

Partnership Working in Fife

Resource Pack

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Fife Partnership	Document Owner:	Head of Community and Corporate Development		
	Next Revision Date	5 th July 2017	Revision Number :	3
	Last Revised	5 th July 2016	Revised by:	Sharon Murphy
Resource Pack	Partnership Working in Fife Resource Pack			

1. INTRODUCTION

This resource pack contains guidance for anyone who is involved in, or thinking of becoming involved in partnership working. It will give information and advice on the support and leadership of any partnership in any setting.

The pack is available at www.fifedirect.org.uk.

The guidance sets out clear processes and procedures to help partnerships deliver services efficiently, effectively and with propriety.

It aims to ensure that:

- We are clear about purpose, duties and expected outcomes when entering into partnerships;
- Our organisation's own priorities are met;
- We make best use of resources;
- There is clear accountability for outcomes and quality;
- We monitor and review partnership involvement, activity and outcomes in line with agreed performance management frameworks;
- We identify the risks for organisations and partnerships;
- Partnerships take account of the impact of their work;
- Partnerships continue to be relevant to their agreed purpose;
- Partnerships are properly authorised and empowered and their legal status clearly understood;
- Partnerships show that they are achieving value for money.

Before entering into any partnership, organisations should assess the potential benefits of taking part, by comparing the intended outcomes with their own priorities and with community plan priorities.

A partnership *may be* appropriate where there is:

- common purpose between the parties involved;
- an opportunity to achieve co-ordinated outcomes;
- the potential to deliver *more than the sum of individual contributions*, i.e. the partnership will add value with an acceptable level of risk.

2. WHAT DO WE MEAN BY PARTNERSHIP?

3.1 What is a partnership?

"A process in which two or more organisations or groups work together to achieve a common goal, and do so in such a way that they achieve more effective outcomes than by working separately"

Partnerships involving public bodies, private companies, voluntary organisations and community bodies are now a common way of working to deliver and improve services for the public. Over the past decade government policy has promoted joined-up working for two main reasons: so that users can receive all the services they need without having to negotiate with many different organisations, and to achieve outcomes that need action across a group of public bodies in an area.

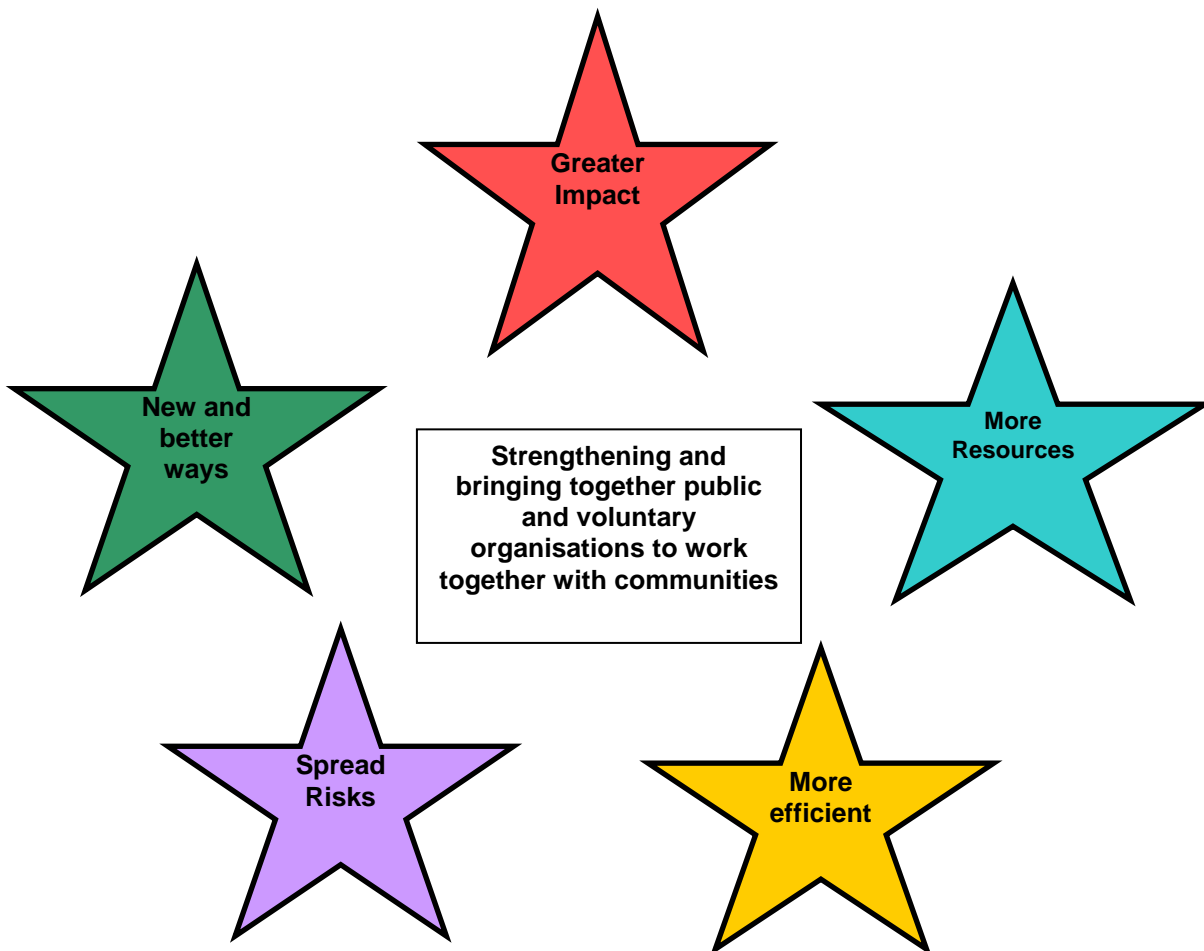
Underpinning partnership working is the view that:

- Service users aren't really concerned with *who* provides services - only that they can access services in their local area that meet their needs in a seamless way;
- Some client groups need services from a number of different organisations;
- Desired policy outcomes can only be achieved by co-ordinated action by public bodies and others working together.

Partnerships can have very different legal bases: some are statutory, others contractual; some are executive, others advisory. The terminology around partnership working can be confusing, but what lies at its heart is the *bringing together of different parties to achieve more than they could working alone.*

3.2 Why work in partnership?

In the wider context of community planning, effective partnership working should enhance levels of openness and engagement among partners. It should also maximise the contribution that each partner can make to the quality of service delivery and to the wellbeing of communities.



Greater Impact

- increased benefits for people, communities or businesses served
- better reach to disadvantaged populations
- additionality: ability to reach and deliver beyond the capabilities of any one partner

More Resources

- attract public funding where an initiative requires partnership bids and evidence of partners' ability to deliver joint projects
- strengthened negotiating power

New and Better Ways

- innovation: new, more effective ways of doing things
- new perspectives and challenging views within the partnership
- improved intelligence about needs and opportunities

Spread Risks

- complementary strengths, resources, perspectives
- greater flexibility within a team

More Efficient

- pool resources
- share the costs of common functions

3.3 Types of partnership

Partnerships fall into a range of types and they evolve over time. What might start out as a number of parties coming together to agree joint outcomes and working arrangements might then develop into new forms, such as a new stand-alone entity, legally separate from the parent partners.

This resource pack is largely aimed at partnerships that are **not** underpinned by a contract, namely:

Executive partnerships: to directly procure the services needed for the purposes of the partners, or to commission services jointly on behalf of partner organisations, or which act in some other way on behalf of the partners.

Advisory partnerships: the partners agree **collectively** what each should do **individually** to further the collective objectives of the partnership. Such partnerships often provide the vehicle for addressing outcomes that cut across traditional organisational boundaries. There will be a number of partners, with one taking a lead role. Examples include local community planning partnerships and arrangements that pool budgets for a common purpose. The growth in the number of these non-contractual partnerships is a direct result of government policy to achieve cross-agency working and joined-up services for particular client groups.

3.4 Key features of partnership

The Audit Commission has developed a definition of partnership as a joint working arrangement between partners which:

- Are otherwise independent bodies;
- Agree to co-operate to achieve a common goal;
- Create a new organisational structure or process to achieve this goal separate from their own organisations;
- Plan and implement a jointly agreed programme, often with joint staff or resources;
- Share relevant information;
- Pool risks and rewards.

This definition excludes **networks of professional relationships**, which are usually more fluid and do not involve organisational commitment or support. It also excludes arrangements where an organisation may be invited to nominate a representative, for example on governing bodies or boards, and the representative acts as an individual under the governance arrangements that apply.

Partnerships involving only **internal partners** are also excluded from the guidance provided in this resource pack. Readers are instead directed to existing relevant corporate guidance, for example Fife Council's Project Toolkit and associated guidance.

Partnerships that are underpinned by a **contract** are also excluded from the guidance, and readers are directed to relevant corporate guidance, for example Fife Council's Scheme of Tender procedures.

Partnerships that involve working with **third sector partners only** are also excluded from the guidance, and readers are again directed to relevant corporate guidance, for example Fife Council's Voluntary Sector Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

In summary, the definition of partnership used in this guidance excludes:

- Groups where an individual partner has direct control over the budget or decision making.
- Procurement and other contract arrangements.
- Commercial partnerships.
- Networking groups.
- Service level agreements (SLAs).
- Public Private Partnerships, Private Finance Initiatives, hub initiatives.
- Grant funding arrangements.
- Consultation groups.
- Arms length external organisations (ALEOs).

- Appointments or financial commitments to outside bodies where the partner organisation has no strategic or policy function.

A key feature of partnerships is that all the parties involved agree to the need for the partnership in these terms and establish a formal **partnership agreement** or other governance arrangement. There may be other ways to achieve the desired outcomes, and alternative mechanisms should be assessed before entering into any partnership agreement.

Appendix 1 sets out a suggested partnership agreement checklist.

4. WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

4.1 New partnerships

Senior managers and/or elected/non executive board members should agree to the creation of any new partnerships. They should consider the suggested criteria set out in the checklist in **Appendix 2** before granting approval.

4.2 Existing partnerships

Activities, outputs and outcomes should be reviewed annually. A regular report on the partnership's work should be presented - at least once a year - to the appropriate lead partnership, management team and committee or board.

Appendix 3 provides a summary of suggested roles and responsibilities in partnerships. By signing up to this way of working, partners will be able to work within a common agreed framework and to the same standards.

Partnerships should work to a formal partnership agreement which makes clear the aims and principles of the partnership, roles and accountabilities of each of the sectors represented on the partnership and the procedures under which the partnership will operate.

Partner organisations should also consider keeping an up to date partnership register. This would:

- Identify when the organisation is in a partnership, as opposed to a networking arrangement or a purely contractual relationship.
- Provide a way of reviewing partnership involvement - enabling partners to check if there is any duplication of partnership activity and to assess the scale of partner resources going into them.
- Provide clarity about which partnerships partner organisations are involved in and why, who is leading and how progress is being reported. This will help to

ensure that those individuals involved are receiving the policy guidance and information they need. The register should therefore be regularly updated.

- Ensure that organisations have a register of all significant partnerships – those that use the most resources, have the greatest impact and pose the greatest risk for the organisation.

4.3 Probity and stewardship

When dealing with public funds, partnership arrangements should have adequate procedures and processes in place to ensure that obligations in respect of probity and stewardship can be fully discharged.

Partnerships should have an appropriate form of governance, as well as effective procedures for resolving disputes. They should also regularly review the effectiveness of partnership working and be able to demonstrate that they are providing effective outcomes and value for money.

The partnership agreement should document, or at least refer to, the documented arrangements for sharing information, particularly if this involves the sharing of personal information as covered by the Data Protection Act 1998.

The Fife Data Sharing Partnership has been set up to support and oversee the effective sharing of information between Police Scotland, Fife Council and NHS Fife. It is hoped further agencies will join in the future. The three agencies have agreed, and signed up to, the **Fife Gold Standard Protocol for Sharing Information** which sets out the high level contractual basis for all information sharing and provides the framework for developing practical sharing arrangements to support service delivery.

4.4 Risk assessment and risk management

Good risk management is a key tool for delivering a successful partnership. Stakeholders in the partnership should have a common understanding of the potential risks associated with achieving partnership objectives, their relative seriousness, and how they can be managed. These risks should be recorded in a **partnership risk register**, which should also specify which agency or agencies are responsible for managing the action plan to reduce individual risks. A designated member of the partnership management group may be named as being accountable for maintaining the risk register and for ensuring its completion and timely review by relevant agencies or partners.

The partnership agreement should identify when, and in what format, the risk assessment and risk management plan will be monitored and reviewed, and by whom. Consideration should also be given to significant events, milestones or incidents that may indicate a need for the partnership to review its risks at particular times.

The partnership team or board should ensure that effective risk assessment is undertaken in all key decision making processes, and that, where necessary, the partnership implements risk management plans to alleviate identified risks. These should set clear deadlines and allocate responsible individuals for particular tasks. All partner agencies will have their own risk management guidance which can be referred to as appropriate. The [Fife Council Risk Management Manual](#) is available for information.

4.5 Impact assessment

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a legal duty to advance equality. This means that officers should consider positive or negative impacts when developing, changing or reviewing plans, policies and proposals. Impact should be considered in relation to the protected characteristics (previously known as equality groups) – *age, disability, race (includes colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins), religion or belief, gender/sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity and sexual orientation*.

Fife Partnership, for example, has developed an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) tool and supporting guidance to help officers to identify the relevance of their proposals to equality and diversity, the impact of the proposal on protected characteristics and then to consider whether a more detailed equality impact assessment is required. Individual partners may also have their own equalities guidance and requirements.

It is important to note that undertaking an IIA should help to improve decision making as it will involve a range of stakeholders who may be affected by potential policy or change in procedure.

Further information can be found at www.fifedirect.org.uk.

4.6 Skills for partnership working

Partnership working needs particular skills and abilities. Partner organisations and partnerships should ensure that officers and elected members are given opportunities develop the skills needed for partnership working. This will include information on how to use this guidance. Examples of the skills and knowledge needed are shown in **Appendix 4**.

For many staff, the work they do in or with partnerships will be an integral part of their job or role and, to differing degrees, they may become involved in the day-to-day management or running of these groups, whatever their role within the partnership. In these circumstances, distinctions between the responsibilities of the partner organisation, the individual officer or non executive member and the

partnership body itself may become blurred. This guidance aims to help avoid such difficulties.

4.7 Review and evaluation

Review - There are two aspects to this. Firstly, regular reviews should be carried of **the partnership itself**, to provide assurance that proper systems are in place and that its outcomes and performance can be monitored and evaluated. Secondly, partner organisations should regularly review **their own involvement** to provide assurance about the effectiveness and value of their own input, and whether organisational requirements are being met.

Reports should be submitted to the appropriate senior officer and partnership group, setting out the findings of the review and any action required. Reviews should be carried out on an annual basis. This exercise is not a substitute for the ongoing monitoring, evaluation and reporting responsibilities of the partnership itself.

Evaluation – The aim of this is to assess the **impact** of the partnership. Regular reports on individual partnerships should be submitted to the appropriate lead partnership group by the appropriate lead officer.

5. EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING

5.1 What helps to make partnership working successful?

It is important to acknowledge the challenges of effective partnership working. There are no easy solutions or 'off the shelf' answers. There will be a need for cultural change and continuous learning and development to meet these challenges.

Opportunities should be created in partnerships for people to get to know one another. This can be done through informal networking, focus groups, seminars and involvement in working groups. There is an extensive literature outlining good practice in partnership working. However, a number of criteria can be identified to ensure effective partnership working in a community planning framework:

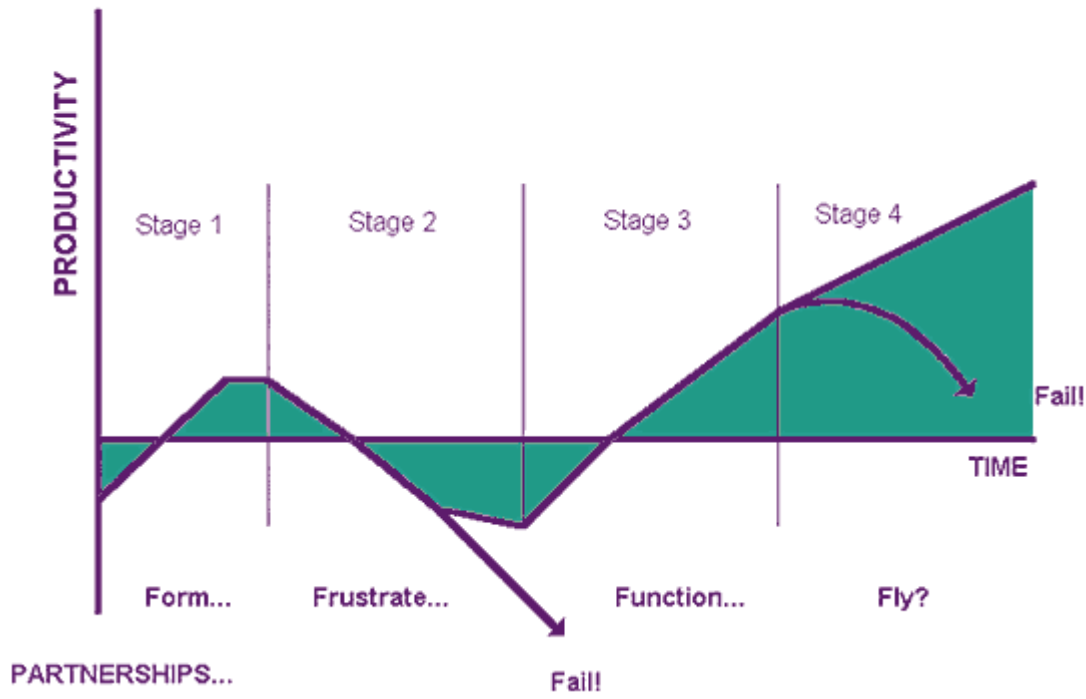
Key Principles

- ✓ **Getting ready** - Preparation time is needed to deal adequately with practical matters. Be aware of the scope of the partnership. Be able to meet, talk and share experiences of roles and jobs. Agree the roles necessary to make the partnership work.
- ✓ **Clear vision and objectives** - Recognise the need for these. This involves explaining the idea behind the partnership, the vision, aims and objectives. Clear objectives should lead to clear work plans and clear plans for partner agencies and coordinators.
- ✓ **Differences among partnership members** - Face up to issues arising from variations in culture, experience, language etc.
- ✓ **Building up trust, honesty and understanding** – This is only achieved with time and effort. The building of trust should begin during the initial phase of a partnership. It can be aided by joint work on simple projects with appropriate feedback and evaluation.
- ✓ **Communication** - Communicate with all parties as effectively as possible. The size of the partnership will affect the structures and procedures
- ✓ **Dealing with issues of power, influence and inequality** - Statutory agencies often assume that they are leading, and voluntary sector members may feel left out of the decision-making process. This can be resolved through open discussion, honesty and preparation.
- ✓ **Project management** - Develop good management skills. Prepare a clear plan, clarify objectives and performance management frameworks. Establish an agreed method for monitoring and review.
- ✓ **Target setting** – Establish clear steps along the way.
- ✓ **Acknowledging the work of partners** - Share success and recognise contributions to ensure all partners feel valued.
- ✓ **New and creative ideas** - Look out for innovative ways of working to add value to day to day activities.

5.2 The partnership life cycle

It is helpful to think of partnerships going through a series of stages, during which particular tactics are needed to ensure partnership progress and success. These are similar to the stages that any team is likely to go through, as people come together to achieve common goals.

The Partnership Life Cycle



(Source: www.lgpartnerships.com)

Like teams within organisations, partnerships typically go through stages, described here as **forming, frustration, functioning, flying or failing**. The following table provides some helpful hints about what to do about it:

Some Helpful Hints.....

If you're at this stage?	Consider....	Is this action relevant to your partnership?
<p>Forming:</p> <p>New challenges New relationships Shared interests Common Causes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create opportunities to get to know each other • Encourage partners to focus on a common vision - the difference they want to make together • Define tasks and tangible outcomes • Shepherd the process of building the partnership agenda - including the use of research • Ensure a neutral meeting ground 	
<p>Frustration:</p> <p>Doubts? Tensions?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisit the common ground. Allow time to redefine issues, purpose etc • Maximise opportunities for practical involvement • Implement actions that demonstrate progress ('little victories') • Encourage open expression and constructive disagreement • Clarify benefits to individual partners • Fix the problem, not the blame 	
<p>Functioning:</p> <p>Focus Renewed Vision Clear roles Accountability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree clear objectives, milestones, responsibilities, success measures • Establish principles/protocols for collaboration • Encourage shared leadership and accountability • Develop common methods and quality standards • Seek learning consciously through cross-partner project teams, joint training and by reviewing activities 	
<p>Flying:</p> <p>Achievement of goals Trust and respect Shared leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipate future challenges and build partner capacity to respond • Take stock of how well the group is performing • Keep working at communications • Avoid any unnecessary partnership working • Ask 'does the partnership still serve its purpose?' • Ensure that all partners are getting the benefits they expect • Continue to celebrate success 	
<p>Failing:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go back to stage 1 and reassess 	

Partnership Agreement Checklist

(Suggested format and contents, the level of detail required will depend on the amount of resources and the level of risk to partner organisations)

1. Purpose.

- What is the function and purpose of the partnership?
- Who will benefit from the partnership?
- What added value will it achieve?
- What will it achieve that the partners can't achieve on their own? - Is the partnership required by law/ in order to receive additional funding / meet a requirement of an assessment regime / statutory guidance.
- How will the partners realise these goals?
- What activities will be undertaken on behalf of the partnership?
- How does the partnership link to the Community Plan or partner organisations' corporate plans?

2. Accountability

- Who is accountable for the partnership?

3. Terms of Reference

4. Membership & Decision Making

- What are the membership arrangements of the partnership?
- Who is on the partnership and who do they represent?
- How will the partnership ensure that membership is sufficiently inclusive?
- How will you encourage full representation?
- How accessible is decision making for groups to contribute fully?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the partnership?
- How will decisions be taken within the partnership?

5. Management & Operation of the Partnership

- What is the structure of the partnership? (Is it a sub-group of a larger partnership?)
- Will it have its own sub-groups?
- What principles or ground rules will govern the partnership?
- What arrangements will be put in place for agenda management and administrative support?
- What is the notice and frequency of meeting; quorum rules; chairing arrangements; voting arrangements; representation of other members; are substitutes allowed; are meetings open to the public therefore DDA compliant; are all agendas, reports and minutes available to the public?
- How many days in advance of the meeting will the papers be circulated, when will the minutes be available; are appropriate venues available for faith groups?
- How will the partnership maintain openness and transparency?
- How will the work of the partnership be communicated and how will media issues be dealt with?

- How will consultation on behalf of the partnership be coordinated and how will you ensure full representative engagement?

6. Code of Conduct

- What arrangements are in place for guiding the conduct of individual partnership members?
- How will declarations of interest be managed?
- How are gifts and hospitality dealt with?
- How will harassment and bullying be dealt with?

7. Resources and Financial Controls

- How will the partnership be resourced? Is there a clear budget set, covering both income and expenditure, for revenue and capital purposes?
- What arrangements are in place for monitoring the partnership's budget?
- How will action be taken where there are major variances in the budget?
- What arrangements are in place to limit the financial liabilities that the partnership can incur?
- What financial procedures/controls are in place?
- What mechanisms are in place to review the financial procedures/controls on a regular basis?
- Where the partnership must meet specific minimum guidelines in order to maintain funding, what arrangements are in place for monitoring how the guidelines are met?
- Where partnerships have staff and/or other assets and one organisation is acting as the host body, what arrangements are in place for clarifying and transfer of these?
- Have the VAT arrangements been agreed with Customs and Excise?

8. Conflict and complaints resolution

- What processes are in place for resolving disputes that may arise between partners?
- What processes are in place for determining who will respond to and resolve complaints against the partnership?

9. Information

- What information will agencies need to share?
- How will this be done? (Including overcoming any technical or legal barriers)
- How does the partnership comply with data protection and information security requirements?

10. Performance and monitoring

- What arrangements are in place for managing and monitoring the performance of the partnership?
- How and when will performance be reviewed?

11. Equalities

- What arrangements are in place to ensure that equality is actively promoted?
- How will the partnership carry out its equality public duties?
- How do the partnership actions/outcomes assist equality schemes?

- What arrangements are in place to ensure that equality is actively promoted?
- Have partners had equalities training?
- How will the partnership measure impact on disadvantaged communities?
- How will the partnership ensure involvement of disadvantaged groups?

12. Legalities

- What arrangements are in place to ensure that the partnership is not able to commit potentially fraudulent or illegal transactions?
- Does the solicitor/legal services representative receive regular reports on new initiatives and progress of the partnership?
- What arrangements does the partnership have for seeking relevant legal advice?

13. Risk Management

- What arrangements are in place for identifying, assessing and managing the risks associated with the partnership?
- Does the partnership have a risk register?

14. Exit strategy

- Have you got an exit strategy?
- What are the arrangements for ending the partnership?
- What are the arrangements to feedback to all parties?

15. Signatures of partners

- All key partners must sign and date the Agreement

Pre-Partnership Checklist

1. Partnership information

- What is the partnership intended to achieve? (Clear, documented and agreed aims, objectives, outcomes and targets)
- What is its intended lifespan?
- What other organisations will be represented?
- Who will lead the partnership?
- What are the risks to partner organisations, who will manage them and how?
- What is the exit strategy for the partnership and for partner organisations?

2. Assessment of fit with partner priorities

- What are the expected roles and contributions of partners?
- How does participation contribute to partner priorities?
- Is participation in the partnership in line with the community plan and corporate plans?
- Is this a partnership or is it really something else? (For example, a service level agreement or a simple funding request)

3. Resource Implications

- What are the resource implications (staff, capital and revenue funds, use of assets)?
- What resources are available?
- How are partners resourcing their participation?
- Are there other sources of funding available?
- Are there future budget implications?
- Does the partnership exist to gain access to funding?

4. Other Considerations

- What are the arrangements for monitoring, reporting, and reviewing - to who and when?
- Does the partnership link in to other partnerships? If so how?
- Has the partnership been the subject of consultation with other service areas? If so, have opportunities and conflicts been addressed?
- Will anybody be disadvantaged by the partnership in terms of race, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability or faith?
- Are partnership decisions legally binding on the partners?

Partnerships – roles and responsibilities

1. Role of the officer/member attendee

- Provide a point of contact between the partner organisation and the partnership.
- Help the partnership's work with the partner organisation.
- Facilitate the partner organisation's input into the partnership.
- Review performance against agreed activities and targets and submit a formal report to the partner organisation as required.
- Report on an exception basis if any issues arise.
- Alert relevant officers to any issues e.g. legal, internal audit, finance.
- Support an annual evaluation of the partnership's activity and make recommendations about actions required.
- Assist in ensuring equality duties are met and report any risks.

2. Role of lead officer/s

- Ensure this partnership guidance is used for all new and existing partnerships.
- Assess the findings of review and evaluation, make formal recommendations, discuss any concerns with the partnership and, if appropriate, brief the relevant management team.
- Action any points arising from the review and/or evaluation.
- Contribute to the overall assessment of effectiveness of the partnership.
- Identify any learning and development requirements.
- Ensure the partner organisation benefits from learning and development.
- Troubleshoot any problems that arise in the day to day operation of the partnership.
- Produce an annual report summarising the outcome of the reviews and evaluations
- Identify any actions necessary.
- Identify learning from the past year and make recommendations as appropriate to ensure that partner organisations benefit.

- Establish a performance reporting framework for partnerships linked to the delivery of outcomes.

3. Role of lead partnership

- Consider the annual partnership report and analyse outcomes, impact and direction.
- Identify and disseminate learning from the past year's activities/experience.
- Ensure partnerships are properly supported and resourced.
- Monitor overall impact of the partnership and advise on any further action required.
- Make recommendations on changes to partnership arrangements.
- Identify issues that have not been addressed adequately and consider resolution.

Skills and Knowledge for Partnership Working

Leadership:

Skills - Coalition building, vision and consensus building, communicating, consulting, managing change, delegating, influencing, negotiating and assertiveness.

Knowledge - Needs and opportunities which provide the basis for common ground, policy and funding developments, partners' roles, contributions, constraints, motivations

Trust:

Skills - Building relationships, managing expectations, promoting dialogue, listening, empathy, managing conflict, giving constructive feedback, managing communications, coping with the unfamiliar and unexpected

Knowledge - Group dynamics, cultures, values and ways of working with others, forms of partnership agreement

Learning:

Skills - Problem solving, creative thinking, systems thinking, networking, diagnosing performance issues

Knowledge - Benchmarking and process mapping, partnership review and evaluation, how to promote learning in partnerships, facilitation techniques

Managing Performance:

Skills - Negotiating, entrepreneurial, setting objectives and performance measures, project planning/management

Knowledge - Partnership structures, accountability mechanisms, managing meetings, ways of making better use of resources