Case Study

Leicester City Council: Data sharing workshop and data sharing agreement

In order to encourage closer shared working and increasing involvement from external experts as local government seeks to make better use of its data, the LGA offered modest grant opportunities in 2016/17 to support councils to buy in additional expert support to assist them in progressing local data projects.

Braunstone Blues is a multi-agency early intervention project consisting of a team from each of the three emergency services (fire and rescue, police and ambulance) operating in the deprived Braunstone area in the City of Leicester. The team's purpose is to reduce the increasing reliance and demand on emergency services, by educating and supporting the local community through a programme of visits and organised events about alternative support services.

The partnership team was keen to engage with more local services including health partners and other local authorities to make the best use of data and to identify the underlying causes for individuals calling the blue light services. The aim was to provide the most suitable service provision or referral to third sector agencies and ensure early intervention. Initially, information sharing was between the fire and police services using incident data to identify high demand areas, but it lacked the detail showing underlying causes.

The council received a grant from the LGA Local Data Experts Programme (LDEP) to work with an external data expert from the Centre of Excellence for Information Sharing. The expert ran a workshop with stakeholders and addressed the existing perceived legal and cultural barriers to data sharing and also worked individually with them to produce a signed information sharing agreement.

Outputs and outcomes

External validation, clarity and facilitation was needed from an outside data expert in order to give partners confidence about the information they could legally share and therefore to progress the project. It was felt that the best way to do this was through a stakeholder workshop run by the data expert which would address perceived barriers to data sharing. It was also hoped that providing key stakeholders with the opportunity to connect and network together could progress this work more rapidly.

The workshop activities that the data expert ran were well organised and encouraged new ideas and ways of thinking around data sharing. The focus on removing barriers from an organisational and cultural point of view was helpful as it allowed stakeholders to concentrate on the end goal that they jointly wanted to achieve and meant that legal barriers became less of an issue.

The activities focussed on developing an appreciation of the benefits of data sharing to service users and agencies including highlighting the positive outcomes of developing a bigger picture through information sharing. Participants also addressed the challenges and solutions around data sharing.

Issues and challenges

There were challenges in moving the project forward due to concerns from partners around the legal issues of data sharing. To progress the project, partners were also required to sign up to an information sharing agreement specifying the legal basis for the sharing of this. The project team needed an independent expert to co-ordinate this work, explain any legal issues and to ensure the information sharing agreement was drawn up, fully understood and signed.

In addition there were difficulties for partners in meeting deadlines and targets due to competing pressures, and information sharing work was at times becoming a lesser priority for some within the multi-agency partnership, due to other demands.

Impacts

The short term impact of using the data expert has brought partners together and broken down perceived cultural and legal concerns and barriers allowing the project to move forward. Data processing agreements are now in place as well as an information sharing agreements. As a result, data is now being shared more effectively and work is being undertaken jointly by partners.

Longer term it is hoped that the effectiveness of data sharing will make an impact in reducing repeat callouts for blue light services by specific vulnerable households. Not only will this result in delivering efficiencies/savings for the blue light services in terms of reducing callouts but there may be service improvement as vehicles and crews are freed up to respond to other emergency callouts more quickly. Early intervention work with those vulnerable individuals and providing help and a preventative strategy could also improve their health, wellbeing and quality of life and reduce costs longer term.

Additionally it is hoped that more health agencies and other local authorities will participate and encouragingly one local GP practice has just signed up to the agreement. Going forward the extent to which the information sharing agreement is adapted and used for subsequent projects will also be a measure of its success.

For more information about the Braunstone Blues Partnership visit:
http://informationsharing.org.uk/clients/braunstoneblues/

Contact: lynn.wyeth@leicester.gov.uk

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