

## **Introduction**

Partnership working is increasingly important in the development of policy and in the delivery of service for the public sector, and the Winchester District is no exception. The District has many different partnerships working to create a better standard of living for all those living and working in the District currently, and in the future. Partnership working can add many benefits to the delivery of services by the Council and its partners, including better understanding of the needs of the public through shared perspectives, seamless provision of services, economies of scale, avoidance of duplication, shared skills, knowledge and data and securing additional resources.

The need for a toolkit to guide partnership working in the Winchester District was identified in the 2006 review of partnerships undertaken by the City Council. The toolkit will also build on work started by the Winchester District Strategic Partnership (WDSP) looking at partnership working and how it helps to deliver the Community Strategy.

This toolkit is designed to be used by any partnership in the Winchester District and by any partner organization.

### **Winchester Community Strategy**

The main context for partnership working in the Winchester District is the Community Strategy. This document sets out the key outcomes that we want to achieve for the District for the next 20 years. It contains short term actions and longer term changes to how we do things: either way it can only be delivered through individuals making their contribution and (most importantly) through partnership working.

Partnerships have two vital roles in contributing towards the Community Strategy.

- They are key in informing what the priorities in the Strategy should be, and
- They are key in delivering the Strategy.

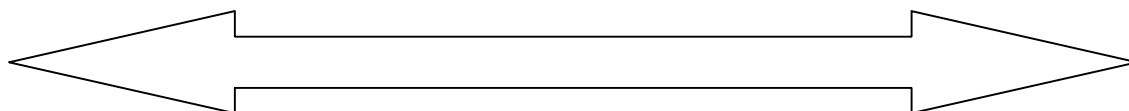
Their work programmes will be directed by the Community Strategy and the Winchester District Strategic Partnership's Board. In turn, they will be supported by the Board whose main role is to unblock 'blockages' which prevent partnerships from delivering.

For a copy of the current Community Strategy, contact the Winchester City Council Chief Executives Department on 01962 848 100 or you can find it online at <http://www.winchester.gov.uk/General.asp?id=SX9452-A782D886>

### **Definition of a partnership**

The word partnership can be used to describe a whole range of working arrangements. 'Partnership' is often used to define a point anywhere along a continuum ranging from informal networking/information sharing through to full collaboration including pooled budgets and joint performance management arrangements, as shown in the table below:

|              |                                |          |  |                        |                      |  |
|--------------|--------------------------------|----------|--|------------------------|----------------------|--|
| Info sharing | Joint identification of issues | Lobbying | Identification of shared actions/goals<br>Coordination | Joint project planning | Pooling of resources | Joint delivery<br>Joint performance management<br>Joint review |
|--------------|--------------------------------|----------|--|------------------------|----------------------|--|



The definition of a partnership to be used by this toolkit is:

*‘A relationship between two or more independent organisations working together to secure some shared objective’*

This toolkit will be useful to all partnerships coming under this definition and falling into one of the categories of the continuum in the table above.

This toolkit doesn’t aim to be prescriptive. Partnerships can use this guidance where it will be useful to them. Partnerships come in a wide variety, and whilst detailed guidance on financial management might be useful for one, it might not be relevant for another – so use this toolkit as necessary and according to the size and purpose of partnership.

The toolkit consists of guidance, checklists and series of bullet points for partners to consider at various points throughout the life of the partnership.

### **Drivers for partnership working**

There are many reasons why organisations want to work in partnership. Below are some of the national drivers for partnership working, which will influence the statutory organisations in the District.

- The 2000 Local Government Act gave local authorities the ‘power of well-being’. This gave local councils the opportunity to work with other partners and the ability to work in any area for the economic, social and environmental well-being of the District
- The need to base future plans and services on holistic themes affecting whole communities; not just focusing on single service areas but on issues that cut across many different sectors and services, such as community safety or public health
- The Local Government White Paper (‘Strong and Prosperous Communities’) supports effective partnership working, encouraging greater service collaboration, consultation with communities and a focus on improving whole areas rather than just individual services – something that must be done in partnership with other organisations. Local Area Agreements will also

become the norm for public sector working. This is an agreement with central government over a series of local targets which all local organisations, not just public sector agencies, can work towards and contribute to

As well as the pressure from government to work in partnership to maximise resources, there are many excellent reasons why partnership working makes sense:

- Funding bodies look favourably on bids coming from genuine partnerships
- It is a good way of increasing your organisation's skills and capacity
- Bigger and more thorough consultation processes can be undertaken by a group of partners
- It can help build coalitions and good relationships with other organisations
- It can improve the quality of services by making them more joined up, preventing a waste of resources where services overlap and increase the reach of services
- It is a way to share knowledge, data and understanding
- It is a way to share responsibility and risk

However, there are also possible risks associated with partnership working, such as:

- Too much time spent on administration and processes rather than on delivering results
- Partnerships may not deliver value for money
- Accountability may become blurred, particularly where public money is being spent by a body separate to the elected authority for the area
- The level of commitment by partners to the partnership may not be clear, causing disruption during the partnership's life
- The partnership's aims may not be clear, causing confusion and partners wishing to work in different directions
- There may not be enough officer support given to running the partnership, which will lead to a loss of momentum

These risks can and should be managed. The toolkit will help partnerships address some of these risks, and the toolkit's section on Performance Management deals with undertaking a risk assessment for the partnership. A risk assessment should be completed when setting up new partnerships or when reviewing existing ones. By investing some time in doing things like a risk assessment, time and resources can be saved later on. This will also help the partnership to work well and make the most of partners' time.

### **What makes successful partnerships?**

Using this toolkit will set you on the way to forming and maintaining a successful partnership. A key aspect to this is clarity of roles, aims and responsibilities but there are many other factors which will help.

A successful partnership is one where:

- The purpose of the partnership is clearly defined and is focused on improvements to the provision of services and the well-being of communities.

- There is respect for the roles of partner organisations and for the statutory role of some partners for service delivery.
- A culture of trust and openness is nurtured within the partnership.
- That there is a joint commitment for the partnership to succeed.
- The partnership is appropriately inclusive and representative of stakeholder interests.
- There are arrangements for the induction of new partners and an exit strategy where relevant.
- There is a regular cycle of review in which partners assess how well the partnership is fulfilling its purpose, and decide on action to improve if appropriate.
- The review and evaluation suggested above is reported publicly in a clear and accessible manner
- A process of performance management where clear targets are set for delivery and where there is regular monitoring of performance against these is in place

And perhaps most importantly:

- **The partnership delivers desirable change**