

PARTNERSHIP

Partnership is a policy 'buzzword' at the moment.

It sometimes seems that everywhere you look politicians and policy makers are talking about the need for people to work in partnership to make a difference in their community.

- Community Planning Partnerships are developing plans and priorities for local areas
- Public / Private partnerships are building schools and hospitals
- Learning Partnerships are promoting life-long learning opportunities
- Community and Police Partnerships are working together to target anti-social behaviour and other safety issues
- and almost every funding body will ask for evidence of partnership working before considering applications

BUT, and almost despite this current popularity,

partnerships can also be a very effective way for local groups, organisations and communities to work together and achieve more than they may have been able to achieve on their own

So what makes a good partnership?

Partnerships are fundamentally about people coming together to share a common problem or issue, and taking responsibility for doing something about it collectively.

For a Partnership to work it must be genuinely in the best interests of all parties involved in the partnership – i.e. that it will help them achieve something that may have been more difficult (or even impossible) if they were to 'go it alone'.

One way of thinking about partnership working is to look at how 'close' partners are to one another. Do they mainly:

- **Co-operate?** Partners may share information and recognise one another's role in a project, however, there is no joint planning and resources are kept separate.
- **Co-ordinate?** Partners will do some planning together for a specific project, there will be some sharing of roles and responsibilities and some shared resources.
- **Collaborate?** Partners commit themselves fully to the aims of the project and make decisions together so that there is a higher degree of shared leadership, control, resources and credit (and also risk if things don't work out well)

Generally, the nearer partners are to collaboration, the more likely it is that the project will be a success.

Some questions to consider when planning for partnership working?

- Is the group or organisation you are thinking of working in partnership with one that you think you can work well with?
Is there a logical and comfortable fit between organisations? or are you entering into a 'marriage of convenience'?
- Can you work together as equal partners?
(This does not necessarily mean that you have equal resources to commit to a project but rather that each organisation in a partnership respects the specific skills and experience that the other brings.)
- Are you all clear about the aims and objectives of the partnership?
- Do they fit clearly with what you / your group are trying to achieve?
- Does the partnership have the potential to 'add value' to the work of your group?
- What is in it for the other members of the partnership?
- Are you clear about what you can bring to the table?
- Is it clear who has responsibility for what?
- Are you being realistic about what the partnership can help to achieve?

