

Sheffield City Council

Organisational Assessment

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of local public services

Sheffield City Council

Overall, Sheffield City Council performs well

Managing performance	3 out of 4
Use of resources	3 out of 4
Managing finances	3 out of 4
Governing the business	2 out of 4
Managing resources	3 out of 4

Description of scores:

1. An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements, Performs Poorly
2. An organisation that meets only minimum requirements, Performs Adequately
3. An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements, Performs Well
4. An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements, Performs Excellently

Summary

Overall Sheffield City Council performs well. It has a clear focus about what it is trying to achieve and this links closely with the overall priorities for Sheffield. It works well with partners to deliver these priorities and make things better for local people. Some services perform very well including adult social care. Most other services are reasonably good. Those that are performing less well including how the Council manages peoples benefit payments, are improving.

The Council makes decisions about services based on a good understanding of what the problems are. This also includes what people think. It is good at monitoring how well it is doing and taking action where things are not going to plan.

Sheffield scores 3 out of 4 for managing its performance. The Council performs well in key services it provides for adults with social care needs and older people and some services for children. The Council is working well on its own and with partners to improve things for local people and also for more vulnerable sections of the community. Crime and anti-social behaviour is reducing and the health of the local population is improving. The Council can show things are getting better more quickly for some people who do less well because of their circumstances. This includes increasing life expectancy and access to employment opportunities and improving educational qualifications.

Some of the Council's services do not perform well or meet the needs of local people. This includes children's educational achievements and services to help homeless people. There are good signs for future improvement in these areas. The Council has a good understanding of what the problems are and what to do to make things better. It can show most of these weaker areas are improving. For example, educational achievement appears to be rising following targeted action to improve standards for all school children.

The Council is working with partners to tackle the major problems facing the local economy. It is effective in encouraging local enterprise, and supporting people of working age to improve their skills and qualifications. In the last year there has been a large rise in the number of people with all levels of qualification. It needs now to focus on those people with no qualifications who often struggle to find jobs as a result. The Council was quick to respond to the recession and work with other partners to support the people and businesses of Sheffield. This has included telling people about benefits available, helping them learn new skills and speeding up paying its suppliers.

Ofsted has rated the Council's children's services as adequate. Fewer than half of all children get good GCSE results; children in care and those from minority communities do much worse. The Council is tackling these long term problems of under-achievement. Information supplied by the Council from the most recent GCSE results suggests this action is having a positive impact including for vulnerable children. There is good progress in helping young people make a successful move into adulthood. For example, fewer young people are entering the youth justice system for the first time and more are taking part in suitable education, employment or training.

The Care Quality Commission has rated the Council's adult social care as performing excellently. The Council works with health partners and voluntary organisations in planning and obtaining services that are needed for older and more vulnerable people. Together they make sure that services give value for money and are properly suited to meet the needs of people who need care or other help. People using these services are also properly involved in deciding how they are delivered.

Housing is an area where further focus is needed to deliver better outcomes for local people. Too many people live in public sector housing which does not meet basic standards set by the Government. The Council won't finish this modernisation work until at least 2014, 4 years after the national deadline. It is also too difficult to afford to buy a house in Sheffield for many people compared with other areas in the region.

The Council sends relatively little waste to landfill sites. Recycling rates though similar to elsewhere should improve significantly with improved facilities planned for the medium term. Local emissions are high compared with other big cities. The Council is leading Sheffield's response to tackling the climate change agenda. Together with partners it is taking targeted actions to reduce emissions in key areas including business and transport. It is too soon to assess the impact of this work.

The Council scores 3 out of 4 for use of resources. It plans and manages its finances well and has a strong approach to improving efficiency. It has re-invested savings in priority areas including education. Resident views of local services and facilities are generally favourable compared with those in other places. Costs for most Council's services generally compare favourably to similar authorities providing similar levels of performance or customer satisfaction.

About Sheffield City Council

Sheffield is a large urban area in South Yorkshire. The 'Steel City' has a proud industrial tradition but in recent years has looked to broaden into other business sectors. The population has grown to around 530,000 and is quickly becoming much more ethnically diverse. Overall Sheffield is a relatively deprived area, although less so than elsewhere in South Yorkshire. Compared with other areas, more unemployed people are looking for work and earnings are lower for those in work. House prices are higher in Sheffield than other South Yorkshire areas and more households are moving into Sheffield for employment and education than are moving out. The health of people in Sheffield has generally improved and is now close to the England average. But there are large differences in people's life experiences of health, education, work, and crime.

Organisational assessment

Leading Sheffield's transformation

The Council recognises the important role it plays in growing the local economy. This is needed to bring the wealth and opportunity to all local people that are more available in other places. The number of people starting up businesses in Sheffield is low compared with other areas. The Council's Make it Your Business (BiG) programme is tackling barriers to enterprise. It is providing support including to those people who don't normally run businesses. Business start-ups are increasing and ahead of Council targets and a greater number are being started by women (40 per cent) and the black and minority ethnic communities (21 per cent). Fewer businesses in Sheffield appear to be failing during the recession.

The Council is also working well with partners to help make it easier for local firms to bid for work with public sector bodies in Sheffield. In a short space of time over 2,000 firms have signed up to the 'Buy4Sheffield' programme which cuts paperwork involved in supplying goods and services. It gives help and full access to upcoming contracts and business. The Council buys from a wide range of organisations. It is good at taking into account other important factors when it decides who to buy from. For example, major decisions with big national and international companies include making sure local firms are used for some work or vulnerable people are given an opportunity to work. This helps to make sure that the local economy and people benefits from the Council's spending.

The Council working with partners has a good understanding and a clear approach to tackling long term local economic problems; particularly a relatively high number of people who have not worked for a long time and a local workforce with relatively few qualifications compared with similar places. There are positive outcomes from this work. People of working age are improving their qualifications. In the last year there has been a large rise in the number of people with all levels of qualification. This is now ahead of the England average and fewer local employers find the lack of skills is a real problem. The Council must focus on making sure that there is a greater fall in the number with no qualifications to give these people better employment opportunities.

There are some positive outcomes in developing the City's economic capacity

and attractiveness for inward investment. The knowledge and creative sectors of the economy are developing well. Significant projects have been delivered including the Electric Works and Digital Campus and lettings are holding up. The Council has successfully managed to keep major commercial and retail developments alive during the recession.

Promoting Sheffield as a city to visit and invest in is important for developing the City's economy and reputation. Key measures such as the number of people visiting the City centre have fallen due to the recession. But there are good longer term prospects. The Council and partners are developing a city-wide joined-up approach to marketing and promoting the city. Sheffield has also recently successfully kept or gained major events including the World Snooker Championship and 2009 BBC Sports Personality of the Year.

Vibrant, safe and strong communities

People like living in Sheffield. They get involved in their communities about as much as people living elsewhere. This includes doing voluntary work or helping in community groups and making decisions about what happens in their area. The Council is keen to strengthen communities by encouraging people to get more involved where they live and the decisions that affect their neighbourhoods. It is introducing Community Assemblies across the City which will allow people locally to help set priorities and budgets for services including libraries, parks and street cleaning. These assemblies have an important goal to make sure that everyone in an area is able to contribute to how local services are provided. The Council is working to promote volunteering. It is also reviewing with partners how it uses and works with voluntary organisations in future to deliver better outcomes for local people.

Sheffield residents generally think people from different backgrounds get on well together. The Council is working well with partners to make sure that this continues and gets better still. There is a clear approach - 'Made in Sheffield' - which includes challenging myths and misunderstandings about how different people are treated.

The Council works well with Police to reduce crime in Sheffield. Rates of domestic burglary, vehicle theft and assault and violent crime are falling. Overall crime is broadly in line with other major cities. Residents think that the Council and Police are tackling crime and anti-social behaviour more effectively than in many similar cities. Anti-social behaviour is reducing. There are good examples of targeting those areas at highest risk. For example, anti-social behaviour has fallen by 10 per cent in Parsons Cross.

Too many people living in public sector housing in Sheffield are in homes that do not meet basic standards set by the Government. Tenants elsewhere have generally had their homes modernised more quickly. 30 per cent of houses still need to be updated. Although houses will be improved to a better 'Sheffield' standard, the Council won't finish this work until 2014, 4 years after the national deadline. Tenants are generally getting happier but are still not as satisfied as those in many other places. They have particular problems with noisy neighbours, litter and the speed and quality of repairs.

It is difficult to afford to buy a house in Sheffield for many people. Housing is less affordable in Sheffield compared with other areas in the region. The

Council will not meet its targets to deliver 1,215 new affordable homes by 2011. The recession has delayed progress but the Council is making full use of national funding programmes and working with developers, banks and building societies to minimise impact.

Protecting and enhancing the environment

There is a strong commitment to improve the local environment. The Council is leading the City's response to address the climate change agenda. This is important. Sheffield has high carbon emissions. It performs poorly compared with other major cities.

There is a clear and well-thought out plan to reduce emissions in Sheffield. But plans are very challenging - to cut the Council's emissions by 30 per cent by 2012 and the City's emissions by 30 per cent by 2020. The Council has worked out its own carbon footprint and knows which of its operations produce the most carbon. It is acting to cut emissions in key areas including housing, transport and business. But it is too soon to assess the impact of the actions currently being taken.

Sheffield is one of the best places in the country for reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill sites - less than 20 per cent of the City's waste is buried. Recycling has increased a lot over the last few years and is now similar to other major cities. Although residents are generally satisfied with the Council's refuse collection service they feel that recycling facilities could be better. The Council is promoting a range of actions including reusable nappies and carrier bags. New recycling facilities will become available from 2010/11 which should improve things further.

Local people are happier with Sheffield's parks, countryside and open spaces than people in other areas. Children are less happy and the Council is increasing the number of play areas in the city over the next two years to improve facilities and help encourage a more active lifestyle. The Council with partners has recently agreed a good long term plan about how it will manage and improve the open spaces in Sheffield over the next 20 years. This work is properly joined up with other important priorities that need to be delivered including reducing crime and improving healthiness.

The Council is acting to deal with longstanding resident and users' concerns about congestion and the quality of the City's roads and highway systems. It is well advanced in planning one of the largest highway maintenance schemes in the country. This should to make it easier for people to travel for work or leisure. However, this will take several years to complete due to the size and complexity of this work.

Sheffield's roads are getting safer with fewer people including children getting killed or seriously injured. However, road safety is still relatively poor compared with other major towns and cities. The Council is focusing on raising awareness and training. This includes expanding the level of pedestrian and cycle training for children.

Supporting people to be healthy and independent

The Council is helping people to remain independently at home and also help reduce the need for later more intensive support. This improves the quality of peoples lives and also saves money. The Council helps people with more complex needs to live independently. It has improved the assessment and support it gives to people discharged from hospital which is better than many other similar councils.

The Council works with health partners and voluntary organisations in planning and obtaining services that are needed for older and more vulnerable people. Together they make sure that services give value for money and are properly suited to meet the needs of people who need care or other help. People using these services are also properly involved in deciding how they are delivered.

The Council and Primary Care Trust are working to improve the health of all Sheffield residents with a particular focus on those who are least healthy. There is a good range of activity which is targeted in the most deprived areas of the City. This work is showing positive results. Differences in life expectancy between the richest and poorest wards are declining.

Participation in sport and physical activity is relatively low in Sheffield. This is improving and the Council is supporting the broader public health agenda in the city by extending the number of events and programmes for both children and young people. There is a focus on the health and physical needs of older people. This includes activities in sheltered accommodation and care homes. The first 'Care Home Olympics' was held recently at the Don Valley Stadium. People in care homes can get involved in a good range of social, leisure and learning activities.

Employment is a key way of involving vulnerable people fully in society. The Council is improving the support it gives people with mental health problems or learning disabilities to find a job which was previously a problem area. Not all vulnerable people are well catered for at the moment. The service provided to homeless people is not good enough. Better help is needed to support more vulnerable people to find and keep a home. The Council is acting to improve performance and services are being reorganised. There are some positive signs. Family use of Bed and Breakfast is reducing and there are new measures to help prevent people from becoming homeless. However, it is too early to tell whether these changes will make things better in the long term.

A better life for children and young people

Many children in Sheffield have generally not done as well getting their educational qualifications as children in other places. Younger children do achieve in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage elsewhere. But overall performance at both Key Stage 2 (7-11 year olds) and Key Stage 4 (14-16 year olds) is below the national level and comparatively low. Fewer than half of all children get at least 5 higher grade GCSEs including Maths and English. Children from certain minority ethnic groups achieve even less on average. The Council is tackling the problem of under-achievement seriously. It has invested more money, recruited many new head teachers and teachers and focused on making standards better for all children in the city.

There are promising signs of improvement. Provisional information supplied by the Council suggests that the most recent GCSE results from 2009 show some pleasing gains, including in some of the worst performing schools. Vulnerable children are beginning to do relatively better. Children are attending school better and the rate of permanent exclusions is low. But behaviour in secondary schools is relatively poor compared with elsewhere in the country. The educational achievement of Sheffield's children is still a major concern and the Council must keep up the pace of improvement.

The Council is working well with its partners to improve children's health. It has a good understanding of the main problems - a high rate of teenagers who get pregnant and an increasing number of overweight children. It is targeting funding and action where it will have greatest impact. It is making sure it links with other work to support children and families and to think about the needs of the child as a whole. There are some promising results and the numbers of pregnant teenagers is starting to fall. The Council is keeping a clear focus on making sure these areas continue to improve. The Council is also making good progress in improving the rate of breastfeeding of babies.

Most children in Sheffield have a safe environment to grow up in. The Council and its partners act quickly whenever there is a risk that a child might be harmed but they need to improve consistency in making early assessments. Children who need closer protection have their situation reviewed regularly and there is good care for those who experience or witness domestic abuse. The Council's children's homes are good and its services for adopting and fostering children perform well though private fostering is less good.

There is good progress in helping young people make a successful move into adulthood. The numbers of young people entering the youth justice system for the first time are falling and are now broadly the same as elsewhere. More young offenders - and young people generally - are taking part in suitable education, employment or training.

Putting the customer first and achieving better value for money

The Council's objectives and priorities are clearly drawn from the wider Sheffield City Strategy. They have been drawn up following discussions with partners and local communities. They take into account local concerns such as crime together with local and national priorities. New groups across Sheffield called Community Assemblies will give people a greater say about how services are provided locally. They will be able to help form priorities and budgets for street cleaning and other services.

The Council makes decisions about services based on a good understanding of what the problems are. This also includes what people think. It consults well with local people on big issues including how to tackle climate change. People who use services are able to feed into how they are run. This includes children and young people who have helped inform plans through wide participation in the 'Tell Us' survey. There is a good understanding of different communities and those less able to make their views known. The Council acts with partners where there are problems or gaps for example to make sure minority ethnic views are properly represented.

The Council is providing good leadership for the City and the wider South Yorkshire area for key issues. It was quick to recognise the start of the recession and work with partners to try to help people and businesses in Sheffield. It has been leading work in South Yorkshire to reduce the number of people not working and help vulnerable people to find jobs. This work has had an impact. Within Sheffield the Council works well with partners to deliver wider City objectives and priorities. Together the partners have reviewed and strengthened how they work together. The prospects for making things better for local people are good.

The Sheffield public's views of local services and facilities are generally favourable compared with those in other places. Costs for most Council's services generally compare favourably to similar authorities providing similar levels of performance or customer satisfaction.

The Council plans and manages carefully how it uses its money and other resources. It has a good approach to getting more for its money and can show it makes savings and improves efficiency. It is able to use these savings to put extra funds to important priorities including education and improving the state of the City's roads. Although council tax rates are relatively high, in recent years increases have been much lower than elsewhere. The ability to manage its finances well gives some confidence that the Council will be better placed to cope with the much tougher financial situation over the next few years.

The Council has a track record of performing well in key service areas including social care and services for vulnerable older people. It has received good external inspection results. It is making good progress in improving some of the areas which are not doing so well. This includes how it manages and pays benefits to people and the number of Sheffield children who get good educational qualifications. These improvements need to be continued.

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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