PPMA Award entry – Most Effective Partnership

Partnering with 33 different organisations to share and benchmark HR Metrics

Who are we?

London Councils represents London's 32 boroughs and the City of London. We area cross-party organisation that works on behalf of all our member-authorities regardless of political persuasion.

We make the case to government, the London Mayor and others to get the best deal for Londoners and to ensure that member authorities have the resources, freedoms and powers to do the best possible job for their residents and local businesses.

One of the professional networks supported is the Directors of HR network

Why partner with the 33 boroughs in London to benchmark their HR Metrics data?

London borough councils have faced huge financial challenges since 2010. Core funding from central government will have fallen by a cumulative 63 per cent in real terms over the decade by 2019-20. Fundamental changes to the way services are delivered are necessary to meet the savings required.

HR has a key role in enabling and supporting significant levels of change to secure the continued provision of high-quality services against a backdrop of funding reductions. For many HR managers one of the biggest challenges is developing business confidence and buy-in. By providing a means of benchmarking workforce data across London boroughs the London Councils' HR Metrics Service enables HR professionals to present workforce benchmark data and secure evidence-based decisions and backing to make their organisations more effective.

What we did

The London borough Directors of HR network sponsors a London-wide workforce planning and information group (WFP&I Group). This group meets quarterly and brings HR Metrics experts together to work in partnership sharing best practice and developing close-working relationships.

The group produced a comprehensive set of survey and HR Metrics data for sharing and benchmarking. The HR Metrics Service have innovated the use of an online web-application tool to collect data and generate highly visual benchmarking reports.

As sponsors, the Directors of HR network is key to ensuring the ongoing commitment and contribution of the boroughs to sharing the workforce data. They have set up a governance-board to ensure the work of the HR metrics service is benefiting all them and one of the borough HR leads chairs the governance-board.

Using benchmarking to focus on performance – key impacts

The benchmarking of HR data from the London region enables Directors of HR to make evidence-based decisions on key issues. It empowers individual councils, groups of councils and the region as a whole to assess performance and drive improvement.

Councils compare their performance on HR indicators ranging from the reasons why staff leave to workforce-diversity, HR-casework and sickness absence. Each can see its performance in relation to others and they share policy/procedure development and innovations that work. This has stimulated closer working relationships between the Directors of HR in the 33 London boroughs.

The online-tool InfiniStats, provides systematic analysis of data, instant up-to-date outputs and is a cost-effective solution to collecting and processing large quantities of data. Boroughs input their data locally and generate sophisticated results, reports and scorecards each with their own council's branding. This reduces manual-processing of data and enables instant reporting and updating of results-outputs.

When resources are limited/reducing, sharing best-practice and ideas is an important way that councils can be more cost-effective and improve performance. They learn from the best performers in the benchmark-group without having to develop their own solutions in isolation.

> Quotes from HR leads -
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> *'We use the benchmarks at a local level at Havering and at Newham not only to continually assess and improve performance in day-to-day HR activities but also to focus on emerging priorities.* Mark Porter, Operational HR Manager, OneSource (LB Havering).
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> *The fact that all London Boroughs subscribe to the HR Metrics service and participate in providing data is testament to its value and success. Sharing and benchmarking HR metrics supports our continuous improvement, both as individual councils and as a region. Having the service and the network in place also enables us to quickly access London-wide data to provide insight and evidence to support the development of new strategies.* Jan Douglas | Deputy Director - Human Resources & Organisational Development oneSource (LB Newham).

Tackling real business issues – significant outcomes

The Directors of HR network collectively explores issues that all boroughs face. For example, the recruitment and retention of staff in specialised roles in high demand and low supply.

> Mark Porter, Operational HR Manager, OneSource said *'One of the key issues this year was difficulty in recruiting children's social workers that had led to an over-reliance on agency workers. There is high demand for these roles and agency worker rates had become inflated adding to costs for councils.*
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> *At the request of the Directors of HR network the HR metrics service surveyed councils on agency pay rates for Children's Social workers and produced an analysis of the rates across London. This information was then used as part of a project to broker a 'memorandum of co-operation' (MoC) to be signed off by Chief Executives, Directors of Children's Services and Directors of HR across London. The MOU sets standardised pay rates across London for agency workers and agreement not to go above those rates. 31 councils of 33 have signed the MoC and are now working collaboratively to manage the agency market for children's social workers not compete with one another.*

The HR Metrics Service will conduct these surveys regularly (approx. every 6 months) to quantify the effect of the implementation of the MoC and monitor its effectiveness and consider any adjustments. This will contribute to delivering an effective and sustainable-change.

This project demonstrated the clear operational-benefit of partnership-working between the boroughs and the utilisation of sharing workforce information to improve service-provision and ensure value-for-money. Initial results indicate a slowing of the rate of increase in pay-rates to less than 2% pa after the implementation of the MoU from significantly higher levels reported by councils in previous periods.

An example of best practice.

Having solved some of the practical challenges in sharing workforce information, London Councils is in a good position to share ideas and demonstrate the benchmarking processes and systems it uses to other public service organisations including a recent presentation to the Civil Service.

The project is the subject of a Valuing Your Talent case study http://www.valuingyourtalent.com/research-resources/case-studies/london-councils

Valuing Your Talent is an initiative with CIPD and CIMA as key partners.

The Chair of the WFP&I Group, and the London HR Metrics Service lead have spoken at a range of events hosted by the CIPD and other providers about the success of the ongoing partnership between the London boroughs and London Councils on HR Metrics.

The London HR metrics service is recognised across the regions for producing some of the most highly reliable and relevant data and analysis. Key London-wide facts and figures are available and can be used to support London's case on the wider national stage that includes Government departments, Parliamentary Select Committees and other decision-making bodies. It has been utilised by the national employers to maintain and build the reputation of the sector. **Selena Lansley – formerly London Councils, Head of London Regional Employers' Organisation and now Head of Workforce at the Local Government Association.**