

The Deal Conference

A special supplement produced by **IMJ**

The Deal Conference: Reasons to be cheerful

Local government and NHS leaders are invited to a unique conference this autumn, which will explore Wigan Council's revolutionary approach to public sector reform, known as The Deal.

Are you ready for The Deal? Wigan Council has organised a one-day conference on 27 September, to be held at The Edge conference centre in Wigan, which will examine how the council and its partners have used The Deal not just to re-imagine public services, but also to re-energise their communities and staff in the face of widespread austerity cutbacks.

The Deal, an asset-based, demand-reduction model, has been praised by other organisations across the country and abroad. This conference has been organised to help others in their reform journeys by sharing knowledge and lessons learnt.

The conference will feature a keynote speech by the authority's chief executive, Donna Hall, along with contributions from other senior members of Wigan's leadership team, the chief executive of Leeds City Council, Tom Riordan and Greater Manchester mayor, Andy Burnham.

The one-day event, which is being held in partnership with Leeds City Council and Luton Council, will also feature opportunities to learn more about the wider commercial products the council can offer, including a Be Wigan masterclass and wider Deal training.

The conference will be ideal for heads of policy, chief executives, cabinet members and people who will be driving through a different approach. Attendees will hear about the key aims of The Deal, which include making Wigan a place where people want to invest, live, work and visit, with the council working with public and private sector partners, as well as community groups to develop sustainable economic growth, skills, infrastructure and a sense of pride and belief in the borough.

'Not only has The Deal saved us a lot of money,' the chief executive explains, 'but it's also improved our residents' and staff satisfaction rates. According to Best Companies we are the best big council to work for and our residents' survey says residents are happy with the council. It really is a win-win.'

The Deal sets out what the council will do to support residents in return for what residents can do to help. The leader of the authority, Lord Peter Smith, describes The Deal as a social contract, which rethinks 'how the local authority interacts with local people'.

The one-day event will also showcase how The Deal places a much greater emphasis on preventative action and how community assets are helping to deliver services.

'Local residents understand the issues and strengths in their local areas which is why we're working closely with community groups and residents to tailor services to their needs. We have a strong volunteer base in Wigan and we're seeing more and more services, including adult social care, delivered by residents,' explains the council leader.

'Our library service is another great example,' adds Lord Smith. 'We recognised a long time ago the important role libraries play in our communities. Yes they provide books, but they also provide a safe place where people can connect and take part in activities. That's why we haven't closed any.'

Donna adds: 'The Deal is being used across the council and is changing the way the local authority works with residents. It's simplicity has enabled its success.'

'Based on an "our part/your part" approach, The Deal sets out the council's commitments and asks residents to play their part. For example, we've committed to freezing council tax if residents recycle more. The approach is working, our recycling rates are increasing and we're spending less on sending waste to landfill.'

'The Deal is helping our finances in adult social care too, where we were overspending by around £6m a year, and now we're delivering £16m every year in savings while improving outcomes.'

And the conference will also look at what the future holds for The Deal.

'The next area we are looking at is social mobility,' adds Donna. 'If you look at a lot of authority reform programmes, they are focused on the most deprived three to five per cent of the population. But we're now looking at the "just managing" and the "managing" categories, and looking at how we can get aspirations up for young people.'

'We're realistic, we know cash won't be flooding back into most local authority services,' explains the Lord Smith. 'The pressures will still be there in the future. The only resource we will have going forward will be growing Wigan as a place, getting more business rates and council tax and continuing this transformation of the way we work.'

'We're moving on from The Deal to The Deal for the Future which sets out how we will achieve our objectives.'



'The Deal has resulted in the biggest culture change for the better that I have ever witnessed in my professional life.'

*Andy Burnham
Mayor of Greater Manchester*



A new relationship

The Commission on the Future of Local Government in 2012 explored the concept of civic enterprise: a new leadership style for local government where councils become more enterprising, businesses and other partners become more civic, and citizens become more engaged.

The Wigan Deal simply articulates this new relationship between public services and citizens that enables shared decision-making, genuine co-production and joint delivery of services.

*Tom Riordan
Chief executive, Leeds City Council*



Donna Hall, Chief executive



Council Leader Lord Peter Smith

Reasons To Be Cheerful - Part One in partnership with Leeds City Council and Luton Council is at The Edge Conference Centre (formerly Wigan Pier Centre) on 27 September.

Tickets are just **£99** excluding VAT

To find out more, contact Lucy Downham on l.downham@wigan.gov.uk or visit www.wigan.gov.uk/thedealconference

The Deal breaks new ground

Wigan Council is putting the latest digital technology and skills at the forefront of The Deal to ensure everyone in the borough reaches their full potential.

The council has already won several awards for its work in the digital sphere, but it is not resting on its laurels.

'We've taken a borough-wide, strategic approach to understanding how digital can help with our growth and reform plans, and change people's lives and businesses,' says deputy chief executive, Alison McKenzie-Folan.

To this end, the council has employed a business growth advisor, who is working with more than 100 small and medium-sized enterprises to increase their digital presence.

As part of The Deal, Wigan has also launched a Get Online programme, which has reached more than 12,800 people who previously had no Internet experience and equipped them with basic skills, such as helping them operate a mobile phone, set up an email address and other

basic skills. The council's Digital Champions programme has also helped reach out and train members of the community with new IT and coding skills.

The programme has been helped by an army of 300 volunteers and has so far delivered more than 360 coding sessions in community centres and libraries across the borough.

Ms McKenzie-Folan says the council has also earmarked £500,000 pounds to help grassroots organisations who want to get active in the digital world.

'We also have an ambition to be the first council to offer the Duke of York's digital entrepreneurs badge,' adds the deputy chief executive.

'It's about supporting young people, older people and families to get these badges and become digital entrepreneurs. We also want our staff to do it. We're going to have our own Wigan badge to track progress and see how many people get on board with it. We don't want anybody to miss out.'

And like other local authorities, the council is offering more services to residents online, through its own website. More than 70,000 residents are registered on the Wigan website for an account, which allows them to access a variety of services, including council tax, housing rents and registrar services.

The council also has a Report IT App, which allows

residents to report a range of environmental services through their smartphones.

The app was first launched in April 2015 and within the first 12 months, around 3,000 reports were received through it and dealt with by Wigan's environmental services team.

And the app was expanded last year to include a range of highways, traffic and anti-social behaviour issues, with more developments to come later this year.

The council's public relations team is also at the forefront of digital technology, regularly topping Netnatives ranking system because of its ability to communicate in a variety of formats, including video to reach out to residents in new and exciting ways in real time.

The deputy chief executive adds the council is also 'empowering our staff through mobile and smart working', with tablets and cloud services. The local authority is also looking at new smart devices, like heating systems and Amazon Echo, that can help people stay in their homes longer.

The Deal

The future's bright, the future's digital.

Are you ready for the Be Wigan experience?

Wigan Council is not just turbo-charging its relationship with residents, it has also transformed the way the local authority engages with its own staff through the Be Wigan programme.

Be Wigan aims to create a shared culture in the local authority, which illustrates its unique approach to public service, and celebrates the staff and their achievements.

The council's deputy chief executive and director of customer transformation, Alison McKenzie-Folan, says the Be Wigan programme is focused around three core behaviours, which they expect staff to embrace - to be positive, accountable and courageous.

As part of this initiative, the council has built an interactive experience on the top floor of one of the borough's buildings, which helps staff to understand what The Deal means for them through videos and workshops.

'What we've done is taken something, which could be quite stale and really brought it to life.'

'The feedback has been fantastic, 91% of the people who have been there have said it was excellent and they



Alison McKenzie-Folan, deputy chief executive

think it has supported them in their roles. It has helped them understand The Deal and the way we have built our corporate strategy,' adds Ms McKenzie-Folan.

Ninety-seven per cent of all staff in the council have now been through the Experience. Staff are also encouraged to

engage with the community in other ways and are allowed to spend two days volunteering a year.

More than 1,500 volunteering days have been taken by council workers in the last three years, who have taken part in a range of activities, including helping out in community centres, youth work and cleaning up parks.

Ms McKenzie-Folan says it has helped staff become 'more conscious about being good neighbours and being ambassadors in the borough.'

And as part of the Be Wigan programme, the chief executive, Donna Hall and leader, Lord Peter Smith, meet with groups of staff every two weeks to hear their ideas and views on how the organisation is run.

Ms McKenzie-Folan says Be Wigan has led to increased staff satisfaction, and one of the key behaviours - to be courageous - has had a significant impact on workers.

'It's giving people permission to do things, which perhaps in the past, they would have not done,' she adds. 'We've tried to break down those artificial barriers that were there for staff and just encourage them to do more, take responsibility and do things.'

Giving young people the best start in life

The Deal is paying dividends in Wigan Council's children's services, which were recently awarded a 'good' rating by Ofsted.

Another example of The Deal in action is the recent Ofsted inspection of children's services. The inspectors praised 'a strong culture of continuous improvement' after they visited the local authority in February.

To date 123 councils in England have been inspected under Ofsted's single inspection framework with more than 70 per cent rated 'inadequate' or 'requiring improvement', demonstrating the scale of achievement in Wigan, which is one of only four councils in the North West to be judged good.

The inspectors also rated the local authority as 'outstanding' for adoption.

The inspectors also highlighted projects such as Achieving Change Together, a joint project with Rochdale BC tackling child sexual exploitation, and SHARE, which is a teenage mental health support service run in conjunction with North West Boroughs Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust - both projects demonstrating the positive impact of a strengths based approach.

Wigan's director for children's services, James Winterbottom, says The Deal has meant 'relentlessly connecting young people and families to the amazing strengths and opportunities in our community', while also

building up early intervention and prevention services, which aim to improve lives and reduce demand on specialist services.

'It's meant a profound change in the way in which services for children are run around here,' says Mr Winterbottom.

'From an organisational development point of view, all our staff are trained in The Deal approach, which has restorative practice at its heart. It also focuses on a strengths-based approach to practice that enables us to have a different conversation with children and families and get to know their communities.

'We also have new roles at the council, which would never have been imaginable in the past, so we have

'Schools have really picked up the mantle of identifying and supporting children who need that early help and support.'

*James Winterbottom
Wigan's director for children's services*

people whose job it is to find out what is going on in their community and be that bridge to connect frontline professionals, young people and families to those opportunities.'

'And we've taken the opportunity to really focus on listening to young people, and giving them a voice in service design.'

The council has also been involved in two innovation projects with the Department for Education to help test an asset-based approach to children's services.

'We don't start with what people can't do,' he explains. 'We start by asking what does a good day look like and how can we make that good day more likely to happen every day? Our support to families starts from there, not that we are here to tell you what to do or fix you. Our focus is building resilience in families, and where it is safe to do so, keep families together.'

The council is also working on a Deal for foster carers, to support their clear aim that no child in care will be placed outside the borough, with a family home available for everyone.

All our schools in the borough now have an early help (Start Well) link worker and a link social worker. And we are working on a similar model for CAMHS and emotional health and wellbeing.

'Schools have really picked up the mantle of identifying and supporting children who need that early help and support, whilst through a systematic strengths-based approach from The Deal and excellent school and early years leadership also achieving significant improvements in school readiness and key stage 2 SATS; setting the foundations for future success,' says Mr Winterbottom.

Wigan was also part of one of the first joint adoption services in the country, working with Warrington BC and St Helens Council to form Wwish Adoption.

The council is now working towards a regional adoption agency, which will include Warrington, St Helens, Halton and Cheshire West and Chester and launch later this year.

The director of children's service says the recent Ofsted inspection 'validated the journey we have been on'.

'It gave us a lot of confidence that we have those important building blocks in place and we're effective in thinking differently and bringing significant change into specialist parts of the system.'

Adult social care was one of the first service areas at Wigan Council to undergo The Deal treatment and the results speak for themselves.

A different conversation around social care

The council's director of adult social care and health, Stuart Cowley says the service aims to support people to remain independent, tackle social isolation and improve health and wellbeing among residents.

They have achieved this by encouraging staff to have different kinds of conversations with residents, be more aware of the community around them and by fostering an atmosphere where staff feel they are free to innovate and redesign services.

'We've taken out £26m in cash and £13m of demand pressures from adult social services, and improved services at the same time.

'We have bucked the national trend in satisfaction of residents receiving adult social care support, have the highest staff morale and residents and people receiving adult social care all saying "this is the better way".'

'Over the years, we have built up the practical ways of bringing the community to life, but the strategic benefit is that we used to have 16 day centres and now we have five.

'We have closed 11 day centres, freed up the resources for community investment and have less people sitting around in traditional day centres,' he adds.

To explain how The Deal for adult social care works in practice, Mr Cowley recounts the tale of an occupational

therapist who had been sent to visit an elderly woman, who had recently returned home after spending some time in hospital with a broken hip.



Having been trained to open up the conversation, the occupational therapist noticed there was embroidery all around the woman's living room.

'The frontline worker just said 'oh they are nice' and the woman just changed in front of her. She had followed rule one about having a different conversation.

'The woman said she felt like a burden on her husband during the day. She wanted something in the daytime, so he could have some respite,' says Mr Cowley.

Having made that connection, the occupational therapist knew this woman lived just down the road from a community circle, where there was a sewing circle.

'The woman who ran the sewing circle was happy to come in and meet this other lady. They got on like a house on fire. The support was her going off and sewing with her mates three days a week, with very minimal care provision.

'And this woman is now part of that community centre, leading the sewing circle, and of course, her husband gets some respite.

'We've got hundreds and hundreds of cases like that of plugging people into what is going on around them, and understanding their interests,' adds Mr Cowley.

Another example of The Deal in action is Rusty the donkey, who was brought in to the council-run Heathside Residential Home to help the residents relive memories from their youth.

'It's a dementia care home and lots of people there have memories about days out in Blackpool,' says Mr Cowley. 'They took the donkey into the home and he went down a storm.

'There was never a check with me to see if it was ok,' he adds. 'The first I knew about it was a seeing press release all about it. The Deal is about creating a culture where people feel they can do that.'