terms of employment is to attract significant numbers of additional jobs to our borough whilst at the same time encouraging a shift to higher skilled, higher value added, higher waged employment.

It is a very significant characteristic of our borough that its communities are highly segregated by ethnicity in terms of where they live. This makes it all the more important that interaction is encouraged in other settings, such as in the workplace, in our schools, and in cultural, sporting, and community activities. Our population is also increasingly 'young' and hence our emphasis on regeneration through education.

This is an important consideration for us as we plan our neighbourhoods and the local centres which serve them.

Our approach to meeting these many and varied challenges depends on confident and consistent leadership delivered by strong and effective local partnerships. It is the culture of close and trusting working relationships combined with effective systems and processes that provides the basis for continuing and sustainable improvement in the long term.

We have a very clear and distinctive vision of the future which our borough can enjoy – an exciting vision shaped and tested through extensive consultation and encapsulated in our **Sustainable Community Strategy**, our **Local Area Agreement (LAA)** and our Citizens' Plan for 2008-11.

We have no illusions about the scale of the task, but are confident that our strong and effective partnerships will enable us to achieve our vision.

The restructured partnership is now solidly established as the key strategic delivery body for our borough, and this renewed confidence in local leadership and enthusiasm was recognised in 2007 when the Oldham Partnership was rated green overall and green for direction of travel. We also won the Local Government Chronicle's (LGC) Partnership Award for Sustainable Communities in 2006 and were shortlisted for the LGC LSP of the Year Award in 2007 and 2008.

"Oldham's winning approach is a great example of training and capacity building to get communities involved in decision making."

LGC Award Judges 2006

Our LAA is regarded by the Government as a model of good practice, bringing together over £400m of pooled and aligned funding for the delivery of local objectives, which has enabled us to achieve significant tangible improved outcomes for local people.

62% of our **Local Public Service Agreement 1 (LPSA 1)** targets were achieved, attracting £3.7m reward grant from Government.

2/3rds of the stretch targets from our 2006 **LAA** are currently on track to deliver 100% stretch performance and achieve £4.1m reward grant from Government.

Major challenges for the partnership continue. We aim to complete the economic and social regeneration of our borough, to reduce worklessness and continue to tackle crime. Our sound governance arrangements, clear leadership and visible partnering behaviours, underpinned by effective decision-making, resource allocation and performance management processes offer a high degree of assurance that these challenges will be met and our ambitious plans will continue to be delivered.

We are also playing a major role in shaping the policies and governance arrangements for the ground breaking Multi Area Agreement (MAA).

We have provided the capacity to support these strategic initiatives at sub regional level through the part time secondment of senior officers to the relevant agencies and the Chief Executive's role as the Chair of the Greater Manchester Chief Executive's strategy group.

2.2 Prioritisation

Self Assessment Score 3

From the overall vision and strategic objectives within the Community Strategy and LAA (developed following extensive consultation with residents and other stakeholders), we have re-defined our priorities in a new Citizens' Plan for 2008-11. Within the overall main aim of 'Better Life Opportunities for Oldham's Citizens', this plan sets out four new Corporate Objectives, which are closely aligned to our new LAA.

The Citizens' Plan for 2008-11 is underpinned by an Annual Delivery Plan which identifies interim targets and key projects for 2008/09.

The development of the new Citizens' Plan and Annual Delivery Plan in 2008 was undertaken in parallel to the development of the **Financial Strategy** to ensure that resources are deployed appropriately to our priorities.

The 2008-11 Financial Strategy sets out our financial boundaries for a rolling three-year period, bringing together service growth pressures, risk, Council Tax thresholds, efficiency gains and resource redirections to Citizens' Plan priorities.

In the 2007/08 financial year, this led to the re-direction of £17.2m towards front line services, including £1.8m allocated to safeguarding vulnerable children. This investment took place against a backdrop of a very challenging budget situation locally, following a robust assessment of need, and resulted in significant improvements in performance and improved outcomes for young people.

Safeguarding

Completion of Initial Assessments and Core Assessments within timescales has improved from 68% (March 07) to 83.9% (March 08) and from 64.3% (March 07) to 85.4% (March 08) respectively.

Repeat referrals have reduced from 35.9% (March 07) to 29.2% (March 08).

The re-registration rate of children who became the subject of a Child Protection Plan has reduced from 20.5% (March 07) to 8.9% (March 08) and our performance is now rated as 'good'.

The budget for 2008/09 has been revised to take into account the priorities of the new political administration.

We have maintained our focus on priorities (see page 7) through decision-making and scrutiny processes and through our performance management framework (see Section 2.4).

Corporate risk management has also been strengthened, ensuring that the highest risks are prioritised and actively managed.

Our Strategic Management Team (SMT) has recognised the need to be more focused on priorities, and has recently restructured **internal governance arrangements** in order to maximise resources and align them more closely to priorities.

2.3 Capacity:

What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?

Self Assessment Score 3

Capital Budget 08/09: £48.5m

Net Revenue Budget 08/09: £196.1m

Anticipated Balances at 01/04/08: £7m

Staff: 10,000 (almost half of whom are schools' based)

Council Tax Increase 08/09: Nil

Working in partnership

Central to our improvement journey has been the increasing strength of the executive and boards of the Oldham Partnership, and our key service delivery partnerships.

Through partnerships we have improved service delivery, accelerated physical regeneration and achieved greater efficiency and community empowerment. Good examples can be seen both in physical regeneration projects, like the West End, Housing Market Renewal and Building Schools for the Future, and in service delivery, such as First Choice Homes and close partnership working between the Adults & Community Services Directorate, working alongside partners like the Pennine Care NHS Trust, Age Concern and others to ensure the highest possible quality of adult social care provision.

We have made a significant contribution towards the work of the LIFT Partnership which has resulted in a confident approach to providing progressive and modern health and social care facilities just where they are needed. Like all successful partnerships, trust and transparency are at the core.

The **Oldham Beyond Implementation Plan 2008/09** also supports better co-ordination of our capital investment plans on an annual basis.

We support communities to manage issues for themselves, for example by providing £1.3m of funding to key voluntary sector organisations and to communities themselves.

Partnership working has also been used to ensure our borough is at the heart of key sub-regional, regional and national agendas. Oldham's key role within the developing MAA is one example of this, but other examples include the Council's work on Green Infrastructure and Rural Issues, our leadership on Waste and on Preventing Violent Extremism.

To further increase capacity, we entered into a **12-year Strategic Service Delivery Partnership** with private sector partners in 2007. A number of front line services are delivered through the company, which is already delivering service improvements in addition to the projected £30m savings over the life of the partnership.

Some key Unity achievements:

- 21% reduction in the average time taken to process new benefit claims, with 12% more being processed in one day
- 11% increase in the % of visitors to the One Stop Shop who started their private interview within 30 minutes

2008 Unity Annual Review

Commissioning

Since 2006, we have operated a **Commissioning Framework** (recognised as a best practice model) for commissioning multi-agency services using resources pooled in our LAA. Local commissioning strategies ensure that services are developed in a flexible way to cover the gaps in local services, meet needs as they arise, and are of an acceptable level of quality.

Examples include:

- In 2007/08, 44% of pooled LAA funding was allocated to partnership bodies (and 56% to Council services).
- The commissioning of Advanced Childcare to provide two, six-place residential children's units.
- The negotiation of contracts with major Independent Foster Agency providers.
- Commissioning through the Children's Integrated Commissioning Board.

We have also made effective use of Private Finance Initiatives (PFI) to increase our capacity to deliver key projects. In the last four years, we have successfully concluded three PFI schemes, which have resulted in 1,500 new sheltered homes, two new secondary schools and the highly successful Library and Lifelong Learning Centre. The combined value of these projects amounted to £1.03 billion. Furthermore, we are leading the Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority's PFI waste contract which has a value of £4.4 billion (currently the largest public procurement in Europe).

The skills and experience developed from these schemes has enhanced our internal capacity in relation to project management, procurement, finance, legal and technical expertise and thus enabled us to proceed with confidence on future transformational projects.

Managing people

Supporting managers and staff to deliver better performance is a central part of our approach to people management.

We have pioneered coaching, made innovative use of theatre forum techniques in change management and delivered an ambitious programme of diversity training in a highly creative way. These approaches to management development and culture change have been a key element in securing sustainable change.

A recent Audit Commission report on Workforce Management and Development applauded our approach, and we have an effective and constructive relationship with the trade unions.

“Trade Unions and employers by their nature have their differences from time to time. At Oldham, we approach the wide range of issues we have to deal with in a spirit of partnership, professionally and openly and with a shared determination to find solutions. Our members certainly benefit from the positive working relationship we have with the Council.”

Unison, GMB, Unite, May 2008

We recognise and reward good staff performance through our STAR Awards scheme.

Our **Workforce Strategy** sets the strategic context and we have made good progress against its targets. We have invested consistently in elected members, managers, partners and staff to build capacity to achieve transformational change while maintaining or improving performance.

Our progress is evidenced by our achievement of Level 3 of the Local Government Equalities Standard, corporate IIP and having met the new IIP standards on work life balance, recruitment and leadership (the first organisation in the country to be awarded this under the new standard). Furthermore we built a requirement to achieve Equalities Standards into the Unity Partnership Contract, and this was so successful that Mouchel have extended this throughout their group (the first private sector organisation to do so).

These achievements were recognised in 2006 when we won the Greater Manchester Employers' Coalition Large Employer of the Year Award, and in May 2008 when we were awarded the North West Employers Organisation Charter for Elected Member Development.

Our achievement in raising awareness and providing training for our managers in relation to equalities was acknowledged when we were shortlisted for the Training Journal Awards for Training Initiative of the Year in 2006 and when we won the North West Employers Organisation Equality Award in 2007.

We have also invested in management development and coaching and gained ILM Centre approval in September 2007.

In a recent survey we have seen significant improvements in levels of staff satisfaction since 2005.

- The % of staff who feel proud to work for us increased from 39% to 61%.
- The % of staff who feel valued and recognised for the work they do increased from 40% to 57%.
- The % of staff who understand what they have to do in their role to contribute to our objectives increased from 54% to 80%.
- The % of staff who are satisfied they have opportunities to show initiative increased from 54% to 78%.

The survey results also highlighted areas for improvement, for example in managing change, and going forward we are working with staff and trade unions to develop an action plan to address these issues.

Having reversed an upward trend in sickness absence, levels are now stable. Although the BVPI is still in the lowest quartile based on all-England comparisons, our performance is in the second quartile amongst metropolitan councils and top quartile against other Greater Manchester councils.

This improvement has resulted in a reduction in sickness absence from 14.72 FTE days in 2003/04, to 11.46 in 2007/08, which equates to over 27,000 more person-days worked overall or the equivalent of over 120 FTE employees.

Workforce diversity is an issue that we consider as central to our ability to deliver high quality responsive services that meet the needs of local people. In 2006/07, we were in the top quartile for performance against a number of diversity measures. Our performance against the duty to promote the race equality standard is in the all-England top quartile and we are now targeting BME diversity in line with the local population profile.

Our equalities policy framework reflects our corporate aspirations rather than the legal compliance which often drives other organisations. We have made a clear commitment to mainstreaming equalities and have dedicated specific resources for improving equality practice through Equality Champions and networks.

A significant issue, and at the top of our risk register in 2007, was equal pay. However we mitigated this risk by negotiating settlements of more than 300 equal pay claims during 2007. This active management approach has so far reduced the financial exposure from a potential £25m to a current estimate of well below £14m.

For the longer term, we have undertaken a comprehensive pay review as part of our overall pay and rewards strategy, which will equality-proof pay structures.

In 2006, we made significant changes to our organisational structures. These changes have accelerated service redesign, particularly in relation to services for children, young people and vulnerable adults, improved our focus on priorities, and supported the achievement of efficiency gains required by our ambitious financial strategy.

We also initiated rationalisation of both finance and HR administration, both of which are now supported by new ICT systems (AGRESSO and Vision).

2.4 Performance management

Self Assessment Score 3

Managing the Council's performance

In recent years we have become increasingly confident in our ability to improve, and morale of the workforce has improved considerably (see staff survey results in Section 2.3).

The Oldham business planning process aligns the Community Strategy, LAA, Citizens' Plan, Annual Delivery Plan, Directorate Business Plans and Service Improvement Plans with the Financial Strategy and staff personal appraisals. This is embedded across the organisation (see staff survey results in Section 2.3) and over the past three years has made a major contribution to the development of a stronger performance culture across the organisation leading to significant improvements in performance.

Our improvement focus has been on specific areas (see page 7) in which we have seen significant improvement. This has necessarily meant that our overall position in relation to all BVPIs has not changed noticeably, but we have made huge strides in narrowing the gap in areas that are important locally (see Sections 2.5.1 – 2.5.4).

"The Council's arrangements for performance management are largely effective with strong leadership and close working at political and senior management level. The focus on performance management has had an impact, in highlighting and addressing areas for service improvement. The Council sees robust and effective performance management as a key element in delivering improved performance and better outcomes for local people."

Audit Commission Performance Management Audit Report 2006

One key success is the improvement from zero to a 2 star service (and a CPA score of 3) in Adult Social Care in just two years. There are also other marked improvements in educational attainment levels, levels of crime, youth offending, teenage pregnancies, libraries and galleries, street cleaning, recycling and resident satisfaction (see this Section and Section 2.5).

Performance management of schools

We have a strong school improvement strategy, with an integrated approach to differentiated challenge and support, ensuring that school interventions achieve maximum impact. There has been national recognition for our approach to the implementation of school improvement partners and none of our schools are currently in an Ofsted category.

11 of our 16 secondary schools improved their performance at GCSE 5 A*-C grades in 2007, one by as much as 23% and another by 15%.

Members take a leading role in reviewing and challenging performance through our performance round table meetings and overview and scrutiny. We also actively seek external challenge as a means of stimulating improvement, one example of which is the 2007 **IDeA Peer Review**.

Scrutiny of fostering services

Scrutiny members established a task and finish group to address the shortage of placements and the support available for foster carers. Recommendations were acted upon and in March 2008 Ofsted graded our Fostering Service as 'Outstanding', one of only nine in the country.

User focus

As part of our drive for excellence, the people of Oldham are recognising improved services. Recent BVPI overall satisfaction figures show us closing the gap, with a nine percentage point rise against a national average decline of two percentage points.

Overall resident satisfaction with the Council in 2006 also increased showing that improvements are now beginning to be recognised by local people. We are aware that even with this increase, an overall satisfaction level of 40% is still not good enough, but are confident that continued improvements in services will see satisfaction rates increase in the future.

The proportion of local people who are satisfied with the local area as a place to live has increased dramatically from 39% in 2003 to 64% in 2006
2006 Mori Survey

The 2006 BVPI survey also shows statistically significant improvement in public satisfaction with our services particularly with libraries, museums and galleries, local tips/amenity sites and street cleanliness.

Against this increase in resident satisfaction, we have also seen a significant reduction in the number of complaints from 1,146 in 2005/06 to 688 in 2007/08.

The improvement in services has been based on developing a better understanding of local needs through effective consultation both within services and corporately through our Citizens' Panel.

Understanding young peoples' needs

There has been an increase in the percentage of looked after children who communicated their views for each of their statutory reviews from 84.2% (March 2007) to 97.7% (March 2008), enabling them to actively contribute to and influence the services they receive.

We know we have to accelerate progress to turn our current, targeted performance improvement into sustained improvement across the board and recognise that to improve overall satisfaction levels, we must ensure that changes internally are geared towards delivering improved services that are responsive and accessible to all our diverse communities.

We have set out our **customer care standards** in our **Customer Charter**, and plans are underway to develop and publish service standards for all services by the end of 2008.

Customer care

"...The feeling of staff being interested in their work and being helpful to visitors is really good. Perhaps there should be an award for making people feel welcome. Out of all the Local Authorities I visit, I think Oldham would win it."

Steve Lomas, Commonwealth War Graves Commission 2008

Oldham people have told us that their preferred way of contacting us is by telephone, and on all non-complaint contacts, satisfaction is high. Two thirds have said it is easy to find the right person and a similar proportion said that staff are helpful.

The Contact Centre is one of the services now managed by the Unity Partnership. Targets have been set for calls answered to increase to 90% and abandoned calls to reduce to 6%, with 80% resolved at first point of contact, by 2010. The first year of the partnership has shown some encouraging performance improvement (see Section 2.2).

In relation to access, we have recently adopted a new **Customer Service Strategy**, established a new Customer Services Board chaired by an Executive Director and are working with the Unity Partnership to implement a new Customer Relationship Management System in 2008.

"Some services have significantly improved their general performance and more responsive access for users has played a part in securing that improvement. There are some examples of good practice – benefits, waste collection, adult social services and street scene have all made measurable service improvements that have incorporated improved access to the service and resulted in greater public satisfaction."

Audit Report on Access to Services 2008

Managing performance of partnerships

Increased partnership working and commissioning has placed greater demands on our performance management processes.

Performance management of the Oldham Partnership and delivery of the LAA is informed by ongoing monitoring of the local area, reported in **Oldham in Profile**.

Delivery of the shared local ambition is monitored against the LAA by the Partnership against Community Strategy objectives, and through our business planning and performance management framework.

Monitoring and evaluation informs the periodic review and updating of the Community Strategy and of our corporate and service plans.

Going forward we recognise that we need to strengthen our approach to managing performance and improvement where working jointly and delivering services indirectly, such as through FCHO, H21, OCLL and the Unity Partnership.

Communicating our performance

We understand that effective engagement with local people drives improved satisfaction, which in turn requires that people are well informed and feel that they can influence decisions about issues that affect them locally.

We are responding to this appetite for engagement through new approaches to local service delivery, more locally focused community meetings chaired by community representatives, and experiments in social enterprise, all of which are embodied in the Oldham Partnership's new **Community Engagement Strategy**.

The Oldhamer, a bi-monthly magazine delivered to every household in our borough was redesigned and relaunched in 2007, with greater emphasis on "You said, We did". In addition to general news on our services, the magazine focuses on issues raised as "areas of most concern" in surveys. To ensure that it is accessible as widely as possible, it is also available on request in Braille, audio and large print and can be translated into other community languages.

During 2007/08 we introduced quarterly **Community Council newsletters**, which provide information relating to each of the twelve community council areas. Co-opted resident members of community councils are involved in writing these.

Our A to Z issued annually ensures that up to date service contact details are communicated to all households, and residents are also kept informed through regular ward newsletters and updates.

Our award-winning website was scored as 'A' in the March 2007 SOCITIM survey for accessibility and recognised as one of the easiest to use by disabled people. It is an increasingly important means of two-way communication, as is a positive and effective relationship with the local media.

During 2007, we undertook a review of our communications function, with the help of Westminster City Council, the result of which is a re-structuring of the service to be implemented during 2008.

2.5 Summary of achievements:

What has been achieved?

Self Assessment Score 3

“The Council is making progress in improving services and continues to make a positive contribution to community outcomes. Notable positive outcomes were achieved in adult social care, youth offending and educational attainment, with GCSE and A level results improving faster than most authorities nationally. The Council has good plans to improve customer access and is leading nationally on promoting community cohesion.”

Annual Audit Letter 2008

2.5.1 Sustainable communities & transport

We believe that communities will become more sustainable and cohesive if people have decent homes, opportunities to work, and a pleasant environment in which to spend their leisure time.

Housing

Oldham has an unusually high proportion of small, densely packed, 19th century terraced houses, particularly in the inner areas in the west, where flats and maisonettes are also a common housing type.

Accordingly we have a supply of homes which is ill matched to the needs and aspirations of people in our borough and the wider city region. Some of our housing does not meet modern day expectations. The supply of high quality housing is concentrated in the outer areas of our borough such as Saddleworth and Shaw. This housing is unaffordable to many of those seeking to move up the housing ladder. Demand for social housing is very high across all areas.

One of the consequences of the mismatch between housing supply and housing needs is a high rate of overcrowding and an increased demand on the homelessness service.

We have addressed these issues by working collaboratively with social housing providers, developers and key partners such as the Housing Market Renewal pathfinder (a joint HMR area with neighbouring Rochdale) and these key partnerships are now starting to deliver tangible outcomes.

Our focus is on quality and sustainability, resulting in impressive designs and energy efficient homes in well designed neighbourhoods. We take a tenacious approach to reducing the number of empty homes. Obsolete homes have been demolished and those which are capable of re-occupation have been brought back into use.

Investment in social housing has been maximised by utilising a mixed approach to funding streams. A particular priority is the provision of larger family homes for rent. Our PFI 4 (which has secured £130m in PFI credits) will deliver more than 300 new homes and refurbishment of a further 300 over the coming four years.

We are reviewing the future of our Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) effectively taking the lead nationally on this matter. A comprehensive stock options appraisal has commenced that will identify tenant aspirations for the future of the stock now that the ALMO has completed its decent homes programme. This demonstrates the ambition within the organisation to offer homes in our borough that meet the expectations of local people.

Achievements to date include:

- 113 homes have been demolished and 104 returned to use (exceeding targets of 105 and 35).
- 1,231 private sector properties have undergone refurbishment since 2004, which ensured the private sector capital programme was fully utilised.
- 271 affordable homes have been built or refurbished since 2004, including 34 delivered through Section 106 agreements.
- The number of homes in non-decent condition continues to reduce at a rate well in excess of the national average (Annual Audit Letter 2008).
- Homelessness acceptances have reduced from 880 in 2005/06 to 478 in 2007/08 meeting the three-year LAA stretch target of 700, a year ahead of time.
- 10 self contained flats for people with mental ill health were completed at Greenacres in 2008.
- 6,241 households have been assisted by Warm Front since 2005 and more than £8m spent on energy efficiency measures within this period, which has contributed directly to increasing levels of affordable warmth and reducing fuel poverty.

Our challenges going forward include completing the stock options appraisal to confirm our vision for our housing stock, and to end the use of bed and breakfast and reduce reliance on temporary accommodation in line with Government targets.

Economic wellbeing

Our vision is of a thriving borough, playing a new and dynamic role in a world class Manchester city region. To achieve this vision we recognise that there is a need to enhance skills attainment, improve employment opportunities and access to jobs for local people, and create an environment which encourages enterprise and investment.

However, traditionally, we have been a low wage, low skills economy, with a high reliance upon manufacturing. Our economic assessments have predicted major job losses arising from the restructuring of our local manufacturing base evidenced by a decrease in the percentage of total employees in the sector from 18.9% in 2005, to 17.6% in 2006. In addition, we do not have significant areas of land for potential economic use, other than by assembly and treatment of Brownfield sites.

We are therefore comfortable with the view that Oldham can provide the city region with a young and highly skilled workforce and that many local people will work outside of our borough. Our **Regeneration through Education Strategy** is helping to ensure that we are equipping residents with the skills, ability and confidence they need to secure those high quality jobs.

We have also taken a rigorous view about prioritising the development of our best economic development opportunities rather than simply responding to ad hoc opportunities. Our Oldham Beyond Regeneration Strategy and **Masterplans for Hollinwood, Chadderton Technology Park and the West End** paint a transformational vision for our private and public sector investment partners and the transformation is already underway. Our Chadderton Technology Park Masterplan complements our economic commitment to build upon our manufacturing traditions by supporting the development of higher value higher technology businesses.

Rochdale (our HMR partner), is experiencing similar economic restructuring, so we have established the Oldham and Rochdale Economic and Skills Alliance (ORESAs). This is strengthening our position in the city region by enabling us to work together strategically in terms of encouraging appropriate public and private investment and we have commissioned a number of successful projects working across our boundaries such as J21 which has helped local people secure training and jobs in construction arising from our regeneration programmes.

We also experience similar levels of worklessness as Rochdale, with patterns of deep-seated worklessness amongst specific communities, including those neighbourhoods with a high BME population. We are working in partnership with Job Centre Plus, DWP, contractors, the Oldham College and the voluntary sector to provide personalised services for Incapacity Benefit clients and also to deal with major redundancy situations. The increased provision of basic skills and Level 2 skills is an essential feature of helping many of these local residents to take the step towards work for the first time or returning to work after a long absence.

Local partnerships are also having a dynamic impact on increasing the opportunity of young people to develop their skills and widen their educational opportunities.

“The Council performs well in ...achieving economic wellbeing. Young people receive good advice to prepare for moving on from school and the number making use of the online prospectus to register for vocational courses has increased to its highest ever level.”

Annual Audit Letter 2008

Our success to date is evidenced by:

Attainment and skills

- Year on year improvement between 2004 and 2007 in almost all measures at Key Stage 2. Our 2007 results gained national recognition in respect of pupil achievement at Level 4.
- Improvements between 2004 and 2007 in Key Stage 3 results (at level 5 or above) in English and significant improvements in Maths and Science.
- Significant improvements between 2004 and 2007 in GCSE results (5 or more A*-C) and improvements in the percentage of pupils achieving five or more at A*-C including English and Maths.
- The number of 19 year olds achieving NVQ Level 2 has increased from 1,963 in 2004 to 2,282 in 2007 (a 16% increase).
- The average points score of 16-18 year old students at A level has seen a significant increase from 299.40 in 2004 to 819.52 in 2007.
- We have seen a 5.4 percentage point rise in the participation in learning rate between 2004 and 2007, which has effectively closed the gap between Oldham and the rest of the country.
- Entry to higher education is improving year on year from 884 in 2003/04 to 1,010 in 2005/06.
- The percentage of 16-19 year olds who are not in education, employment and training has reduced from 8.2% in 2004 to 5.6% in 2007.
- 68.8% of care leavers aged 19 were in education, employment or training, placing Oldham into the top-performing bracket.
- The number of adults achieving Skills for Life qualification in literacy, numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages has increased from 1,208 in 2005/06 to 3,207 in 2007/08

Going forward we recognise we need to maintain our focus on closing the gap between Oldham and the rest of the UK, particularly in relation to attainment at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 3 (English).

Physical regeneration – education, skills and training facilities

- We opened New Bridge Special School in 2004 and Lyndhurst and Spring Brook Primary School in 2008.
- New Radclyffe and Failsworth schools opened in 2008 (the first new mainstream secondary schools to open in Oldham for 40 years).
- The City Learning Centre opened in 2006.
- University Centre Oldham opened in 2005 and now has 1000 students (most of who live in the Borough) with applications for 2008 entry showing further strong growth.

Physical regeneration – commercial developments

- Bentfield Estate (570 new jobs)
- Siemens site (230 jobs safeguarded)
- Furtherwood Farm (70 new jobs)
- Hollinwood junction (285 new jobs)
- Hollinwood Business Centre (70 new jobs)
- Salmon Fields Business Park (60 new jobs and 20 safeguarded)
- Junction 21 Business Park (50 new jobs and 75 safeguarded)
- EDZ Business Expansion Scheme (50 new jobs and 50 safeguarded)
- SRB Business Improvement scheme (204 new jobs and 457 safeguarded)
- Failsworth District Centre (400 new jobs)
- Shaw District Centre (250 new jobs)
- Broadway Business Park (750 new jobs and 10 safeguarded)
- Harrison Street (30 new jobs)

Employment and business growth

Although unemployment in Oldham decreased by 4.2% during the year to January 2008, this is the third smallest percentage decrease across Greater Manchester. There are 3,899 people unemployed (a rate of 4.0%) which is the third highest rate in Greater Manchester. Our approach to addressing this challenge is to develop both supply and demand led employability programmes as set out in our **Economic Development and Enterprise Strategy**.

Our success to date is evidenced by:

- Working in partnership we have helped almost 500 local people into work in the last six months.
- The creation of 1,200 new jobs in the last 12 months.
- Increased percentage of VAT registered businesses from 36.3% in 2005/06 to 39.4% in 2007/08.
- J21 has secured employment for 45 people in the last 12 months and invested £50,000 in training.

- The Passport to Employment project has helped unemployed people to increase their skills as well as encouraged employers to recruit locally. For example, 75 of the 390 jobs created at the new Tesco store in Failsworth have been given to the long-term unemployed, single parents and people who have been made redundant.
- The Oldham Employment Partnership worked with 201 employees facing redundancy through the closure of the Slumberland factory in March 2007. As a result 103 people have gained new employment to date.
- Our work with local not for profit partners has led to 55 people with a learning disability gaining employment (up by 16%).
- We have assisted 50 people with mental health conditions into work and a further 15 people with physical and sensory impairment with employment opportunities – a significant increase on the previous year.
- The Enterprise Factory (established in 2006) has supported the start up of 49 new businesses, assisted 52 businesses to grow and developed and created over 60 new jobs in the area.

Going forward we are developing a greater understanding of the barriers to employment, but continuing to maintain our focus on improving the skills of local people and supporting them to secure quality jobs in the city region.

Transport

We want people to be able to easily access the opportunities across our borough and the wider city region in a sustainable way. Delivering this without increasing congestion and pollution gives rise to significant transport challenges.

To address this we have invested in improvements to transport facilities and maintenance of the existing network. Importantly, we are also striving to locate new developments at points of greatest accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling.

We are working closely alongside other councils in Greater Manchester both in terms of delivering the objectives of the Greater Manchester Local Transport Plan and the submission of a successful bid for funding from the Transport Innovation Fund which will enable further substantial investment to be made in the local transport network, including the provision of a new Metrolink line from Manchester to Rochdale via Oldham Town Centre.

We take a full part in setting the Greater Manchester Local Transport Plan (LTP2) which outlines the approach being taken across the region towards transport planning and investment for the 2006/07 to 2010/11 period.

Achievements to date include:

- Opening the West Street bus station in 2006.
- A high profile Travel Plan has achieved a reduction of 6% in the number of staff driving to work between 2005 and 2007. An even better reduction of 11% in the amount of car travel on business has been achieved.
- A £2.5m programme of improvements has been carried out along some of our borough's key road corridors.
- A £14m investment in retaining walls to protect highways and the environment.

The major challenge we face going forward is gaining public support for the congestion charging to be imposed in order to secure Government investment in the extension to the Metrolink. In common with other councils, we also need to secure the resources needed to make improvements to the condition of our road network.

Environmental improvements

Our approach to environmental improvements has been developed from our desire to develop cohesive and safe neighbourhoods for local people and businesses.

Oldham is diverse on many fronts. One third of Oldham is rural; conversely two thirds consists of high density housing, and more than half of Oldham people live in terraced houses or flats. It is therefore essential that the public spaces around these high density neighbourhoods are maintained to a high standard, thereby creating clean safe and green environments. It is also important to provide access to well maintained parks and open spaces in these areas.

Our approach to waste management has also been driven by this local context. Our new managed weekly collection service includes a weekly collection of food waste which is important in such high density areas where composting is not an option. Our pilots therefore provided a flexible approach to suit the needs of different households, and these were so successful that we are now rolling the approach out across our borough (see below).

Cleaner Oldham

“Good progress has been made in improving the cleanliness of the local environment, through reductions in littering, graffiti and fly-posting, reflected in public satisfaction.”

Annual Audit Letter 2008

Our approach to achieving a cleaner Oldham has been to clean up, educate and enforce and, although in its infancy, our innovative **Community Reparation scheme** has already received national media attention.

Mr Gary Stevenson is the first individual to have opted for the alternative punishment; he was given the choice of paying an £80 fine or spending a day cleaning up the town centre. He said:

“I was called to an office and when I was given the choice, I thought cleaning was the right thing to do. I was wrong. I hold my hand up, and I’m trying to do the right thing now and encourage other people not to drop litter. The scheme is a great idea and if it stops people throwing litter on the streets it’s a good thing.”

- The percentage of streets falling below Grade B standard of cleanliness has fallen from 29% in 2004 to 17% in 2008 (achieving the LAA stretch target a year ahead of time).
- There has been a significant increase in satisfaction with street cleanliness from 39% in 2003 to 51% in 2006 (the highest in Greater Manchester, and achieving the LAA stretch target a year ahead of time).

Joan is one of 250 volunteer litter watchers on alert across our borough.
She said:

“It’s just a case of when you are walking about, keeping an eye out for litter. There are lots of takeaways on Hollins Road – prime hotspots. I suppose if I wasn’t there it might not get noticed. There are litter watchers all over the borough but I try to keep my patch litter and graffiti free.”

- Our NDC area has been a national pilot for **Neighbourhood Agreements**.

“The Clean and Green Agreement is one of the best things to happen to our area... People are taking more notice of the condition of the area by trying to keep the streets clean, which is really making a difference.”

Local resident

Greener Oldham

More than £8m of external funding has been invested in our parks and open spaces in recent years, the single most notable achievement being the transformation of Alexandra Park.

Perceptions of safety in the parks has been an issue in the past but the introduction of park security has improved this and attracted further visitors.

In relation to waste management, £459,000 was invested by Oldham Partnership to support targets identified in the LAA. This funding enabled implementation of the managed weekly collection pilots. A further £2m capital funding has been allocated for service improvements over the next two years, including borough wide roll out of the managed weekly collections.

As a result of this investment and the focused use of mainstream funding:

- We now have seven Green Flag parks.
- 65% of our residents are satisfied with our parks and open spaces, up from 60% in 2003.
- The percentage of household waste sent for composting has been validated for the first half of 2007/08 at 8.95% (an improvement of more than 6% from 2003/04).
- The successful implementation of the pilot of new waste collection methods delivered recycling rates of 36%. As a result, our borough wide recycling rate in 2007/08 was 20% (an increase of 14% from 2003/04).
- The corresponding reduction in the amount of waste sent to landfill is 8,937 tonnes (a reduction of 11% since 2003/04).

“I just wanted to say thank you for the efforts that you are making in the area of recycling. As a family of three, we are definitely looking forward to an extension of our current recycling service. I would love to have a compost caddy /bin, and any other “doorstep” recycling opportunities.”

Local resident

Sustainability

We have made significant progress on sustainability issues in the last few years, and on many issues we have helped to drive the environmental agenda in the region. We made a clear commitment in 2005, by signing up to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change. As a result of this, a whole range of activities have been undertaken to address sustainability and our use of resources.

Some of our successes are listed below:

- We have a Renewable Energy Policy (the first authority in Greater Manchester, and one of only a few in the whole country) that requires all major new building developments having 10% of their energy produced by renewable resources.
- Our Library and Lifelong Learning Centre has a Green Roof, which provides recycled rainwater to the building, as well as several other sustainable features.
- 'Excellent' Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) status achieved, in advance of the Government's 2010 target.
- Eighteen new environmentally friendly homes built in 2006 achieved the EcoHomes 'Excellent' rating and were the first homes in the North West to receive the Building for Life 'Gold Standard' Award.
- 84% of Oldham schools are registered Eco-Schools, with more than 55% achieving an award, and one school with permanent Green Flag status.
- We are one of only 15% of councils working towards implementing a fully accredited Environmental Management System.

There is a shared understanding with our partners that we must work together to help lift Oldham even further, and going forward, achieving the sustainable use of resources is highlighted as a key issue in our new Sustainable Community Strategy.

2.5.2 Safer & stronger communities

Within the Oldham Partnership, work on tackling crime and disorder and building stronger communities has been brought together under the **Safe & Strong Communities Board**. This enables the Partnership to take a co-ordinated approach in taking forward work on these inter-connected issues, with a focus on increasing resident satisfaction with their neighbourhoods.

Our success to date is evidenced by:

Crime reduction & prevention

In 2003/04, Oldham was in the bottom quartile of Crime & Reduction Partnerships nationally. The national PSA 1 target was to reduce comparator crime by 15% over three years. A stretch target to reduce comparator crimes by 23% over the same period was achieved with a reduction of more than 24%. Specifically:

- Comparator crimes have reduced from 19,598 in 2004 to 14,783 in 2008, a reduction of 25%.
- We have reduced domestic burglaries from 3,152 in 2004 to 2,101 in 2008, a reduction of 33%.
- Since 2004 over 2,700 commercial and domestic properties have received security upgrades.
- Since 2004 a total of 304 alley gating projects have been completed giving protection to over 8,600 properties.

Clarksfield alley gating project

The Clarksfield area of Oldham had for some time been recognised as a chronic hotspot with regard to the number of domestic burglaries being committed in the area. In the 12 month period up to 18th March 2007, there were 31 burglaries in an area of 900 homes. In response to this problem we installed 70 alley gates throughout the area, covering a total of 900 homes, at a cost of £83,000.

In the 12 months that followed, there were only two burglaries in the area.

- Violent crime has reduced from 4,930 in 2004 to 4,281 in 2008, a reduction of 13%.

30% of all Oldham's violent crime is related to domestic violence, making this a priority for us.

The **'Step By Step' Sanctuary Scheme** for victims of domestic violence is intended to reduce repeat victimisation and increase confidence in reporting. It provides home security measures to enable victims to stay in their own homes. So far 90 victims have been assessed, and additional security has been provided for 44 women.

As a result, more victims have had the confidence to report incidents leading to an increase of reported incidents from 5,713 in 2004 to 5,885 in 2008, but the percentage of repeat victims has decreased from 49% to 46% in the same period.

Hate crime is a major challenge to cohesion and we have addressed this by ensuring a partnership response to all hate crime that includes prevention and enforcement.

We have introduced a 24 hour “Stop Hate” telephone line to support victims of hate crime in partnership with Stop Hate UK.

- In 2007/08 there were 534 reported hate crimes in Oldham, a reduction of 14% from 2004/05.
- Theft from motor vehicles has reduced from 2,723 in 2004 to 2,331 in 2008, a reduction of 14%.
- Theft of motor vehicles has reduced from 1,919 in 2004 to 999 in 2008, a reduction of 48%.
- In 2006 the percentage of Oldham residents who felt safe in Oldham Town Centre during the day was 94% compared to 93% in 2004. However there has been a significant increase in the percentage of people who feel ‘very safe’ from 38% in 2004 to 59% in 2006.
- The percentage of residents who feel safe during the evening / night in the town centre increased from 52% in 2004 to 64% in 2006.
- The number of first time entrants to the Youth Justice System has reduced from 438 in 2005/06 to 403 in 2007/08 (a reduction of 7%).

Going forward we need to continue to reduce acquisitive crime and violent crime at a rate greater than our statistical neighbours. Accompanying this primary reduction is a continuing need to reduce the re-offending rate of offenders through increased employment, training and education and improved access to housing.

Anti-Social Behaviour

The Home Office Respect Unit’s own study has shown that the percentage of Oldham residents who think that anti social behaviour is a serious problem in their area has reduced from 42% in 2006 to 28% in 2007.

“Having lived on Dowry Street for 46 years I have seen many changes. All those years ago it was a little village all on its own. The community spirit was there but then, as people died or moved away, we got a different element of neighbours, so the good old community spirit went. Now, I am happy to say, thanks to the hard work from the council’s anti-social behaviour team and police presence, we have got it back.”

Local resident

This reduction has been achieved through a twin track approach deploying prevention and intervention tactics at individual problems as part of a concerted strategy.

Operation Owl

Operation Owl is a partnership response to alcohol related anti social behaviour and criminal damage. A team of ASB and police officers has been set up to patrol hotspot locations over the weekend.

As a result, more than 150 youths had alcohol taken from them, their behaviour was reported to their parents and incidents of anti-social behaviour reduced by 32% over the first three months of the project.

- Since 2005 there has been a considerable reduction in the number of children who say they purchase their own alcohol from 48% in 2005 (the highest rate in the North West) to 21% in 2007 (amongst the lowest in the North West).

Intimidation and fear prevents many victims and witnesses from reporting and providing evidence in relation to anti social behaviour. To address this, we have developed an Anti-Social Behaviour Witness Support Protocol which ensures a quality service to support victims of ASB. As a result people in Oldham are now more confident in reporting or providing evidence, and since 2004 more than 197 Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, 386 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and 53 injunctions have been issued.

Going forward we are increasing our early intervention and prevention services so that young people in extreme difficulty who are displaying anti social and criminal behaviour, have easy access to the right services at the right times to improve their life chances.

Emergency planning

Our emergency command and control arrangements are resilient and monitored at our state of the art Emergency Control Centre.

We have robust business continuity plans in place covering critical service delivery functions and which enable back office functions to support our main statutory work.

Our local arrangements for community tension monitoring were recently cited as good practice in guidance from the Department of Communities & Local Government. However, we are not complacent and are currently working with local partners and Government Office for the North West to develop them further.

Accident prevention

We take action to prevent accidents on many fronts.

In relation to road traffic accidents, we work with the police, other partners and local communities to identify accident black spots and vulnerable groups, which enables us to target our intervention appropriately.

In January 2007, we were awarded £300,000 Government’s Road Safety Partnership Grant to tackle the high incidence of traffic accidents involving children. Our ‘3-7’ project utilises a number of innovative approaches to road safety education in conjunction with partners.

The following illustrate some of the effects of our activities:

- The number of people killed or injured on our roads has reduced by 22.6% from 1,139 in 2004 to 882 in 2007.
- The number of people killed or **seriously** injured on our roads has reduced by 10.2% from 88 in 2004 to 79 in 2007.

Children and young people are educated about road safety and how to respond to other environmental hazards through a number of targeted programmes, including creative work undertaken within Children’s Centres. In addition we have continued to roll out 20mph zones around schools. As a result we have seen a significant reduction in the number of children and young people aged 0-15 killed or seriously injured on our roads of 34% between 1998 and 2006.

Taking account of the population and size of the area, and using the latest 2006 comparisons available for accidents resulting in death or serious injury, this puts us in the top quartile of all unitary authorities.

Working in partnership with the Fire Service and the voluntary sector, Oldham provides a free **Home Fire Risk Assessment** for residents, and as a result of this targeted preventative work, we have reduced accidental dwelling fires by 48%.

In partnership with the Fire Service, we also jointly commissioned £100,000 of work to install domestic sprinklers in supported homes in our borough.

We are also engaged in a range of accident prevention initiatives targeted at the most vulnerable.

We take action to prevent unsafe goods from entering the market place, including managing product recalls and safety testing.

Going forward, we recognise that we need to develop a strategic approach to accident prevention (of all types) and are developing this through our strong relationships with partner agencies.

Stronger communities

Our approach has been based on building a shared sense of **identity**, building individuals' confidence in their own identity as well as respect for that of others; strengthening **engagement** between us and all our communities and to improve engagement **between** all our communities; reducing **inequalities** between communities of place and interest; and **resilience**, working closely with partners both to prevent problems occurring and to manage any issues which threaten good race and community relations.

Our 12 **Community Councils** provide a mechanism for engaging residents in discussing local issues and service delivery. These involve over 140 co-opted resident members.

Our approach to **Neighbourhood Management** is built around six multi-agency Area Action Teams, which support one or more of the Community Councils.

In 2007, we launched **Neighbourhoods Together Green and Clean Agreements** and work is ongoing on the second agreement due to be launched in July. "Peace and Quiet" deals with crime and anti social behaviour issues.

"I find more residents ring or contact me since I got involved in the agreement and I am stopped on the street... The agreement clearly defines the responsibilities of a resident and the service providers."

Local resident

A key feature of our approach to building strong communities is in mainstreaming it into everything we do.

Building Schools for the Future

A key objective of our Building Schools for the Future programme is to create more ethnically diverse secondary schools

Housing Market Renewal

We offer a wide range of housing choices which encourage the creation of more ethnically and socially diverse neighbourhoods.

Work within schools

There is a very wide range of work with children and young people to encourage interaction with people from different backgrounds and respect for difference.

We have been at the forefront in responding to the emerging challenge of violent extremism, and are the lead authority in the region's Preventing Violent Extremism pathfinder programme. This has developed capacity in all 10 districts and built a close working relationship with the Regional Counter-Terrorist Unit. Our Chief Executive also represents the Local Government Association on the Government's national programme board.

Culture is an important vehicle for bringing together people from different generations and backgrounds. Our cultural programme is designed to value the diversity of our borough, and we have also supported communities in organising their own events.

"The Council has maintained a strong focus on community cohesion and effectively promotes access to its services. An impressive array of community and cultural activities are helping to increase participation of minority or potentially isolated groups in the life of the Borough."

Annual Audit Letter 2008

Sport is also used to build relationships. For example, the Sports Development Service ran a "Lets Kick Racism out of football" campaign with primary schools, and designs its holiday sports scheme to bring together young people from different parts of our Borough.

The following illustrate the impact of our activities:

- 54% of Oldham residents think that local people from different backgrounds get on well together in their neighbourhood, (an increase of seven percentage points from 2003).
- The percentage of pupils in ethnically diverse primary schools increased from 26% in 2006 to 35% in 2008.
- The percentage of people who say that they regularly meet and talk with people from different ethnic backgrounds has increased from 60% in 2006 to 83% in 2008.
- 57% of residents took part in unpaid voluntary activity in the last 12 months, and 79% acted as a "good neighbour" by providing one of a range of different types of support for someone other than a relative.
- Resident co-optees of our community councils have taken ownership of **a range of community events** aimed at promoting cohesion in local neighbourhoods.

Going forward we are continuing to promote social contact between people from different ethnic groups, particularly in neighbourhoods where the demographic is changing. We are also conscious that our approach to our BSF programme (see above) will need to be managed carefully.

2.5.3 Healthier communities

Health and well-being in Oldham has been improving and people are living longer than ever before. A consequence of this and other demographic changes will mean that the population is proportionally older, with a larger number living with long term conditions.

The recent **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment** identifies the key challenges in relation to the health and well-being needs of our borough.

Early intervention & prevention

The concept of prevention has become increasingly prominent in health and social care policy. Prevention is seen as a positive intervention to reducing demand for high-intensity, high-cost services. Our focus on community well being has resulted in the modernisation of services that support people in their own homes. Furthermore we are engaged in a **range of joint initiatives** aimed at addressing lifestyle issues and health inequalities.

Promoting better health

Oldham is one of 50 local authorities who has been selected to deliver “**Communities for Health**”, a community based programme that aims to promote good health and reduce health inequalities.

Partnerships & performance

The delivery of individualised services demands a new approach to commissioning, market management and evaluation and monitoring. Oldham is a pilot site for “**National Small Community Programme.**”

Community leadership

The emphasis on preventative health measures within our LAA evidences the importance we place on improving long term health within our borough.

“We are satisfied that although improvement in health outcomes can only be demonstrated over the longer term, sufficient leadership focus is now being given to this important area ...within Oldham Council.”

Annual Audit Letter 2007

The success of our approach is evidenced by:

- We have achieved a 32.8% reduction in teenage conceptions between 1998 and 2006 placing Oldham the 7th most improved in England and the only area in the North West with a ‘Green’ rating.
- Since April 2005 there has been a total of 17,011 self certified quitters using the stop smoking service, provided by Oldham PCT.
- 95% of all our schools are participating in the National Healthy Schools programme, with 62% of schools having achieved Healthy School status (higher than the national average).
- Childhood obesity in Oldham’s under 11 year olds has reduced from 15.9% in 2006/07 to 12.8% in 2007/08.

Our work to prevent ill health and promote healthy lifestyles will not result in improved outcomes for some time to come, but in the meantime, we continue to provide effective services to support the most vulnerable of our communities.

“Adult Social Care continues to deliver good performance. The timeliness and completion of assessments improved once again. Admissions to residential care have reduced and the level of support provided to carers has increased.”

Annual Audit Letter 2008

Achievements to date include:

- An improvement in social care performance rating from 0 stars in 2004 to 2 stars in 2006.
- Being in the unique position of never having had any delayed discharges from hospital.
- Our preventative services enabled 4,454 people to stay in their own homes and avoid residential care (an increase of 1,934 from 2005/06).
- The average number of days taken to provide community equipment (from date of referral) has reduced by 13.5 days in the last year (despite an increase in referrals of 86%).
- The number of breaks for carers has increased from 10,623 in 2004 to 15,252 in 2008.

Our work as national lead on the developing personalisation agenda has improved the lives of numerous vulnerable people in our borough.

Brenda's Story:

“I've got my life back again and with the right help, I manage smashing.”

Gavin's story:

“I want a life, not a service. Living with quality doesn't have to cost the earth... I cannot control the condition, but I can control the support.”

Going forward we look forward to seeing improved health and life expectancy as a result of the multi-agency investment to address the range of health issues in our borough.

2.5.4 Older people

Strategic approach

Older People are a diverse group, which extends beyond age to encompass ethnicity, health and well-being, income, leisure interests and life experience. The challenge for Oldham is to construct a new kind of service model that supports independence rather than enforces dependence, and responds to need rather than age.

Our approach to meeting the needs of an ageing population (to be formalised in our Ageing Population Strategy) has been informed by a number of ongoing mechanisms for engaging with older people.

Through these mechanisms we have identified that what matters most to older people in Oldham is to have their say, to be financially secure, to be secure at home and in the communities where they live, to be able to get about and access services and activities, to be free from ill health, but to have access to care services in the community where needed, and for those services to be seamless and joined up.

Our strategy will therefore set out our objectives in relation to Oldham's over 50s as being to:

- Ensure that older people have equality of opportunity and are able to participate in civic life and the community.
- Ensure that older people have access to financial and economic resources to prevent exclusion and isolation.
- Ensure that older people have a decent and secure life in their home and community.
- Ensure that older people have access to services and facilities that meet their needs and priorities.
- Deliver integrated services that improves people's health, well-being and quality of life.
- Ensure that we work with partner agencies to improve services and the quality of life for older people living in Oldham.

We will achieve this with the active engagement and support of our Older People's champion.

Meaningful engagement

Our engagement with older people has been through a number of well established mechanisms, including:

- Forum 4 Age
- COSMOS Grandparent project
- Area committees
- Tenants Groups
- Carers Federation
- Project based consultation

Furthermore, local people are encouraged to volunteer in their local communities.

Range of services

Our approach to older people has led us to provide a **varied range of services** which meet the many and varied needs of Oldham's over 50s.

In partnership with Age Concern we have enhanced and increased the range of services to enable people to remain in their own homes, including a "Handy Man Service" to help with small repairs, "Where Can I Find" directory, a shop for aids and assisted living, and a community café.

Life story:

This multi agency project strives to promote personalised, dignified care for people with dementia and similar conditions by providing information for people who come into contact with the individual via a life story book.

Achievements to date are evidenced by:

- Improvements to parks and open spaces including the provision of bowling greens, cafés and toilets have resulted in greater use of the parks by older people.
- Satisfaction with parks and open spaces in the over 65s increased from 58% in 2003 to 72% in 2006.
- Our PFI 2 (the largest PFI sheltered housing scheme in the country) will lever in an initial investment of £100m and total investment of £400m over the life of the project and deliver 1,612 renovated or new homes for the elderly, including eight extra care schemes, one of which was completed in May 2008, and the second one scheduled for completion in August 2008
- Since 2006, an additional 1,004 people have been helped to live at home as a result of the Assistive Technologies pilot within the Adaptations Service.

Although much has been achieved over the last few years, we recognise that working in partnership with others, services can be developed further to improve the life-chances for our ageing population.

For further information, please contact Joanne Platt, Assistant Director (Strategy & Performance) on joanne.platt@oldham.gov.uk