

Wigan

Area Assessment (Summary version)

Dated 9 December 2009



oneplace

for an independent overview
of local public services

Wigan at a glance

This independent assessment by six inspectorates sets out how well local public services are tackling the major issues in Wigan. It says how well they are delivering better results for local people and how likely these are to improve in future. If, and only if, our assessment shows that the following special circumstances are met in relation to a major issue, we use flags to highlight our judgements. We use a green flag to highlight where others can learn from outstanding achievements or improvements or an innovation that has very promising prospects of success. We use a red flag to highlight where we have significant concerns about results and future prospects that are not being tackled adequately. This means that local partners need to do something more or different to improve these prospects.

Green flags - exceptional performance or innovation that others can learn from

No green flags have been identified for Wigan

Red flags - significant concerns, action needed

No red flags have been identified for Wigan

The local area

The borough of Wigan is one of ten metropolitan districts in Greater Manchester. Over 300,000 people live in the borough. It lies in the centre of the old South Lancashire Coalfield, midway between Liverpool and Manchester. The borough is divided into 10 townships, each having their own distinct identity.

Almost all traditional industry has gone with these areas being regenerated into housing, retail and leisure destinations.

The population is changing, people from Eastern Europe are now moving to some parts of the borough and the number of elderly people is expected to grow significantly over the next few years.

Wigan's public services have agreed the following challenges that they need to tackle:

An ambitious community; strong skills that meet business needs and supports a sustainable local economy where people can get round more easily and live in affordable homes.

A strong community that provides positive activities for all with improved

community confidence, participation and cohesion; safe and sustainable neighbourhoods.

Living longer with a better quality of life; addressing inequality

Improved aspirations, attainment and life chances for children and young people (especially those in most disadvantaged communities)

The next section tells you how Wigan's public services are doing in each of their local priority areas.

How is Wigan doing?

An ambitious community; strong skills that meet business needs and supports a sustainable local economy where people can get round more easily and live in affordable homes.

Partners work well to support and encourage the local economy. Connecting more Wigan people to jobs is a bigger challenge, and traffic congestion is proving to be a difficult issue to resolve.

Employers who want to set up in Wigan have good access to a skilled workforce. At the end of 2008, there were more professional, managerial and skilled jobs in Wigan than ever before. And more people of working age were employed compared with similar areas.

It is more of a challenge for the Partnership to ensure all Wigan people have access to skills and jobs that will improve their income. Nearly one in four local adults who could be in work are not.

The Partnership has responded to the recession by considering how to reduce the impact on local people and businesses. It set up "Beat the Credit Crunch" - online support which signposts services such as debt counselling, employment and business support.

Income levels for older people are not increasing. More positively, fewer children live in poverty than many other places in the region. And work to reduce fuel poverty will also have a positive impact on the quality of life within the borough - for families and for older people.

Housing in Wigan is improving. There are more homes of a decent standard, they are more affordable and most are energy efficient. Actions to prevent homelessness are effective. The number of homeless people in Wigan has significantly reduced.

Roads in Wigan are busy at peak times and because of the congestion journey

speeds are slow. People who live in Wigan say that traffic congestion is one of the top three things they would like tackled.

A strong community that provides positive activities for all with improved community confidence, participation and cohesion; safe and sustainable neighbourhoods.

Progress against this priority is mixed.

Crime in Wigan is lower than in similar areas, but youth crime is higher. Almost every measure of crime continues to get better - with only robbery being higher than average.

Alcohol misuse is an issue in Wigan - residents say that drunk and rowdy behaviour is a problem. Many local people drink more than the recommended safe limit. Too many hospital admissions are linked to alcohol, alcohol-related diseases are becoming more common and much crime and anti-social behaviour in Wigan is alcohol-related.

Partners are taking effective action to tackle the alcohol related crime problem, but are having less influence on people's drinking habits.

Schools and other settings provide a safe environment for young people, and most of the borough's looked after children are in stable placements.

The Partnership is well placed to encourage a stronger sense of community by bringing people from all walks of life together. Plans and funding are now in place, but local people were not involved at an early stage. We will be interested next year to see what progress is being made on the plan.

Partners are investing in community facilities, which should benefit teenagers and adults. Leigh Sports Village and the sixth-form college are now complete.

Wigan has more litter, graffiti and fly-posting than many similar areas. Work to make the borough more attractive has made a difference in some places. But it is hard work to keep standards high as people's behaviour isn't changing.

Wigan residents create more waste per household, and recycle less. Waste recycling and composting has increased, but not by as much as other areas. Most residents are happy with their waste collection, but would like doorstep recycling arrangements to improve.

Not many people in Wigan volunteer for community and civic activities, compared with similar areas. Partners could help to change this by making it easier for people to volunteer and to see the potential longer-term benefits.

Living longer with a better quality of life; addressing inequality

Improving the health of people living in Wigan is a key challenge for partners, but there are signs of improvement. Recent information shows that residents' life expectancy is improving, but this is different depending on where you live in the borough. Partners have worked hard to introduce initiatives to improve people's health, such as find and treat which identifies residents at risk of health issues and this among other projects is contributing to this improvement. Other improvements include free swimming for all residents and the good promotion of healthy living in schools.

Improved aspirations, attainment and life chances for children and young people (especially those in most disadvantaged communities)

The Partners are doing well in this priority area, but the incidence of teenage pregnancy remains stubbornly high.

Young people in Wigan are well supported. Their views are considered and further education provision is good. Partners are working well to get young people into education, employment and training. But high numbers of teenagers get pregnant and this has a significant impact on their life chances.

The support for children to achieve well at school and to enjoy their education is good or better. The provision for making a positive contribution is good in most schools and settings but there are some relative weaknesses in children's homes. Half of childcare settings which were inspected this year could do more to encourage young children to become active participants in society as they get older. Outcomes are generally in line with national averages although the level of substance misuse by young people is higher than in similar areas.

Support for vulnerable children, to improve their prospects has got better. A new centre has opened which provides residential and support services for children with severe learning disabilities. Support to help young people achieve economic wellbeing is generally very good.

CAA looks at how well local public services, working together, are meeting the needs of the people they serve. It's a joint assessment made by a group of independent watchdogs about the performance of local public services, and how likely they are to meet local priorities. From 9 December you will find the results of Comprehensive Area Assessment on the Oneplace website - <http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk/>

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