The Local Government Staff Commission
for Northern Ireland

Local Government in Northern Ireland

Competency Framework for Local Government

solace
Northern Ireland

lgtg
Local Government Training Group

ppma
PUTTING PEOPLE AT THE HEART
OF PUBLIC SERVICES

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CONTEXT

This framework was conceived as part of an Organisational Development initiative coordinated by the Local Government Staff Commission for Local Government and funded by the Local Government Training Group.

It was produced through the involvement of employees and Trade Unions from Derry City Council and Coleraine Borough Council and was designed specifically for Local Government. Its objective is to support delivery of Councils' vision, values, Corporate Plan and The People and Organisation Development Strategic Framework for Local Government in Northern Ireland.

The framework contains 4 Competence Groups that contain 14 sets of behaviours for employees working at Strategic, Operational and Front Line level within individual Councils which reflects the standards and behaviours expected of employees within Local Government at an individual, team and organisational level.

It is envisaged that the framework will be integral to joining up all the processes across the lifecycle of the employee within local government, i.e. from attraction to leaving.

Councils involved with the initiative to date include:-

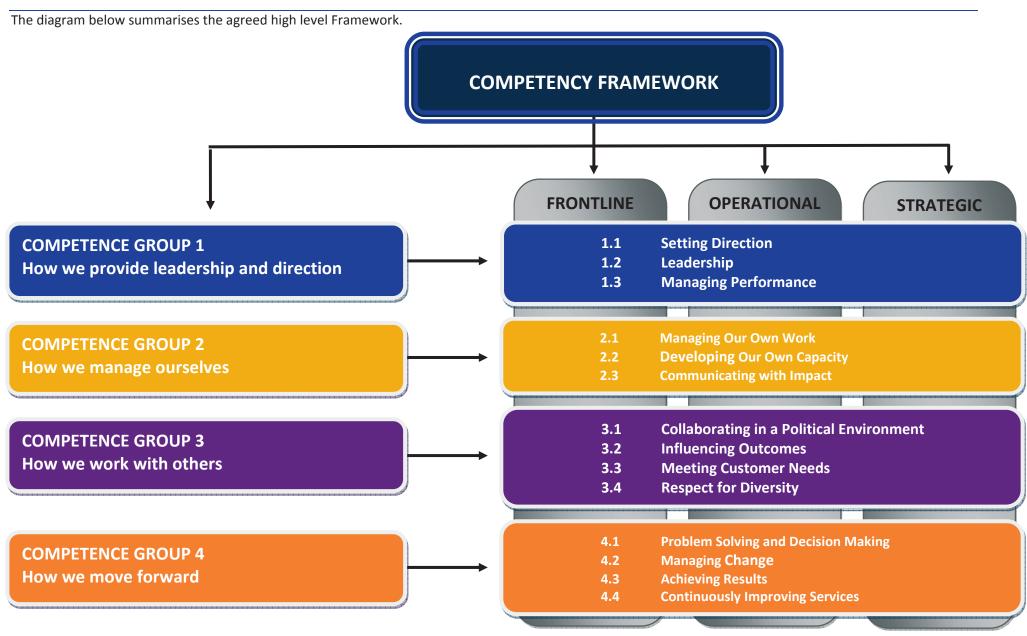|	
Derry City Council:	(Sinead McNicholl and Katrina Bradley)
Coleraine Borough Council:	(Anne Lennon and Brenda Bradley)
Newry and Mourne District Council:	(Catherine Sweeney)
Lisburn City Council:	(Caroline Magee and Sinead Clarke)
Ballymoney Borough Council:	(Joan Kinnaird)
Antrim Borough Council:	(Stuart Wilson)

The Local Government Staff Commission was represented by Diana Stewart.

DERRY
CITY COUNCIL

VITA · VERITAS · VICTORIA

COLERAINE
BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW OF AGREED FRAMEWORK

The diagram below summarises the agreed high level Framework.

COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

FRONTLINE | OPERATIONAL | STRATEGIC

COMPETENCE GROUP 1
How we provide leadership and direction

1.1	Setting Direction
1.2	Leadership
1.3	Managing Performance

COMPETENCE GROUP 2
How we manage ourselves

2.1	Managing Our Own Work
2.2	Developing Our Own Capacity
2.3	Communicating with Impact

COMPETENCE GROUP 3
How we work with others

3.1	Collaborating in a Political Environment
3.2	Influencing Outcomes
3.3	Meeting Customer Needs
3.4	Respect for Diversity

COMPETENCE GROUP 4
How we move forward

4.1	Problem Solving and Decision Making
4.2	Managing Change
4.3	Achieving Results
4.4	Continuously Improving Services

Competence Definitions and Behavioural Indicators

COMPETENCE GROUP 1: HOW WE PROVIDE LEADERSHIP AND DIRECTION			
COMPETENCE AND HIGH LEVEL DEFINITION	**POSITIVE INDICATORS**		
	Frontline	**Operational**	**Strategic**
1.1 Setting Direction Contributes to the development of a strategy and conveys a clear vision led by being innovative, ambitious and proactive	• Understands the plan for going forward and shares their understanding with others • Recognises what they have to do to achieve the vision within their area of work • Ensures that roles are clearly allocated for the completion of tasks • Communicates clearly about what outcomes will be achieved	• Contributes to the development of the organisational strategy by bringing insights on customer feedback and expectations. • Communicates a clear and compelling vision of what the strategy will achieve • Provides a clear direction for their department/region/service based on the vision/strategy • Communicates clearly what outcomes will be achieved	• Creates a compelling vision for the organisation • Works with senior team to develop a compelling vision • Provides opportunities for stakeholders to influence and support the development of the vision • Clearly links the vision to outcomes for the citizens and other key partners • Puts plans in place to ensure delivery of the vision and strategy • Takes account of local capability when planning roll out of strategic goals • Encourages others to ensure that activities take account of short and long term objectives • Ensures that all key Council activity is aligned to the delivery strategic objectives • Takes responsibility for making the vision and strategy a reality

COMPETENCE GROUP 1: HOW WE PROVIDE LEADERSHIP AND DIRECTION (cont'd)			
COMPETENCE AND HIGH LEVEL DEFINITION	**POSITIVE INDICATORS**		
	Frontline	**Operational**	**Strategic**
1.2 Leadership Motivates others to achieve their objectives and organisational goals through involvement and providing feedback and support. Provides and supports development to enable effective delivery.	• Demonstrates confidence in staff and colleagues to get on with the job • Demonstrates a level of respect with those they work with • When mistakes are made focuses on the lessons to be learned for the future • Strives to achieve a balance allocation of work across the whole team • Recognises when others in their team do a good job and gives the positive feedback • Acknowledges others contributions • Maintains enthusiasm and commitment	• Ensures individuals understand the contribution they can make to corporate and service objectives • Involves others, to ensure that they are bought into plans. • Recognise and celebrate the success of self and others. • Provides relevant support, training and resources to enable individuals to deliver their objectives • Identifies strengths and weaknesses in the team and puts plans that optimise the use of strengths and takes account of weaknesses. • Effectively balances work demands with the need to develop people • Demonstrates confidence and judgement when leading others through difficult situations	• Takes account of the realities of front line delivery when developing the vision • Involves staff and elected members and other key stakeholders in identifying strategic priorities • Develops and implements effective communication channels and processes for communicating around the vision and strategy of the organisation • Highlights the relevance of the vision and objectives frequently in their daily interactions with staff, politicians and other key stakeholders • Motivates staff across the organisation by taking account of both "hearts and minds" issues • Involves staff in planning how the vision and objectives will be achieved • Listens to staff and others to take account of feedback • Adjusts strategic plans on the basis of feedback • Factors in a review of strategy and takes account of feedback in developing plans

COMPETENCE GROUP 1:	HOW WE PROVIDE LEADERSHIP AND DIRECTION (cont'd)		
COMPETENCE AND HIGH LEVEL DEFINITION	**POSITIVE INDICATORS**		
	Frontline	**Operational**	**Strategic**
1.3 Managing Performance Sets clear, aligned, high standard performance goals & objectives for self, others and the organisation	• Makes time to prepare for and participate in effective one to one performance management discussions • Freely passes on skills and knowledge to others • Help new team members to learn the job • Learns from the experience of self and others • Takes responsibility for ensuring own learning	• Makes time to conduct effective one to one performance management discussions • Sets clear, challenging and realistic objectives • Clearly communicates with regard to the boundaries of delegated tasks • Monitors and provides clear, balanced and constructive feedback on individual performance • Ensures that staff are equipped to deliver against objectives • Deals with poor performance effectively • Develops the talent and recognises high performers • Coaches team members to motivate and optimise performance	• Develops and manages a clear, simple and transparent corporate performance framework • Ensures that individual and departmental objectives are aligned with business plans and corporate strategy • Makes time to conduct effective one to one performance management discussions • Sets clear, challenging and realistic objectives and ensures that individuals have a clear understanding of the performance standards and behaviours expected of them • Clearly communicates with regard to the boundaries of delegated tasks • Monitors and provides clear, balanced and constructive feedback on individual performance • Ensures that adequate resources are in place and that staff are equipped to deliver against objectives • Deals with poor performance effectively • Ensures that staff are equipped to deliver against objectives • Develops the talent and recognises high performers based on values of transparency and fairness • Coaches team members to motivate and optimise performance

COMPETENCE GROUP 2: HOW WE MANAGE OURSELVES			
COMPETENCE AND HIGH LEVEL DEFINITION	**POSITIVE INDICATORS**		
	Frontline	**Operational**	**Strategic**
2.1 Managing Our Own Work Plans, structures and prioritises own work to achieve optimum results	• Plans ahead of completing a task ensuring their work is organised • Recognises the difference between urgent and important tasks and prioritises effectively • Manages their time to deliver what is required for the team • Follows instructions and knows when to refer upwards when workload exceeds their time constraints • Works flexibly – is prepared to get involved in projects and other areas beyond a narrow scope of their role • Takes responsibility and ownership for their job • Asks for assistance when necessary • Maintains confidentiality • Agrees and sets standards of work with their manager and works to them • Consistently delivers work to the required standard • Understands and has the knowledge to work within Council policies	• Develops personal plans that measurably contribute towards achievement of objectives and targets • Prioritises workload effectively • Monitors progress against objectives and takes appropriate actions to deliver results • Uses appropriate tools and techniques to plan work effectively • Strikes an effective balance between adding value and incurring cost • Balances needs of self with those of others when tackling competing demands • Identifies potential problems and develops contingency plans to prevent or mitigate them • Manages an effective balance between work and home life	• Holds themselves accountable for delivering their departments objectives & business plans • Demonstrates commitment & loyalty to the council and their department • Achieves a rigorous balance in managing their time across key activities • Delegates work effectively • Maintains a focus on strategic rather than operational issues

COMPETENCE GROUP 2: HOW WE MANAGE OURSELVES (cont'd)			
COMPETENCE AND HIGH LEVEL DEFINITION	**POSITIVE INDICATORS**		
	Frontline	**Operational**	**Strategic**
2.2 Developing Our Own Capability Looks for opportunities to learn and develop in order to deliver and add value to their own role	• Reviews their own performance as appropriate • Willing to learn and take on new ways of doing things • Willing to take feedback and sees this as an opportunity to develop • Willing to implement an agreed personal development plan	• Actively encourages and values feedback from a wide range of stakeholders. • Adapts own behaviour to enhance style and improve personal performance • Avails of opportunities to learn and develop • Consults with and makes use of experts to enhance effectiveness • Seeks and adopts efficient ways of working • Sets clear performance standards and objectives for self	• Acts as a role model – "walks the talk" • Seeks and responds to constructive feedback • Understands and optimises their personal strengths • Reviews their own performance • Takes responsibility for their development needs

COMPETENCE GROUP 2: HOW WE MANAGE OURSELVES (cont'd)			
COMPETENCE AND HIGH LEVEL DEFINITION	**POSITIVE INDICATORS**		
	Frontline	**Operational**	**Strategic**
2.3 Communicating with Impact Presents a positive image by communicating effectively, being resilient and treating people fairly	• Communicates clearly and positively • Listens to, understands and respects others views • Shares relevant information with others • Provides follow-up of information to relevant stakeholders • Has a positive approach • Keeps relevant people up to date and in touch with what is happening • Their body language positively supports what they are saying, use body language and tone of voice in a positive manner • Anticipates the impact of their communication and adapts accordingly • Communicates in a calm and polite manner	• Communicates ideas and information effectively, both verbally and in writing • Uses language and a style of communication that is appropriate to the Council context and the political environment • Adapts their communication style in response to others and the situation • Listens carefully to understand others views • Effectively promotes the interests of the Council and Directorate at local and regional levels • Is concerned with projecting a professional, positive consistent image in written documents and presentation material • Is able to utilise persuasive skills to convince others through a well structured argument, ensuring commitment • Checks for understanding and is able to build consensus, where disagreement exists	• Communicates their point of view clearly and succinctly • Makes time to communicate with others face to face • Takes account of how others think and feel about issues • Shares relevant and appropriate information • Develops empathy for others • Adapts their communication in response to others and the situation • Structures their communication logically and in a format that suits others' needs • Responds promptly and proportionately • Checks that others understand what they have said

COMPETENCE GROUP 3: HOW WE WORK WITH OTHERS

COMPETENCE AND HIGH LEVEL DEFINITION	POSITIVE INDICATORS		
	Frontline	**Operational**	**Strategic**
3.1 Collaborating in a Political Environment Develops and manages effective networks by establishing common ground	• Builds effective relationships with colleagues and their team • Listens to colleagues and takes on board the views of others • Shows an understanding of the priorities of other functions • Recognises their role as a public servant • Builds their credibility with others • Defuses conflict situations • Keeps others informed on relevant issues on a timely basis • Involves others by asking for their opinions and taking account of these • Communicates with colleagues across functional areas to ensure a "joined up" approach to delivering services for the customer • Creates harmonious working environment with colleagues	• Establishes good relationships with relevant stakeholders e.g. staff, politicians, unions and external agencies. • Facilitates effective partnership working with a wide range of external stakeholders • Establishes common goals for working together • Facilitates collaborative working across internal and external boundaries • Engenders the trust and respect of Elected Members and others • Effectively manages the Member / Officer interface with a high degree of probity and integrity • Develops and maintains an appropriate network across team and/or organisational boundaries • Shares information & knowledge across departmental, political and organisational boundaries • Consults with stakeholders	• Networks externally to understand what is going on • Establishes good relationships with relevant stakeholders e.g. staff, politicians, unions, external agencies, central government European and International stakeholders • Facilitates effective partnership working with a wide range of stakeholders outside the Council • Works across functional areas and boundaries to achieve corporate objectives • Looks for opportunities to share or maximise resources • Communicates with key stakeholders to gain their buy in, in advance of formal discussions • Identifies common ground to move conflict forward • Resolves difficult conflict situations effectively and sensitively at early stages • Keeps relevant parties informed of progress and issues • Considers the political impact of actions • Understands the political process and the role of Councillors and makes sure their team understands too • Remains professional and impartial when dealing with elected members • Builds credibility with elected members by successfully advising and supporting them

COMPETENCE GROUP 3: HOW WE WORK WITH OTHERS (cont'd)			
COMPETENCE AND HIGH LEVEL DEFINITION	**POSITIVE INDICATORS**		
	Frontline	**Operational**	**Strategic**
3.2 Influencing Outcomes Adapts style and approach to achieve effective outcome	• Remains constructive when disagreeing or challenging • Is not afraid to ask questions in order to understand • Tries to understand other points of view • Is persuasive in communicating their point of view • Strives for a win / win outcome	• Presents their ideas and recommendations persuasively • Questions and probes to gain an understanding of others views • Endeavours to understand others views and perspectives • Facilitates dialogue between dissenting groups • Factors in what is important to others to gain their buy in • Remains constructive when disagreeing or challenging • Deals with conflict effectively • Works toward effective team working by sensitively challenging team members' views where appropriate • Strives to achieve a win / win outcome where appropriate • Achieves outcomes that satisfy a range of stakeholders	• Understands who the stakeholders are and what their positions are in order to influence them • Listens carefully to gain an understanding of what is important to others • Establishes a common vision to motivate others to work collaboratively • Tactfully reminds others of common vision when conflict arises • Identifies mutual benefits to working together • Effectively engages others with their point of view • Takes account of what is important to others in proposing solutions

COMPETENCE GROUP 3: HOW WE WORK WITH OTHERS (cont'd)

COMPETENCE AND HIGH LEVEL DEFINITION	POSITIVE INDICATORS		
	Frontline	**Operational**	**Strategic**
3.3 Meeting Customer Needs Establishes the needs of customers and strives to ensure that these are met	• Demonstrates a high level of integrity and fairness in working with others • Considers issues from the customers point of view • Places the customer's needs as the key focus in all activities • Is knowledgeable in their area and is able to deal with customer queries effectively • Understands the expectations of the customer • Strives to deliver a good service for the customer • Communicates in a positive and accurate manner with customers keeping them informed • Is courteous and friendly to customers and takes time to build relationships • Listens to and responds to customers known or perceived needs and seeks direction where appropriate in a timely manner • Does not repeatedly use excuses for not delivering the required services • Works with others to ensure effective delivery of service • Responds promptly in emergency situations • Understands the scope of what they can deliver	• Actively listens to customers to establish their needs • Sets standards of excellence for service delivery • Ensures that the delivery of customer needs is a priority for them and their team • Actively seeks and acts on customer feedback • Keeps the customer informed and updated	• Establishes customers' needs by consulting broadly • Develops and delivers services in line with the established needs of the customer • Manages any conflict between the Council strategy and customer / service users • Seeks feedback on the delivery of services • Involves customers and service users in developing council strategies and budgets

COMPETENCE GROUP 3: HOW WE WORK WITH OTHERS (cont'd)			
COMPETENCE AND HIGH LEVEL DEFINITION	**POSITIVE INDICATORS**		
	Frontline	**Operational**	**Strategic**
3.4 Respect for Diversity and Equality Treats all individuals with respect, responds sensitively to differences and encourages others to do likewise. Ensures equality of opportunity for all.	• Treats everyone with respect • Takes account of the opinions of others • Creates an environment where everyone is valued and fairness is promoted and embedded in all activities	• Encourages mutual respect, support and openness • Promotes diversity and recognises its importance in the workplace • Treats everyone with respect • Takes account of the opinions of others • Creates an environment where everyone is valued and fairness is promoted and embedded in all activities	• Treats all stakeholders with fairness, dignity and respect • Develops and delivers services in line with the diverse needs of the community • Communicates effectively with the diverse community • Creates a culture where difference is celebrated • Takes opportunities to demonstrate their willingness to engage and work with others • Ensures equality of access to services

COMPETENCE GROUP 4:	HOW WE MOVE FORWARD		
	POSITIVE INDICATORS		
COMPETENCE AND HIGH LEVEL DEFINITION	**Frontline**	**Operational**	**Strategic**
4.1 Problem Solving and Decision Making Gathers information from a range of sources. Analyses information to identify problems and issues. Makes effective decisions and recommendations based on resolution agreement within an environment of trust, mutual respect and co-operation	• Thinks ahead to anticipate and deal with issues • Recognises when and how to make decisions within remit of role • Interprets relevant legislation within the context of specific circumstances rather than taking a rigid and inflexible approach • Exercise good judgement in problem solving • Identifies and calculates the level of risk in a situation • Identifies situations where a conflict of interest can arise and manages these effectively • Demonstrates an ability to interpret and implement policy effectively • Makes decisions on a timely basis and considers the impact of these decisions • Gains buy in to solutions by involving others	• Gathers and analyses relevant information and evidence • Identifies the root causes of a problem • Considers the financial issues astutely – understands ways and means of increasing revenue and reducing costs, without affecting core services • Deals positively with ambiguity when not all information is available to aid decision-making • Provides a range of options • Explores and evaluates the feasibility of options • Considers the political environment in assessing options • Keeps an open mind • Identifies and manages risks • Tackles the causes rather than the symptoms • Takes ownership of the problems to ensure satisfactory solutions • Consults with others to share ideas • Considers the pros and cons to come to a logical conclusion • Strikes an effective balance between speed of decision making and the value of consultation • Ensures a clear decision is reached • Demonstrates a good understanding of governance issues within the Local Government context and factors these into their decisions	• Leads the development and implementation of corporate policy at a strategic level • Considers the financial issues astutely – understands ways and means of increasing revenue and reducing costs, without affecting core services • Makes tough decisions • Manages resources effectively – looks to use them in the best way • Anticipates problems and takes action to avoid or manage these • Takes account of a comprehensive range of issues • Considers the pros and cons of strategic issues in advance of reaching a decision • Gives balanced consideration to how others think and feel about issues • Considers both the short and long term implications of a decision • Accurately assesses and manages corporate risk • Comfortable making decisions that involve "considered" risk • Demonstrates a good understanding of corporate governance issues in their decision making

COMPETENCE GROUP 4: HOW WE MOVE FORWARD (cont'd)			
COMPETENCE AND HIGH LEVEL DEFINITION	**POSITIVE INDICATORS**		
	Frontline	**Operational**	**Strategic**
4.2 Managing Change Promotes change effectively and ensures that changes are delivered in line with organisational goals	• Is prepared to change how things are done • Is open to contributing ideas on how change can be implemented • Discusses concerns in a positive manner • Will engage in changing for the benefits of others	• Scans the environment and recognises the need for change • Positively sells the benefits of new initiatives • Deals effectively with the barriers to change • Confronts resistance positively and actively manages concerns • Allows time for people to adapt to change • Engages and involves others in the change process • Monitors the change implementation and adapts as required	• Scans the environment and identifies the need for change • Proactively prepares for change • Assesses the business case for change • Involves others in planning to gain commitment • Anticipates and manages the emotional resistance to change • Considers the resource implications of change • Promotes the benefits of change • Ensures they are visible to staff in times of change and welcomes opportunities to engage and bring them on board • Develops Champions for change to help engage others in the change process • Encourages others to take ownership for change in their area of responsibility • Reviews progress and adapts plans to deliver effective change • Evaluates the results of change

COMPETENCE GROUP 4:   HOW WE MOVE FORWARD (cont'd)

COMPETENCE AND HIGH LEVEL DEFINITION	POSITIVE INDICATORS		
	Frontline	**Operational**	**Strategic**
4.3 Achieving Results Takes personal responsibility for making things happen. Shows motivation and perseverance in overcoming obstacles and achieving results.	• Understands what is expected in terms of delivery • Works to deliver and exceed the results expected • Seeks clarity about priorities • Adheres to the Council policies and procedures • Uses initiative to get the job done - within acceptable boundaries • Sees tasks through to completion • Holds themselves and others to account for delivering results as appropriate • Shares knowledge with others • Displays drive and commitment to deliver the service	• Self driven to achieve outcomes • Knowledge of corporate direction/ values • Understands what is expected • Sets targets with clear outcomes - SMART • Identifies appropriate measures to track outcomes • Obtains feedback on progress and acts on it i.e. customer research • Monitors, reviews and evaluates achievement • Consults with staff on an ongoing basis • Challenges and manages inappropriate behaviour • Works within constraints i.e. resources • Works hard to overcome obstacles • Understands the context of results – cost analysis of results are the cost justified and balanced against the results achieved	• Creates a can do culture, where outputs are measured and delivered • Tolerates mistakes and encourages people to learn from them • Holds themselves and others accountable for achieving results as appropriate • Consistent in their approach to all employees and avoids favouritism • Considers the needs of colleagues and is flexible around them. • Challenges and manages inappropriate behaviour • Treats colleagues and staff with fairness, dignity and respect • Supports employees in balancing work and home life • Applies up to date knowledge of employee related policies • Tailors resources and support to individual need

COMPETENCE GROUP 4: HOW WE MOVE FORWARD (cont'd)			
COMPETENCE AND HIGH LEVEL DEFINITION	**POSITIVE INDICATORS**		
	Frontline	**Operational**	**Strategic**
4.4 Continuously Improving Services Seeks to continually improve the services and processes that impact on users	• Contributes to ideas • Involves others to agree how the service could be improved • Understands the problems in order to make improvements • Uses good judgement to see what improvements could be implemented • Thinks creatively about how a task can best be achieved • Seeks and acts on feedback from a variety of sources to improve service • Ensures that improvements in one area support a "one Council" approach • Shares good practice across and outside the organisation	• Challenges the status quo effectively • Looks for new ways of working in order to gain efficiencies and improve service delivery • Encourages and demonstrates creativity and innovation • Adopts a can do attitude • Carries out benchmarking and research into Best Practice • Focuses on the "value add" to the customer • Encourages others to take balanced risks and learn from their mistakes • Shares knowledge • Takes an evidence based approach in identifying and tracking improvements. • Introduces processes that positively deliver improvements • Ensures that improvements in one area support a "one Council" approach	• Acts to take unnecessary bureaucracy out of the systems, in order to streamline service provision • Benchmarks and researches against other services and sectors to ensure best practice • Takes considered risks and is prepared to make mistakes • Thinks innovatively • Challenges and supports others to implement new ways of working to achieve improvements • Secures resources to support improvements • Develops KPIs. links plans, policies and strategies to encourage "one Council" approach

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