

Accounts and Audit Committee Progress and Update Report for Trafford Council

23 November 2016

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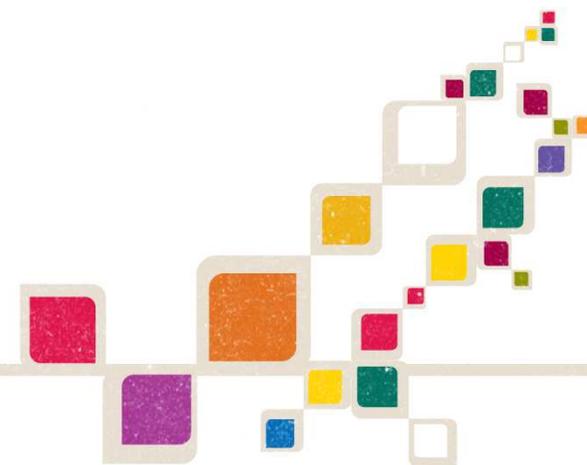
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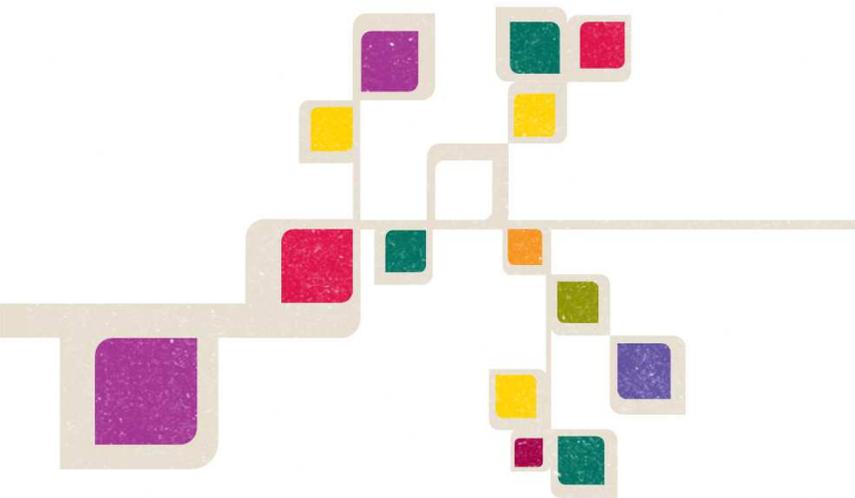
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The contents of this report relate only to the matters which have come to our attention, which we believe need to be reported to you as part of our audit process. It is not a comprehensive record of all the relevant matters, which may be subject to change, and in particular we cannot be held responsible to you for reporting all of the risks which may affect your business or any weaknesses in your internal controls. This report has been prepared solely for your benefit and should not be quoted in whole or in part without our prior written consent. We do not accept any responsibility for any loss occasioned to any third party acting, or refraining from acting on the basis of the content of this report, as this report was not prepared for, nor intended for, any other purpose.



Contents



Contents	Page
Introduction	4
Progress at November 2016	5
Emerging issues and developments:	
Sector issues	8
Technical update	11
Publications and events	14

Introduction

This paper provides the Accounts and Audit Committee with a report on progress in delivering our responsibilities as your external auditors.

Members of the Accounts and Audit Committee may be interested in our Greater Manchester Health Pioneer event which we are running on 24 November 2016 – see page 16.

To register go to <https://sites-grant-thornton.vuturvevx.com/55/1031/landing-pages/your-vip-manchester-live-invitation.asp>

Members of the Accounts and Audit Committee can find further useful material on our website www.grantthornton.co.uk, where we have a section dedicated to our work in the public sector. Here you can download copies of our publications:

- Innovation in public financial management (December 2015); www.grantthornton.global/en/insights/articles/innovation-in-public-financial-management/
- Knowing the Ropes – Audit Committee; Effectiveness Review (October 2015); www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/knowing-the-ropes--audit-committee-effectiveness-review-2015/
- Your Generation: Making decentralised energy happen <http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/making-decentralised-energy-happen/>
- Reforging local government: Summary findings of financial health checks and governance reviews (December 2015) <http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/reforging-local-government/>,
- Culture of Place: A copy of the report and a collection of short videos can be found on our website at: <http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/culture-of-place/>

Members and officers may also be interested in our recent webinars:

Alternative delivery models: Interview with Helen Randall of Trowers and Hamlins, discussing LATCs and JVs in local government. <http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/qa-on-local-authority-alternative-delivery-models/>

Cyber security in the public sector: Our short video outlines questions for public sector organisations to ask in defending against cyber crime <http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/cyber-security-in-the-public-sector/>

If you would like further information on any items in this briefing, or would like to register with Grant Thornton to receive regular email updates on issues that are of interest to you, please contact either your Engagement Lead or Engagement Manager.



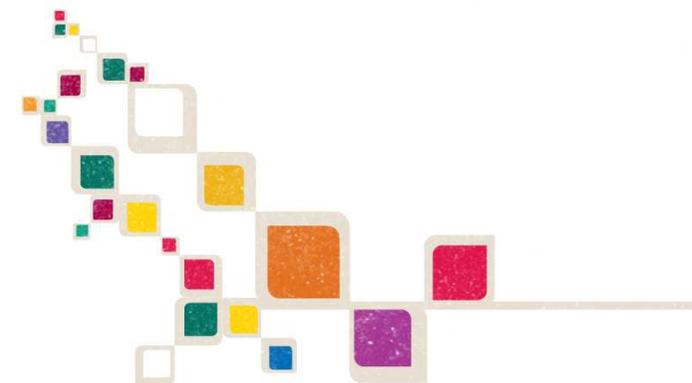
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Progress at 23 November 2016



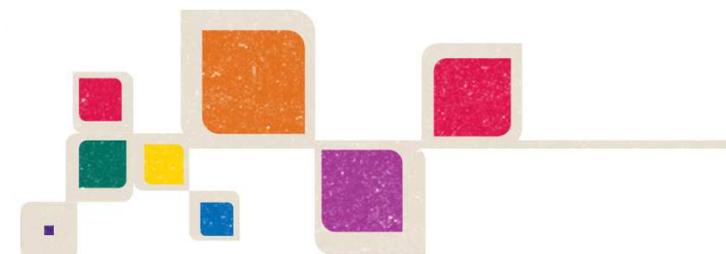
 **Progress against plan**
On track

 **Opinion and VfM conclusion**
The deadline is 30 September 2017

 **Outputs delivered and planned**
Fee letter delivered , Audit Plan, Progress Reports, Audit Findings Report and Annual Audit Letter planned

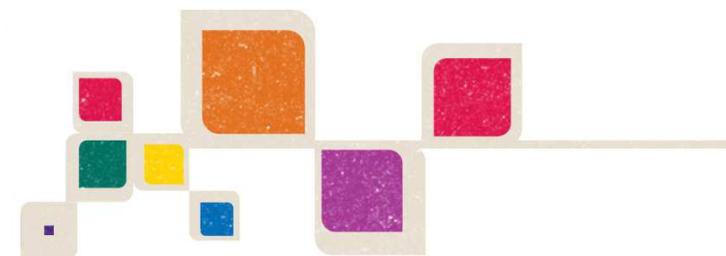
2016/17 work	Planned date	Completed	Comments
<p>Fee Letter We are required to issue a 'Planned fee letter for 2016/17' by the end of April 2016</p>	April 2016	Completed to plan	We issued the fee letter for 2016/17 in April 2016, with no change to the fee proposed. This was presented to the Accounts and Audit Committee in June 2016.
<p>Accounts Audit Plan We are required to issue a detailed accounts audit plan to the Council setting out our proposed approach in order to give an opinion on the Council's 2016-17 financial statements. We also inform you of any subsequent changes to our audit approach.</p>	March 2017	Not started	We will present this to the Accounts and Audit Committee in March 2017.
<p>Interim accounts audit Our interim fieldwork visit includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • updating our review of the Council's control environment • updating our understanding of financial systems • review of Internal Audit reports on core financial systems • early work on emerging accounting issues • early substantive testing 	From January 2017	Not started	<p>We will agree a detailed timeframe for our work with finance officers.</p> <p>We have agreed to schedule early review of some revised technical areas including the opening group accounts restatement and Highways Network assets valuations.</p>
<p>Final accounts audit Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit of the 2016-17 financial statements • proposed opinion on the Council's accounts 	June - August 2017 (timing to be agreed)	Not started	<p>We have held early discussions with finance officers on some key technical areas of account and will agree a detailed timeframe for the 2016/17 audit .</p> <p>We will report the findings from our final accounts work to the Accounts and Audit Committee prior to the statutory deadline.</p>

Progress at 23 November 2016



2016/17 work	Planned date	Completed	Comments
<p>Value for Money (VfM) conclusion</p> <p>Auditors are required to reach their statutory conclusion on arrangements to secure VFM based on the following overall evaluation criterion: <i>In all significant respects, the audited body had proper arrangements to ensure it took properly informed decisions and deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people.</i></p> <p>The three sub criteria for assessment to be able to give a conclusion overall are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informed decision making • Sustainable resource deployment • Working with partners and other third parties 	<p>From Jan - August 2017</p>	<p>Not started</p>	<p>We will carry out an initial risk assessment to determine our approach and report this in our Audit Plan. Our focus will be around risks in respect of the financial position and longer term financial sustainability.</p> <p>We will report our work in the Audit Findings Report and give our value for money conclusion by the deadline of 30 September 2017.</p>
<p>Annual Audit Letter</p> <p>Our Annual Audit Letter summarises the key findings arising from the work that we have carried out for the year ended 31 March 2017.</p>	<p>October 2017</p>	<p>Not started</p>	

Progress at 23 November 2016



2015/16 work	Completed	Comments
Housing Benefit Subsidy claim 2015/16 We are required to review and certify the claim by 30 November 2016.	On track for certification November 2016	We are currently completing our work on the claim and are on track to meet the deadline of 30 November 2016.
Annual Audit Letter Our Annual Audit Letter summarises the key findings arising from the work that we have carried out for the year ended 31 March 2016.	Completed	The Annual Audit Letter for 2015/16 is included within the agenda papers

Grant Thornton Sector Issues



Financial sustainability of local authorities: capital expenditure and resourcing

National Audit Office

According to the NAO, Local authorities in England have maintained their overall capital spending levels but face pressure to meet debt servicing costs and to maintain investment levels in their existing asset bases.

Since 2010-11, local authorities have faced less pressure on their resources to support capital expenditure as compared to revenue. Although local authorities' revenue spending power fell by over 25 per cent in real terms from 2010-11 to 2015-16, the NAO estimates that capital grants to authorities marginally increased from 2010-11 to 2014-15, (excluding education).

Capital spending by authorities increased by more than five per cent in real terms overall between 2010-11 and 2014-15, but this is uneven across local authorities and service areas. Almost half of authorities reduced their capital spending. Most service areas saw an increase in capital spend with the exception of culture and leisure: capital spending fell by 22 per cent overall in this area.

The NAO's report, published on 15 June, found that authorities face a growing challenge to continue long-term investment in their existing assets. Total spending has remained stable, but increasingly capital activities are focused on 'invest to save' and growth schemes that cover their costs or have potential to deliver a revenue return. Many areas of authorities' asset management programmes do not meet these criteria and are now seen as a lower priority.

The report also notes that local authorities' debt servicing costs have grown as a proportion of revenue spending as revenue resources have fallen. A quarter of single-tier and county councils now spend the equivalent of 10 per cent or more of their revenue expenditure on debt servicing, with metropolitan district councils being particularly exposed.

According to the NAO, DCLG has rightly focused on revenue issues in the 2015 Spending Review but in future reviews will need to focus more on capital. The Department is confident from its engagement with authorities that revenue pressures are their main concern, however the NAO's analysis demonstrates that capital costs exert significant and growing pressure on revenue resources.

The full report is available at:

<https://www.nao.org.uk/report/financial-sustainability-of-local-authorities-capital-expenditure-and-resourcing/>

The changing face of Corporate Reporting

We have established a global network of public sector auditors and advisors to share good practice and to provide informed solutions to the corporate reporting challenges our clients face.

We were fortunate to have the CEO of the IIRC speak at our most recent meeting. Integrated Reporting, <IR>, is a new approach to corporate reporting and it is building a world-wide following in both the public and private sectors.

In the commercial sector, <IR> has led to improvements in business decision making, the understanding of risks and opportunities as well as better collaborative thinking by boards about goals and targets.

<IR> is based on integrated thinking that results in a report by an organisation about sustainable value creation. It requires a more cohesive and efficient approach to organisational reporting that draws on different reporting strands and communicates the full range of factors that materially affect the ability of an organisation to create value over time.

By moving the focus away from only short-term, backward looking, financial reporting, <IR> encourages organisations to report on a broader range of measures that link their strategic objectives to their performance. The result is an overview of an organisation's activities and performance in a much wider, more holistic, context.

- <IR> encourages organisations to consider whether there are any gaps in the information that is currently available to them, so that integrated thinking becomes embedded in mainstream practice.
- <IR> is underpinned by the International <IR> Framework published in December 2013. It is principles- based, allowing organisations to innovate and develop their reporting in the context of their own regulatory framework, strategy, key drivers, goals and objectives.
- <IR> is consistent with the Strategic Reports required from UK companies, the Performance Reports that government departments, agencies and NHS bodies produce and the developing Narrative Reporting in local government.

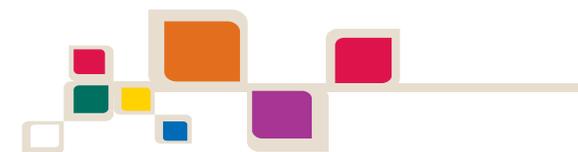
The IIRC has established a Public Sector Pioneer Network to consider why and how the public sector can adopt <IR>, with the end goal of improving transparency and building trust. There is already a core of UK organisations within this such as the World Bank Group, UNDP, the City of London Corporation, the Wales Audit Office and UK government departments.

<Integrated Reporting>

Further information is available on the IIRC's website

Grant Thornton Technical update





Accounting and audit issues

Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2016/17

CIPFA/LASAAC has issued the Local Authority Accounting Code for 2016/17. The main changes to the Code include:

- the new measurement requirements at depreciated replacement cost for the Highways Network Asset (HNA) and
- the requirement for local authorities to report in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on the same basis as they are organised and report in the year (ie. no longer following SERCOP). This is accompanied by the introduction of a new Expenditure and Funding Analysis which provides a reconciliation between the way local authorities budget and report during the year and the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

In respect of HNA, the Accounting Code requires local authorities to comply with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Transport Infrastructure Assets issued in 2013. The Transport Infrastructure Code is currently being revised and will be reissued as the Highways Network Asset Code (HNA Code) over the summer of 2016. Whilst no major changes are expected to the basis of the accounting set out in the previous Code of Practice on Transport Infrastructure Assets, the detailed accounting requirements will not be finalised until the updated HNA Code is formally issued.

The key challenge for local authorities is around the accuracy and completeness of supporting records for HNA inventory and condition at 1 April 2016 and effective arrangements for recording expenditure and other movements on HNA from that date.

We have had some early discussions on the progress with the valuation of HNA with your finance officers. We intend to carry out an early review of this work prior to our final accounts visit.

We are preparing a series of briefings to support clients in implementing this change. Copies are available from your Engagement Manager or Engagement Lead.



Accounting and audit issues

Flexible use of capital receipts

DCLG has issued a [Direction and Statutory Guidance](#) on the flexible use of capital receipts to fund the revenue costs of reform projects. The direction applies from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2019.

The Direction sets out that expenditure which 'is incurred by the Authorities that is designed to generate ongoing revenue savings in the delivery of public services and/or transform service delivery to reduce costs and/or transform service delivery in a way that reduces costs or demand for services in future years for any of the public sector delivery partners' can be treated as capital expenditure.

Capital receipts can only be used from the disposals received in the years in which the flexibility is offered rather than those received in previous years.

Authorities must have regard to the Statutory Guidance when applying the Direction.

Grant Thornton Publications and events



Website Relaunch

We have recently launched our new-look website. Our new homepage has been optimised for viewing across mobile devices, reflecting the increasing trend for how people choose to access information online. We wanted to make it easier to learn about us and the services we offer.

You can access the page using the link below – <http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/industries/public-sector/>





Grant Thornton Event

Great health improves individual prospects and economic prosperity. But are we truly realising this as a region?

Greater Manchester has so many outstanding things going for it: trail-blazing businesses with people's wellbeing at the core, technological innovation, world-class universities, a variety of on-going health initiatives and a devolved healthcare budget of £6 billion. Yet health levels are lower in this region than in others across the UK, so how can we realise our region's potential to create a healthy population and the benefits this could bring to Manchester's economy and its people?

- What if we better connected the public, private and not for profit sectors?
- What if a broader range of people committed to collectively improving health outcomes?
- What if communities could reduce their demand on the NHS?
- What if businesses increased the health and wellbeing of their employees?
- What if best practice was showcased, replicated and accelerated?
- What if technology companies found it easier to pilot health innovations?

Join us on 24 November 2016 to consider actions that will answer the question: How do we all mobilise Greater Manchester to pioneer world class health?

You'll be joined by around 200 dynamic individuals from across the region – leaders from business, charities, education and the public sector, influencers, creative brains and people in our community – for an inspirational day of innovation, inquiry and transformation.

It will be an inventive and practical day of 'sleeves rolled-up' working together to explore the potential, share ideas and come up with real actions that will help our region be the healthiest it can be. This is not a talking shop! To register go to <https://sites-grant-thornton.vuturevx.com/55/1031/landing-pages/your-vip-manchester-live-invitation.asp>

Culture of Place

Our towns, counties and cities have distinct and varied cultures

Our towns, counties and cities have their own compelling and richly varied cultures. There are shared and sometimes contested values, local traditions, behaviours and drivers for change. Culture evokes memory and identity. It affects how we feel about where we live and work and what's possible. It can be a set of stories describing how we do things around here, bringing out the best in us – like our history and heritage – but also preventing us from moving forward.

With local authorities increasingly adopting a place-shaping role we're exploring how culture impacts on the sector's ability to facilitate and support a vibrant economy.

We have hosted two round tables with local authority CEOs, leaders and others, to consider how local authority leadership needs to change if it is to take local culture into account.

From conversations with local authority CEOs, leaders and others, we have collated a selection of stories that invite us all to think about how the sector can disrupt fixed thinking, open up cultures and energise our places. They go beyond what's immediately obvious, voice what is sometimes unsaid and work with the strengths of their place.

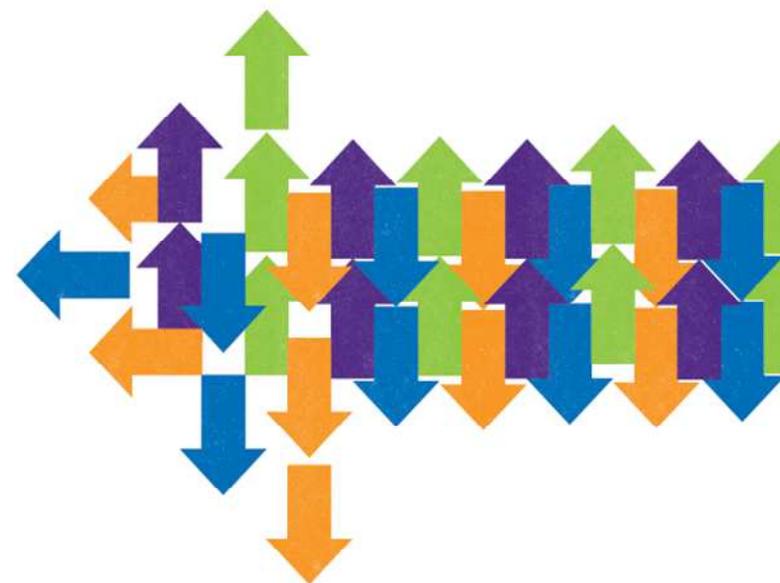
Although the term culture of place is heavily subjective our initial conversations suggest there are some common themes occurring.

- The place leader is the story teller – leaders need to be more deliberate in their storytelling, helping communities make sense of a complex world, the past, present and possible futures
- Being clear about what they want to see – there is a strong need to create an environment that gives people permission to care, to be innovative, to take action themselves, to adapt and experiment
- Socio-economic situations often drive the culture – the uniqueness of socio-economic factors leads to a recognition that one place will never be like another – and, in fact, should not aspire to be so - instead tailoring their approach to the areas specific strengths.
- It's all about context – areas within Britain can be local, national and international all at the same time, learning to live with, and get the best advantage from, what's on our doorstep is key.

A copy of the report and a collection of short videos can be found on our website at:

<http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/culture-of-place/>

Grant Thornton reports



Health and social care integration

Department of Health strategic statement for social work with adults in England 2016-2020 (12 July 2016)

This statement sets out what the department is doing and will do in the future to raise the standing and status of the social work profession, through its continuing reform programme in respect of health and social care integration.

It includes:

- a commitment to social work as a single profession, with common values, skills and knowledge
- the creation of a specialist regulator to raise the quality of education, training and practice
- a sustained focus on continuous professional development and the creation of accredited and specialist roles
- the intention to consult on how to make the best use of funding for social work education.

Joint review of partnerships and investment in voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations in the health and care sector (19 May 2016)

This is a joint review by the Department of Health, Public Health England, and NHS England. The aim of the review is to:

- describe the role of the VCSE sector in improving health, wellbeing and care outcomes
- identify the challenges and opportunities in realising the sector's potential
- address challenges and maximise opportunities

The report makes recommendations for government, health and care system partners, funders, regulatory bodies and the VCSE sector. It emphasises putting wellbeing at the centre of health and care services, and making VCSE organisations an integral part of a collaborative system.

These reports are accessible at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications>

Department of Health reports

Advancing closure: the benefits to local authorities

With new regulation bringing forward the required publishing date for accounts local authorities must consider the areas needed to accelerate financial reporting.

In February 2015, regulations were laid before parliament confirming proposals to bring forward the date by which local authority accounts must be published in England. From 2017-18, authorities will need to publish their audited financial statements by 31 July, with Wales seeking to follow a similar approach over the next few years.

Many local government bodies are already experiencing the benefits of advancing their financial reporting processes and preparing their accounts early, including:

- raising the profile of the finance function within the organisation and transforming its role from a back office function to a key enabler of change and improvement across the organisation;
- high quality financial statements as a result of improved quality assurance arrangements;
- greater certainty over in-year monitoring arrangements and financial outturn position for the year, supporting members to make more informed financial decisions for the future;

- improved financial controls and accounting systems, resulting from more efficient and refined financial processes; and
- allowing finance officers more time to focus on forward looking medium term financial planning and transformational projects, to address future financial challenges.

While there is no standard set of actions to achieve faster close there are a number of consistent key factors across the organisations successfully delivering accelerated closedown of their accounts, which our report explores in further detail, including:

- enabling sustainable change requires committed leadership underpinned by a culture for success
- efficient and effective systems and processes are essential
- auditors and other external parties need to be on board and kept informed throughout

Grant Thornton reports



Advancing closure
Transforming the financial reporting of
local authority accounts



<http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/advancing-closure-the-benefits-to-local-authorities/>

Partnership working in mental health

Joining up the dots, not picking up the pieces

Mental ill health costs the economy over £100 billion each year and affects one in four people. However, responding to issues related to an underlying mental illness does not solely sit within the remit of health professionals. With many parts of the public sector needing to respond, and each facing significant financial pressures, collaboration around this issue is essential if savings are to be found and the best care provided.

This paper draws together examples of successful collaboration between public services and feedback from a Midlands round table discussion – where the West Midlands Combined Authority has set up a mental health commission – to look at how different services have overcome some of the traditional barriers and demarcation lines between organisations

There are four key messages:

The unpredictable nature of mental health symptoms can mean that the first point of contact is via emergency services, with ambulance, fire and rescue or police officers being present. The cost of services not being available at the right place at the right time can be huge, in terms of the personal suffering of individuals and costs to the wider system.

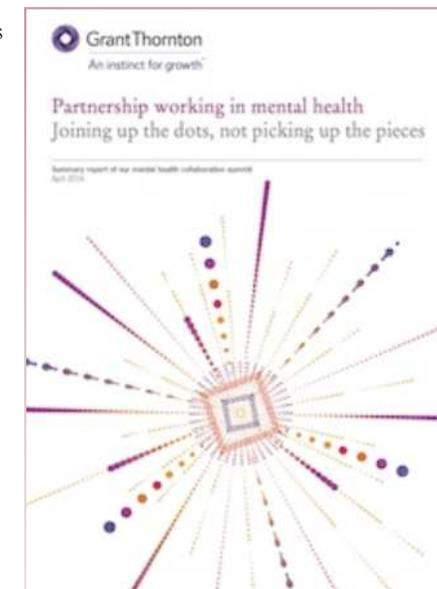
Often relatively modest amounts of money targeted at specific initiatives such as street triage or community cafes can make a huge difference in improving the availability of important services.

An impact can be made without the need for expensive structural change. Most importantly, it requires a genuine approach to collaboration and a culture of putting the patient first.

Investing in collaborative initiatives that focus on the needs of mental health patients were undoubtedly resulting in savings elsewhere to the public purse. Examples include:

- 92% reduction in detentions under section 136 of the Mental Health Act in Cheshire and Wirral; 50% reduction in Birmingham and Solihull; 39% in Nottinghamshire; 30% in Kent
- 647 A&E attendances avoided by one street triage team in one year in Birmingham and Solihull
- 80% remission in psychosis through early intervention in Derbyshire
- 25% of unemployed users of the café run by the Manchester Mind Young Adults Services and Projects team have gone on to find employment.

A set of recommendations on how to move this approach forward is also provided.



<http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/partnership-working-in-mental-health/>

CFO Insights – driving performance improvement

CFO insights is an online analysis tool that gives those aspiring to improve the financial position of their local authority instant access to insight on the financial performance, socio- economy context and service outcomes of every council in England, Scotland and Wales.

The tool provides a three-dimensional lens through which to understand council income and spend by category, the outcomes for that spend and the socio-economic context within which a council operates. This enables comparison against others, not only nationally, but in the context of their geographical and statistical neighbours. CFO Insights is an invaluable tool providing focused insight to develop, and the evidence to support, financial decisions.



We are happy to organise a demonstration of the tool if you want to know more.



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