Third Sector Partnership Compass:

What research tells us about engaging in positive partnership

How do I find my partnership?

A Scottish Third Sector Research Forum resource

February 2016

Preface

"The Third Sector Partnership Compass was written by the Scottish Third Sector Research Forum ('the Forum'), in response to a demand amongst third sector organisations working in partnership for tools and resources to help guide them through collaborative working both within and between sectors[1,2,3].

This resource builds on the work produced by others to highlight a number of ***good practice principles*** *for positive partnerships. It is not an exhaustive list for all of the different types of partnership but should instead be seen as a reference guide for new and existing partnerships."*

Steven Marwick, Chair of the Scottish Third Sector Research Forum

The Forum brings together Scottish Government and third sector strategic partners to obtain holistic oversight of third sector evidence and data needs; to work collaboratively to identify research questions and meet evidence gaps; to share and critique data, evidence and knowledge, and to maximise the impact of third sector evidence through knowledge transfer and dissemination.

The Forum would like to thank those organisations that contributed to the development of this resource with their experience, knowledge and helpful resources.

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[1] *Partnerships and Collaborations*. Kris Von Wald and Linda Boyes, Evolving Leadership and Governance Forum (2010)
[2] *Supporting collaboration and partnerships in a changing context: A study for the Big Lottery Fund*. Big Lottery Fund (2011)
[3] *Working in partnership: A snapshot of needs and experiences in collaborative work in Scotland*. Lucy Stewart, Association of Chief Officers of Scottish Voluntary Organisations (2013)

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1. Introduction

In a time of reduced public sector budgets and increased demand for services, organisations are increasingly being encouraged to work more closely together, to share their resources and deliver more effective, integrated services for communities. Indeed, the Christie Commission highlights the need for public, third and private sector organisations and communities to work in partnership when designing and delivering services in order to achieve better outcomes for people and communities[4].

The third sector is well placed to deliver many of the recommendations of the Christie Commission regarding partnership working in terms of its skills, knowledge and experience. This is being increasingly recognised by the Scottish Government, for example through its defined role on the community planning partnerships and the health and social care partnerships.

In addition, the decisive shift towards prevention – one of the "four pillars of Christie" – provides new opportunities for partnership working in areas such as health and social care integration (2011)[5], social prescribing and reducing reoffending (2012)[6,7]. Specifically, the third sector has experience and understanding of working with individuals and communities, and of mobilising the skills and knowledge of people and their communities, rather than viewing them as passive recipients of services. This co-production of solutions is essential to successful anticipatory and preventative spend.

> *"The traditional public service delivery of one agency delivering a service in isolation is no longer appropriate as we move towards preventative approaches and person-centred services. An increased focus on delivering the most dynamic services to an individual and a community has meant that organisations are increasingly seeing the importance of working*

[4] *Commission on the future delivery of public services*. The Christie Commission (2011)
[5] *Why Involve the Third Sector in Health and Social Care Delivery*. Scottish Third Sector Research Forum (2011)
[6] *Why Involve the Third Sector in Reducing Reoffending*. Scottish Third Sector Research Forum (2012)
[7] *Collaboration works: Putting the third sector at the heart of collaboration*. Voluntary Action Scotland (2015)

together and building collaboration.'' **Collaboration works, Voluntary Action Scotland (2015)**

Definition of 'partnership'

While there is no single definition of 'partnership working', the Big Lottery Fund describes it in its partnership guidance for funded projects as:

> *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. This involves the sharing of skills and resources in a climate of mutual understanding, trust and respect."* [8]

The Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland's Partnership Drugs Initiative (PDI)[9] and others make the following classification depending on the type of partnership work [10]:

- Two or more agencies **formally** joining together to work on a specific project
- **Informal** working between two or more organisations to achieve closer or more joined-up working to better serve the needs of a client or user group
- **Integrated** action at a local level based on the premise that no individual agency or sector can make a difference to quality of life or achieve change in communities.

There are also a number of other associated terms which are used by different organisations and sectors to explain specific types of partnership working, including 'collaboration,' 'integration,' 'joint working' and 'networks.' These are often used to signify different types of relationships between organisations, including the formality of the arrangement (for instance, whether or not a legal contract is in place), accountability of different partners and the division of resources. In this resource we use the term 'partnership' to encompass all of the different arrangements for working together.

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[8] *Good practice guide: Working in partnership*. Big Lottery Fund

[9] http://www.lloydstsbfoundationni.org/sites/default/files/CC%20report%20spreads%20web.pdf

[10] A multidimensional framework for conceptualizing human services integration initiatives. Konrad, E. L. (1996). In J. M. Marquart & E. L. Konrad (Eds.), *New Directors for Evaluation: Evaluating Initiatives to Integrate Human Services*, 69, 5-19.

What constitutes ‘partnership working’ can vary depending on the particular organisations or stakeholders that are working together, how the partnership is managed or structured and what the partners are aiming to achieve through working this way.

Purpose of this resource

As noted before, there is no agreed definition of ‘partnership working’ and likewise, there are no agreed rules of what constitutes ‘good partnership working’. What proves effective for one partnership may not work for another and external factors like personalities and individual working styles will always come into play.

Are we in the right place for partnership?

This resource therefore does not outline specific steps or approaches that should be followed strictly in order to develop and maintain a ‘good partnership’. Instead, it should be seen as a reference guide that **pulls together current learning around good practice in partnership working into one simple resource** that organisations can refer to when considering:

(i) Whether partnership working is right for the project;

(ii) What support and infrastructures they may want to put in place to increase the likelihood of their partnership functioning effectively; and

(iii) The effectiveness of their current partnership(s).

This will include dedicating sufficient time to understand each partner's organisational culture and to ensure all partners have a shared vision for the partnership.

Structure

This resource is broken down into a number of smaller sections which are outlined below.

Section 1 – Introduction: provides information of how this resource came about, what it is for, how it is structured and who it is for.

Section 2 – To partner or not to partner: highlights some of the advantages and challenges for working collaboratively. It also has a *checklist* on page 12 to help you decide if partnership working is right for the project.

Section 3 – Good practice in a positive partnership: contains six key principles, based on existing evidence, to help you establish an effective partnership or to monitor an existing one. Each one contains key points, helpful hints and an action checklist.

Section 4 – Examples of good partnership work: provides links to examples of effective partnerships.

Section 5 – Tools: contains diagrams showing the overarching journey for effective partnerships. This has been adapted from the Evidence Review published by What Works Scotland in 2015.

Section 6 – Other resources and references: includes useful sources of information and support; many of which informed the development of this partnership compass.

If you are **new to partnership working** you may choose to read the whole resource in order to identify useful tips and resources. Otherwise, you may prefer to go straight to the most relevant section to where your partnership is.

Who is this resource for?

This partnership compass is for **anyone in the third sector who wants to engage in positive partnership**, regardless of the level of experience they have in doing so. As well as being a useful tool for those who are starting out in a new partnership it also aims to help re-energise existing partnerships by highlighting where improvements might be made.

The resource will also be of value to a wide range of organisations that (might) work in partnership with the third sector, including funders and commissioners, academics, the public sector and associated agencies.

Most importantly, this resource is aimed at any organisations who want to improve their partnership working skills in order to achieve better outcomes for services users and communities.

2. To partner or not to partner

The ultimate aim of partnership working is to enable partner agencies to achieve better outcomes through working collaboratively, than they would have been able to achieve on their own. In some cases it may not be the most effective way of achieving improved outcomes.

Research that we looked at for this guide (see Section 6) tells us that the most common **benefits and advantages** to partnership working include:

- Sharing and making better use of existing resources, such as staff, premises or funding, as well as organisational knowledge and skills
- Improving the quality of services by offering more joined-up, holistic support for service users
- Drawing on the knowledge and resources of all partners to develop new or innovative services, including around prevention
- Being able to reach a wider group of service users
- Developing stronger relationships amongst staff from the partner agencies and a better knowledge and understanding of the value of the work they deliver, which may extend beyond the life of the partnership
- Reducing duplication, confusion and competition between services
- Sharing positive and negative learning, intended and unintended outcomes of a service
- Reinvigorating community activity and empowering a wider range of social and cultural groups to be involved in designing and delivering services who may otherwise not have the opportunity to do so.

Figure 1: Reasons for working in partnership highlighted in "Fife partnership resource pack" (2007)[11], aimed at Community Planning Partnerships.

However, there are also **disadvantages and challenges** to partnership working, such as:

- It can be more time-consuming than working alone, and it may lead to delays in decisions being reached and/or actions being implemented
- Organisations with different cultures and values may not be able to reach an agreement about how to address certain issues
- Partnerships are made up of people. People have personalities, which may clash at times. This may have a major impact on effectiveness.
- Innovative responses to problems may not be adopted if decisions need to be reached by consensus, and certain members of the partnership are risk adverse

[11] *Fife Partnership Resource Pack*. Fife Partnership (2007)

- There may be an imbalance of knowledge and decision making power between partners sitting around the table, so while they are working in partnership this may not necessarily be an equal partnership
- If there is not a shared purpose within the partnership it may turn into a bureaucratic talking shop or a channel for individual agendas to be taken forward
- Organisations may be reluctant to share information and intellectual property with organisations that can be seen as competitors in their sector
- There is a risk to an organisation's reputation if the work the partnership takes forward is not successful.

It is also worth noting that there is limited evidence showing links between partnership working in UK public services and improved outcomes for individuals and communities. Rather than suggesting that there isn't a link between the two though, the gap in evidence has been partially attributed to a lack of focus within the partnerships on the intended final outcomes.[12] If you do decide to engage in partnership working it is vital that you consider the final outcome(s) you hope to achieve and that you keep this in the forefront of your mind throughout the project. This will help your partnership to stay on track and is as effective as possible.

Take home message:

It is important to be able to **recognise the situations where 'partnership working' is the right approach** for your organisation and to **be aware of both the benefits and challenges** involved in working this way.

"There is often an assumption that a partnership is always the most effective, inclusive and efficient means of achieving policy outcomes. This is true in many cases, but the pros and cons of working in partnership as the best means of achieving a policy outcome should be considered at the outset." **Working in Partnership, IOD PARC (2005)[13]**

[12] Partnership working across UK public services: an evidence review. What Works Scotland (2015), p.6
[13] Working in partnership: Evaluating our ability to influence and achieve better policy outcomes. IOD PARC (2005)

Are you ready to set up a partnership?

The following **checklist** includes a number of things to consider before setting up a partnership. Once you are confident that you have given careful consideration to forming a partnership you are set to go!

- ☐ What are your expectations regarding the partnership?
- ☐ Does your potential partner share the same expectations?
- ☐ Do you understand mutual constraints (in terms of resources, time, expertise, etc.)?
- ☐ Have you identified clear goals for the partnership?
- ☐ How will the partnership benefit your clients/service users/stakeholders?
- ☐ What is the current opinion on partnership work within your own organisation?
- ☐ How are you planning to manage your own organisational involvement?
- ☐ How are you planning to manage the risks of partnership?
- ☐ Are there any legal/regulatory requirements to think about (e.g. consent of board or funder, etc.)?

3. Good practice in a positive partnership

Partnerships can take different forms and involve organisations and people in different ways and at different levels; however, most, if not all, positive and healthy partnerships will have a number of themes in common. These are good practice principles that make partnership working more effective.

In addition to good practice principles, a good working partnership must have a strong foundation.

"The barriers and facilitators (to partnership working) are often two sides of the same coin." (Ling 2012:3)[14]

Trust is an essential 'brick'. Trust enables dialogue between partners, which will most likely be needed at all stages: from set up to continuation of relationship once the partnership is dissolved. However, trust cannot be taken for granted or be assumed; it takes time and effort to build strong trusting relationships. In fact, trust is the product of everything else the partnership does.

Trust requires partners to have tolerance, acceptance and willingness to work and learn together. Following the principles below will help build that trust.

Another essential brick of a healthy partnership and key to achieving trust is **leadership**. A good leader should enable and create a safe inclusive environment, where issues can be discussed and dealt within partnership. A good leader should also be able to accept that the world is not perfect and mistakes and/or failures might happen.

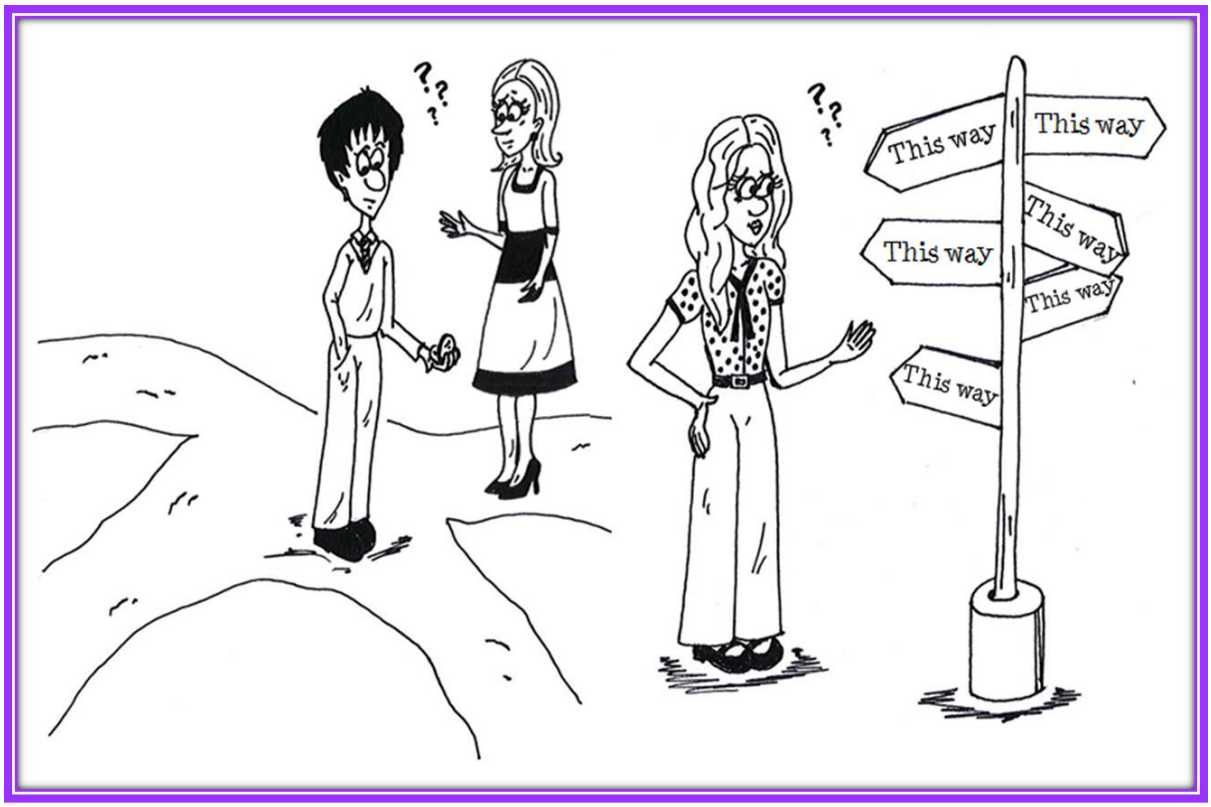
Partnerships are complex systems working in a complex funding and policy landscape. As a result they need to be **flexible**, both in terms of how they achieve their outcomes and how the partners work together internally. By carefully monitoring and evaluating the project and the partnership, as well as being open to change, it will ensure that any issues can be addressed and remedied early on.

[14] Cited in Partnership working across UK public services: an evidence review. What Works Scotland (2015), p.8

Research carried out for this resource highlights a range of good practice examples which all partnerships should follow. This resource has summarised them into **six good practice principles**.

This resource identifies, for each of the six good practice principles that follow, a number of **key points for you (and your potential partners) to consider**, as well as an **action checklist** and useful **tips** to help you embed the good practice into your partnership. There are also some **health check indicators** to help you monitor existing partnerships and make sure they are on track.

Section 4 of this resource (pages 29-31) includes a list of case studies which illustrate the principles that follow.



Which way to partnership?

Principle 1: Ensure the purpose of the partnership is clear

"Successful partnerships are constructed through a shared vision, a belief in a better, more constructive way of working and improved outcomes. They should be principally guided by the needs of the service user. Partnerships should not be seen as a 'route to market' and effectiveness is built upon high levels of trust and on relinquishing power for the common power."

Working in Partnership, ACOSVO

Key points to consider:

- What is the situation you are **trying to solve**?
- What **skills / resources / knowledge** do you need to solve the problem? What are the gaps?
- Why are you looking to work in partnership? What are your **motives**?
- What partners would best compliment you/your organisation? Why?
- Are they **interested in partnering** with you? Why? (It's a win-win situation: remember, all gain something from working in partnership)
- Do you have **shared goals**? – Partners need to have the same vision/aims
- Are your trustees and staff (at all levels) **on board** with your partnership plans? If not, why not and how can you get them on board?
- Do you have buy-in from external stakeholders including potential service users, the local community, other organisations, and local and national government, where appropriate? If not, why not and how can you get them on board?
- Are all of the different approaches, skills and expertise within the partnership being recognised and valued?

Action checklist:

- ☐ We have collaboratively crafted a shared vision for the work
- ☐ Together we have identified together the components that will support successful implementation of our shared vision

- ☐ We have buy-in from all of the partners and external stakeholders (where appropriate)
- ☐ We review the partnership's progress against the shared vision at regular intervals
- ☐ We monitor the mechanisms through which the trustees and staff at each of the partner organisations are informed of key developments in the partnership.

Develop a *Skills/ Knowledge Matrix* that sets out the skills, knowledge and experience that you currently have so you can identify gaps that could be filled by partnering with others.

Further information on how to build a skills/ knowledge matrix can be found at:

http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/how-to-create-a-skills-matrix.html

http://www.cipd.co.uk/nr/rdonlyres/e062bdf4-cfda-48f4-bc79-c954c9f729dc/0/competencyandskillsmatrixpresentation10jan2013.pdf

Principle 2: Be clear about expectations (and how these are managed)

Key points to consider:

- Are you clear on what each partner wants to **get out from the partnership**?
- Are you open to negotiating **partnering terms**?
- Have you agreed protocols for working together? (Including communication and responsibilities)

"Clarification of roles within a partnership is essential. Power relations, challenges to professional identify and anxiety and role confusion are often cited as barriers to cross sector working and can be avoided by specifying roles and objectives early." **Working in partnership, ACOSVO**

- Do you have **good communication** channels? – Talk to each other, establish clear communication links to ensure that each partnersis clear on what they need to contribute
- Do you have **shared language**? – Remember, not everyone will understand the jargon used within your own organisation. Keep it clear, simple and understandable
- Are all of the relevant stakeholders **realistic** about what the partnership can achieve?
- Have you considered what you and your partners will do when **things don't go to plan**?

Evidence collated by ACOSVO suggests that it is important that all organisations and individuals involved in joint initiatives are clear about the purpose of the change in service and of utmost importance, know what their roles are.

Action checklist:

- ☐ We know what each partner and the partnership as a whole are here to achieve
- ☐ We know the actions/steps we are going to take to achieve our goals/ objectives/outcomes

- ☐ We know what, within our own delivery and our partnership's delivery, needs to be improved
- ☐ We share and champion the learning from the partnership in our own organisations. We see partnership as a learning experience. We acknowledge that different partners might have different learning curves
- ☐ We have developed a communications strategy for our partnership
- ☐ We review progress against the original document in order to highlight any changes
- ☐ We keep a log of information that is shared between the partners to make sure nothing is being missed.

Develop a *Partnership Agreement* that sets out the shared vision and aims of the partnership, roles and responsibilities, communication strategy, financial management, etc. For example:

For advice on how to set up partnership agreements check out Big Lottery Fund's website: https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/-/media/Files/Programme%20Documents/Coastal%20Communities/Guidance%20for%20partnerships.pdf

Public Social Partnerships (PSPs) adopted the following working values in their Memorandum of Understanding (MoU):

- Equality, mutual respect and trust
- Open and transparent communications
- Co-operation and consultation
- A commitment to being positive and constructive
- A willingness to work with and learn from others
- A shared commitment to providing excellent services to the community
- A desire to make the best use of resources

The Scottish Government's template MoU for PSPs, is available to download at http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0040/00406960.doc

You can find out more about Public Social Partnerships on the Scottish Government Website, here: http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/15300/enterprising-organisation/PSPGuidance2011

Develop a Contingency Plan with forethought about how conflicts might be resolved. This plan should also detail information about whether someone has 'executive decision-making power' and when it can/should be applied.

Principle 3: Be open about the time and resources available and be willing to share

> *Creating a culture of collaboration will take time. A framework for joint working will not be established overnight.''* **Working in partnership, ACOSVO**

Key points to consider:

- Do you know what **resources** you and your partners are willing to put into the partnership (e.g. time, staff, additional budget for other logistics, such as venues and catering, photocopying, etc.)?
- Have you mapped **potential linkages** for the partnership (i.e. stakeholders that might add to existing resources)?

Learning from the Thinking Differently Partnership Fund highlights the need to allocate sufficient time and resources to enable different reporting, monitoring and evaluation process to be aligned and all governance structures to be finalised. The report also highlights the need to consider the size and composition of the partnership, as the number and diversity of partners involved can bring advantages (e.g. joint funding, skills and expertise) but also disadvantages (e.g. aligning processes, geographical barriers to meet to make decisions).

Face-to-face networking is key to building relationships to support partnerships; however, small organisations often lack capacity and time to engage in networks.

Resources, such as the Local Government Association (LGA)'s Knowledge Hub, can be used online to set up and maintain collaborations.[15]

Support organisations such as your local third sector interface (TSI),[16] social enterprise network and other intermediaries/umbrella bodies can also help your partnership with practical advice and support.

Action checklist:

- ☐ We have a signed agreement that states that all partners are willing to accommodate resources to work in partnership, where appropriate
- ☐ We know what each partner can put into the partnership, including:

[15] https://khub.net/
[16] http://www.vascotland.org/tsis/find-your-tsi

- Time and staffing
- Travel expenses
- Funding
- Logistics – e.g. venues and catering, photocopying, communications

☐ We have a jointly developed stakeholder map for the partnership (i.e. other groups, partnerships and/or organisations interested in our work)

☐ We have considered using and/or are using a community of practice, such as the Knowledge Hub

☐ We review our stakeholder map at regular intervals to identify whether it has changed and whether or not new people need to be informed

☐ We provide a brief organisational update at the start of each partnership meeting. This will show if circumstances and, therefore, the resources available have changed.

Take stock of the knowledge, skills and resources each partner is willing to 'give' and 'receive' as part of the partnership. These should clearly link to and support partners' roles and responsibilities. Use the information to identify gaps, weaknesses and strengths within the partnership.

Create a collaborative 'stakeholder map' for the partnership. Create this map right at the start of the partnership. Think of what stakeholders each partner might have that would be interested in the work carried out by the partnership. The stakeholder map will provide you with an idea of who needs to be involved/ informed and at what stage of the work. Here is a good resource to find out more about stakeholder mapping: http://www.stakeholdermap.com/

Once you identify who your key stakeholders are for the partnership, think about what the best way to communicate with them might be. This is what is called a 'communications strategy'. You can find out more at: https://knowhownonprofit.org/campaigns/communications/effective-communications-1/communications-strategy

Principle 4: Develop and support effective leadership

"Forming and maintaining [...] partnerships requires effective, pragmatic leadership. Leaders in all sectors need to invest in relationships, navigate cultural differences and ensure that a partnership is mutually beneficial and, most importantly, is providing quality, cost-effective services. Leaders need to be honest about their strengths and weaknesses; communicate effectively with all their staff, and to maintain a strong partnership there must be a supportive structure in place allowing each provider the necessary freedom to do their job well." **Working in partnership, ACOSVO**

Leadership is important to ensure balance of power amongst partners.

Good leadership qualities include:

- Embracing empathy
- Showing flexibility
- Having the self-confidence to recognise when you are wrong
- Having a willingness to spend more time with those outside your organisation than inside
- 'Live' in the various sectors and have the ability to quickly understand the landscape
- Strategic thinking and being able to attend team strategy days with potential partners
- Good organising and action planning skills to deliver the vision and strategy
- Risk management to help avoid things going wrong, and manage when they do

Key points to consider:

- Is your partnership led by someone who motivates and inspires partners?
- Have you considered how the partnership can support the leader?
- Are all the partners' trustees and senior management team on board with the partnership vision and plans?

> *The current focus on collaborations and partnerships raises the bar by introducing formality to what might have been a previously informal arrangement. The formality requires that Boards and Trustees are more involved in discussions and decisions about collaborative working, and that they have the relevant and appropriate information, support and resources to add value to the process as they fulfil their governance obligations.''* **Partnerships and collaborations, Evolving Leadership and Governance Forum**

Action checklist:

- ☐ We have identified a leader for the partnership, in line with the characteristics described on page 22
- ☐ We have clear lines of communication between leader and partners to ensure open and honest dialogue throughout the life of the partnership
- ☐ We have assessed support needs for the partnership's leader and are clear on how we can support his/ her development in the role
- ☐ We allow time at each partnership meeting to feedback about the effectiveness of the partnership, not just the progress of the project and can adapt our systems and processes as necessary
- ☐ We monitor the mechanisms through which the trustees and staff at each of the partner organisations are informed of key developments in the partnership

ACOSVO's Leadership Exchange Programme aims to provide a platform for collaborative cross-sector knowledge sharing. Current Exchanges exist between Third Sector and Scottish Government leaders and ACOSVO is now offering the programme across other public services. Leaders can gain insights into the very features that lend themselves to successful work in partnership: different cultures, languages, constraints and opportunities.

For more information visit: http://www.acosvo.org.uk/leadership-exchange-about.

Collaborate is a research and development project which is drawing together employers within the Skills for Justice (SfJ) footprint across the United Kingdom (UK), in order to co-create a development product to support the effective leadership and management of cross-sector collaborative working.

For more information visit: http://www.sfjuk.com/coming-soon-a-learning-resource-for-collaborative-working-across-the-sector/

Principle 5: Understand accountability within the partnership (and be aware of when it gets in the way of 'equal partnership')

"Issues of accountability can be the most difficult to address, as informal cooperation may fly under the radar of formal channels of accountability and formal partnerships may potentially require another layer of governance or dismantling and reconstructing existing governance structures." **Partnership and Collaborations, Evolving Leadership and Governance Forum**

Partnership cannot be legislated or regulated; however, a lot of the existing policies rely on partnership working for them to be effective.

Partnership means different things to different people and organisations. Partnerships can be formed by organisations of different size and by people in different positions of power. Some partners might also be more accountable than others.

The partnership may be accountable to and may have to communicate with external stakeholders. Your stakeholder map and communication strategies should help with this (these are referred to on page 21). For example, partners may have to:

- Report to funders on progress towards outcomes agreed and expenditure
- Engage and communicate with service users at different stages of the work
- Report to regulatory and scrutiny bodies on key policies and legislation that apply to the project (e.g. audit reviews, good practice standards, etc.). This might apply to specific policies, such as health and social care integration; building and environmental issues, and education.

By doing the above, the partnership will demonstrate that partners reflect and use positive and negative learning arising from the partnership to improve and be more effective.

It is important to be realistic and recognise that a partnership might never be equal. Indeed, in some cases it might be appropriate to have one or more organisations as 'lead partners'. This may be because of particular skills or expertise, or it may be linked to the level of resources which they are putting into the partnership. Nonetheless, there needs to be a healthy level of respect

between all of the partners so that each partner agency is seen to bring something unique and valuable to the partnership.

These unique contributions should be identified and acknowledged.

Key points to consider:

- Are all partners clear about the **different stakeholders they are accountable to**, both within and outwith the partnership?
- If any partners have greater **decision-making powers** within the partnership, has this been clearly communicated to all partners and agreed ahead of time?
- Are all partners **clear about their responsibilities** within the partnership and is there a clear policy in place outlining what will happen if partners fail to meet these responsibilities?
- Have you identified ways to facilitate discussions and build consensus?
- Are there processes in place for dealing with any **conflicts** that may arise within the partnership?

Action checklist:

- ☐ We have an agreed live action plan with responsibilities assigned to specific partners and contingency plans for these.
- ☐ We have a clear policy in place that outlines what will happen if partners fail to meet their responsibilities.
- ☐ We have assessed the support needs of partners to be able to carry out their responsibilities and have a development plan in place to see them through (or a protocol to develop it)
- ☐ We review the action plan at regular intervals and keep it updated
- ☐ We review the communication strategy and stakeholder maps at regular intervals and updated accordingly.

There are power dynamics in most partnerships. Being aware of these help make the partnership work. Communication, honesty and openness between partners are key.

Principle 6: Promote opportunities to learn and grow together

Partnerships can be used to strengthen personal/ organisational weaknesses by sharing learning and expertise. Partners are in a journey together; through which they can learn and grow together.

As well as learning from each other, partnerships are also a useful way of connecting into different networks and new training opportunities. You should not assume that your partners are all aware of training and learning opportunities which you may know of so find ways of sharing relevant information across the partnership. This does not need to be time-consuming and you could use online tools such as Google documents or a shared dropbox folder which each partner updates and checks regularly.

Creating a skills matrix for your partnership could help to identify any potential gaps within the partnership or areas of interest for you and your partners. There is information on how to find out more about a skills matrix on page 16.

An important part of learning is acknowledging when a partnership is not working and/or it has run its course. It is good practice to stop and take stock of where you are regularly. Monitoring and evaluation can help you do this so you do not waste time and resources and the partnership maximises their use.

Key points to consider:

- Do you **know your own organisation** well (operationally and strategically)?
- Do the partners **know each other's organisations** well (operationally and strategically)? If not, have you built in time to get to know them better?
- Do you **share tasks** to allow willing partners to explore areas of work outside their comfort zone?
- Do you have regular opportunities for **joint working**, including meetings, conferences and joint training?
- Do you have a **monitoring and evaluation** plan that allows all partners to learn about what is working/not working in the partnership?

Action checklist:

- ☐ We have a communications plan to share learning from our partnership inside and outside the partnership

- ☐ We set up regular 'sharing the learning' meetings where partners get together to discuss progress towards agreed outcomes and other relevant intelligence
- ☐ We identify activities in which partners can 'buddy up' so that they benefit from working closely together
- ☐ We keep a log of how many times opportunities are shared across the partnership
- ☐ We review the skills matrix at regular intervals to help identify new strengths and potential gaps across the partner organisations.

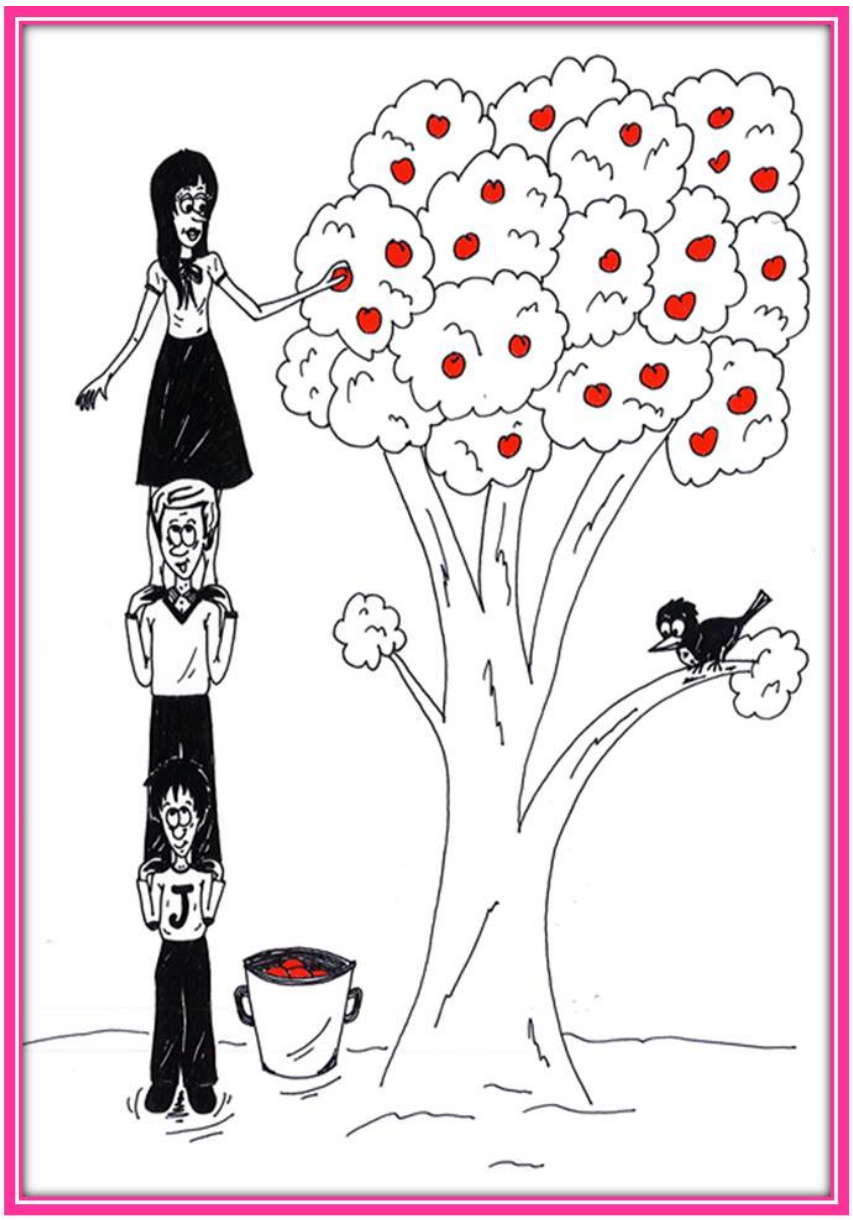
Most partnerships focus their monitoring and evaluation on the outcomes they are trying to achieve, rather than on how the partnership is doing. Whilst it is important to be able to evidence the difference the partnership is doing, it is also important to learn about what makes the partnership particularly successful so that others know what to look for when setting up a similar collaborative project. Writing a logic model or theory of change for your partnership may be of help!

For more information on logic models visit:
http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/resources/127/

More tips on monitoring and evaluating partnerships can be found in Working in Partnership (2005):
http://www.iodparc.com/resource/evaluating_partnership_outcomes.html

4. Examples of good partnership work

There are plenty of examples of partnership work involving the third sector; however, not all of them follow the good practice principles highlighted in the previous section. This section of the resource showcases a number of examples where good practice has been followed.



Working together in partnership

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list; in fact, there are plenty more to add. However, for the purpose of keeping the resource concise we have selected those examples that illustrate well the good practice set out in this document.

Trust and leadership: essential partnership building blocks

Leading through Co-Production in North Lanarkshire:
http://www.coproductionscotland.org.uk/

Thinking Differently Partnership Fund:
http://www.therobertsontrust.org.uk/impact-learning/alcohol-misuse/young-people-and-families/thinking-differently-partnership-fund

PlusOne Mentoring:
http://www.plusone.uk.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/YMCA_MW_lores.pdf

Be clear about the purpose of the partnership

Family Buddies: http://www.vascotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/VAS-CW-booklet-new.pdf

Lochside Neighbourhood Group: http://www.coproductionscotland.org.uk/

Scottish Huntington's Association and Stirling University:
http://thirdforcenews.org.uk/tfn-news/charitys-university-partnership-is-top-of-the-class-at-scottish-charity-awa

National Galleries of Scotland and the University of Edinburgh:
http://www.ed.ac.uk/news/2015/moungs-250215

Be clear about expectations (and how these are managed), time and resources available, and willingness to share

Gala Men's Shed:
http://www.vascotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/VAS-CW-booklet-new.pdf

One Glasgow: http://www.glasgowcpp.org.uk/oneglasgow

Scottish Collaboration for Public Health Research and Policy (SCPHRP):
http://www.scphrp.ac.uk/

Glasgow Caledonian University and SAMH:
http://www.gcu.ac.uk/newsroom/news/article/index.php?id=58452

Accountability (often gets in the way of 'equal partnership')

National Third Sector GIRFEC[17] Project: Implementing GIRFEC in Edinburgh: http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20170/girfec/739/

[17] Getting it Right for Every Child

West Dunbartonshire Community Health and Care Partnership (CHCP):
http://www.socialpartnershipforum.org/case-studies/developing-an-integrated-health-and-social-care-partnership-for-west-dunbartonshire/

Opportunities to learn and grow together

The Community Capacity Building and Carer Support Programme:

Meaningful and Measurable - A collaborative action research project:
https://meaningfulandmeasurable.wordpress.com

Parenting across Scotland: http://www.parentingacrossscotland.org/

Early Years Collaborative: http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/early-years/early-years-collaborative

What Works Scotland: http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/WWS-workplan.pdf

Other interesting partnerships include:

Evidence Exchange – Alliance for Useful Evidence, Carnegie UK Trust, Joseph Rowntree Foundation:
http://www.alliance4usefulevidence.org/evidence-exchange/

Knowledge Translation Network:
http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/our-work-partners/knowledge-translation-network/

Scottish Third Sector Research Forum:
http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/our-work-partners/scottish-third-sector-research-forum/

Scotland Funders' Forum: http://scotlandfundersforum.org.uk/

Scotland's Towns Partnership: http://www.scotlandstowns.org/

Scotland's Learning Partnership: http://scotlandslearning.org.uk/about-us/history/

5. Tools

Processes for an Effective Partnership[18]

Inputs / Resources for partnership:

- Effective IT systems that enable information sharing
- Management structure which is specific to the partnership (rather than the individual organisations)
- Sufficient staff/staff-time for the partnership (operationally and strategically)

Partnership activities:

- Develop and articulate shared aims and objectives
- Clarify roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability at both operational and strategic levels
- Establish performance management systems that reflect the complexity of the partnership, capture the range of activities and have a focus on outcomes

Engagement / involvement /reach:

- Key staff at operational and strategic levels are included
- Local communities and other relevant third and public sector organisations are meaningfully involved in the development of the partnership project
- Relevant private sector organisations are included and relate to the partnership in a relevant way

Stakeholder reactions / awareness

- The need for the partnership is recognised by external stakeholders
- There is commitment to the partnership from all of the partners at both operational and strategic levels
- Relevant stakeholders (including the partners, local and national government, funders and service users) are realistic about what the partnership can achieve

[18] Adapted from Partnership working across UK public services: evidence review. What Works Scotland (2015), p.9

Knowledge, attitudes, skills and aspirations for effective partnership:

- Different professional approaches and expertise are valued
- Partners are trusted and respected
- Partners feel that the relationships are mutually beneficial
- Partners take time to understand the contexts in which each other are working
- Staff believe other partners and the partnership as a whole will deliver its objectives
- There is appropriate knowledge and experience within the partnership

Practice and behaviours for effective partnership:

- A flexible approach to developing the work, using resources and determining roles and accountability
- Regular and effective communication sharing between partners at operational and strategic levels
- Regular opportunities for joint working, including meetings, joint training and co-location
- Effective and visible leadership at operational and strategic levels
- Involvement of wider partners and staff in development of procedures and policies
- Services / interventions are holistic and responsive, meeting the broad needs of individuals and communities
- Services provide specialist support where required
- There are appropriate ways of achieving conflict resolution and consensus building
- The partnership engages in continual reassessment of processes and procedures

Examples of final outcomes of effective partnerships:

- Improved health and wellbeing
- Reduction in inequalities
- Reduction in offending
- Equitable access to services
- Avoid inappropriate service use
- Reduction in costs
- Responsive service that meets the needs of service users

Factors influencing the effectiveness of partnerships[19]

Underlying assumptions

- This is a partnership
- Partnership is the most appropriate way to address this issue
- There is a clear need and rationale for the partnership
- There is a shared understanding of the intended final outcomes
- The partnership has sufficient autonomy and authority to make decisions
- All partners have been involved in clarifying direction and decision making
- There is effective power sharing across the partnership
- There are sufficient resources to deliver an objective
- The timeframes for the project/partnership are realistic

Risks

- The term 'partnership' is used cynically to mask hierarchical arrangements
- Partnership formed naively because it is assumed to be the right thing to do
- No clear sense of purpose or outcomes
- Programme of work is unrealistic – too large and complex
- Some of the partners aren't included in the decision-making process at every stage
- Operational staff are not included in strategic decision-making
- Work of the partnership is dominated by performance management reporting requirements
- Lack of ownership amongst all, or some of the partners

[19] Adapted from Partnership working across UK public services: evidence review. What Works Scotland (2015), p.12

6. Other resources and references

This resource builds on the work produced by others, including:

Evidence Review: Partnership Working across UK Public Services, What Works Scotland (2015)

This is one of a series of papers which What Works Scotland has published in order to share learning and learn about public service reform. It brings together evidence about partnership working from a range of sources including peer-reviewed articles and reports published by the third sector between January 2000 and July 2015. It is not intended to be an exhaustive review of existing evidence but instead explores some of the questions around what makes a good partnership and what we can do to improve partnership working.

http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/WWS-Evidence-Review-Partnership-03-Dec-2015-.pdf

***Creating Change: Measuring Impact Report*, The Lloyds TSB Foundation for Northern Ireland (2011)**

In January 2011, The Lloyds TSB Foundation for Northern Ireland (hereafter 'the Foundation') commissioned Gauge NI (a Belfast based Community Interest Company specialising in impact measurement) to measure the impact of the Foundation's Creating Change Programme. The analysis was carried out at the halfway point of its six year (April 2008 – March 2011)investment and was completed between February and August 2011. This report includes key learning from the research.

http://www.lloydstsbfoundationni.org/sites/default/files/CC%20report%20spreads%20web.pdf

***Learning Guide 3: Working in Partnership*, Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland Partnership Drugs Initiative (PDI) (2015)**

This learning guide was developed from a PDI session that looked at success factors and challenges that projects face on a daily basis when working in partnership. The resource highlights the *top ten key action points for effective partnership working*.

http://www.ltsbfoundationforscotland.org.uk/documents/Working%20in%20Partnership.pdf

***Partnership manifesto*, Centre for Research on Families and Relationships (CRFR) (2015)**

This manifesto was created by CRFR through discussion and consultation with colleagues across institutions and agencies.

http://www.crfr.ac.uk/assets/manifesto.pdf

***Collaboration works: Putting the third sector at the heart of collaboration*, Voluntary Action Scotland (2015)**

This booklet highlights the role of Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs) in developing collaborative working between third sector groups, the public sector and others in order to make sure that innovative service design and delivery methods deliver better outcomes for people in communities. The booklet includes a series of case studies.

http://www.vascotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/VAS-CW-booklet-new.pdf

***From providers to partners: what will it take?* Coalition of Care and Support Providers and Collaborate (2014)**

This report examines the question of how to shift relationships between commissioners and providers into the territory of real collaboration. The answer includes a mixture of practical action, changes in culture and behaviour, and a willingness to work with each other in different ways.

http://www.ccpscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/FromProviderstoPartners.pdf

***Working in partnership: Effective solutions to working in partnership Part 1 – Taking practical steps to partnership*, Advice UK (2013)**

This resource offers guidance on the various stages of working in partnership, including set-up and review, as well as a list of additional resources.

http://asauk.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Steps-to-partnership-Part-1.pdf

***The Engagement Matrix: A tool and guidance for improving engagement with the third sector*, NHS Health Scotland, Voluntary Health Scotland and Scottish Government (2013)**

The Engagement Matrix is a template and guidance for health boards and third sector organisations to complete together. It is a tool for opening dialogue between agencies, and for building stronger understanding and working relationships. It enables participants to map where and how existing engagement at both strategic and operational levels is enhancing people's health and care experience and outcomes. It supports agencies to identify where engagement could be strengthened and to action plan on this basis.

The Matrix can be downloaded as an editable template here: http://www.gov.scot/resource/0045/00457745.pdf

An example of how The Engagement Matrix can be used: http://vaorkney.org.uk/images/documents/ThirdSectorForum/Engagement%20Matrix%20report.pdf

***Working in Partnership: a snapshot of needs and experiences in collaborative work in Scotland*, Lucy Stewart, ACOSVO (2013)**

The aim of this project was to build a better understanding of partnership and collaborative work across the third sector in Scotland. This report collates collaboration /partnership data, information, models, processes, best practice and case studies from partnership in the third/public, third/private and third sectors.

http://www.acosvo.org.uk/sites/default/files/20140108_Working_in_Partnership.pdf

***Reducing Reoffending Change Fund Evaluation of Year 1 – Public Social Partnership Development*, Scottish Government Social Research (2013)**

The Scottish Government commissioned Iconic to evaluate the development of Public Social Partnerships (PSP) during Year 1 of the Reducing Reoffending Change Fund. The evaluation examined how the 14 organisations awarded Development Funding in Year 1 have used the funding to develop PSPs, and what has been achieved in this initial six-month period (October 2012 to March 2013). PSPs involve public and third sector bodies co-designing services to deliver agreed social outcomes.

http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0042/00422599.pdf

***A manifesto for partnership*, National Union of Students (NUS) (2013)**

NUS' Manifesto for Partnership explores the meaning of partnership, as well as the role of students' unions in creating and maintaining partnership approaches.

At the heart of this document is the idea that individual civic engagement is strongest when it comes about through the collective, and that strong students' unions are core to any understanding of partnerships.

http://tsep.org.uk/resource/manifesto-for-partnership/

***Choosing to collaborate: Helping you succeed*, CommUNITY Barnet (2011)**

This toolkit is designed to be of practical help to all charities when considering, planning and progressing a joint working agreement. The toolkit highlights the common pitfalls and offers good practice advice that will help charities collaborating, from considering the decision through to evaluation. It focuses on some of the most important legal and process aspects of general collaborations, as well as addressing many of the issues that arise frequently in our casework. The toolkit also signposts to other support and resources that provide more specific information on particular types of collaboration.

http://www.communitybarnet.org.uk/data/files/colltoolkit.pdf

***Supporting collaboration and partnerships in a changing context: A study for the Big Lottery Fund*, Leila Baker and Ben Cairns, Institute for Voluntary Action Research (2011)**

This is a summary of key findings from a small-scale study commissioned by the Big Lottery Fund (BIG), which looked at collaboration and partnership working in a changing context. The study was carried out by the Institute for Voluntary Action Research (IVAR) between January and March 2011. The aim of the study was to explore how BIG can support its voluntary and community sector (VCS) applicants and grant holders to collaborate more effectively and so deliver their agreed project outcomes more successfully in a changing environment.

https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/-/media/Files/Research%20Documents/er_supporting_collaboration.pdf

***Partnership and Collaboration*, Kris Von Wald, PhD and Linda Boyes, ACOSVO (2010)**

This Evolving Leadership and Governance Forum's report highlights the learning from a half-day workshop which was designed to explore the issues related to this topic by making connections between recent relevant research and participants' own experiences of partnership working and collaboration. With a focus on the leadership and governance issues around collaboration and cooperation between independent third sector organisations, the event provided

a framework for discussion about good practices in leadership and governance together with the practicalities of independent organisations working together.

http://www.acosvo.org.uk/sites/default/files/GuidelinesinGovernance-3.pdf

***Briefing Notes for Practitioners and Managers: Chapters 1-7*, Joint Improvement Team (2009)**

A series of guides aimed at helping members of health, housing and social care partnerships understand and apply the evidence of best practice in partnership and as a tool for development.

Based on extensive examination of the literature, it provides short and practical guides, with review questions for each chapter to help in applying the main messages to individual partnerships.

Each chapter can be used as a stand-alone resource as suits local partnerships. In particular, Chapter 5 – Characteristics of Successful Partnerships and the checklist derived from it, can be used as an aid in developing partnerships.

http://www.jitscotland.org.uk/resource/briefing-notes-practitioners-managers-2009/

***Partnerships between voluntary organisations (*and other resources), Collaborative Working Unit, National Council for Voluntary Organisations (2007)**

NCVO's Collaborative Working Unit published a model of collaborative working, entitled *Working together to achieve your mission* to help third sector organisations achieve their mission, and *Joint working agreements*, a guide to developing agreements between third sector organisations.

https://www.oneeastmidlands.org.uk/sites/default/files/library/What_is_collaborative_working_PDF.pdf#overlay-context=node/4533

http://www.oneeastmidlands.org.uk/sites/default/files/library/Working_together_to_achieve_your_mission_PDF.pdf

http://www.ncvo.org.uk/images/documents/practical_support/public_services/Joint_working_agreements.pdf

***Working in partnership: A Sourcebook*, Big Lottery Fund (2002)**

This sourcebook was developed to encourage organisation and groups to work in partnership and to help them to do so effectively. It is intended as a practical source of ideas and suggestions for both new and existing partnerships.

http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/er_eval_working_in_partnership_sourcebook_uk.pdf

***Good practice guide: Working in partnership*, Big Lottery Fund**

Big Lottery Fund produced a good practice guide for grant-holders to know what a good working partnership looks like in practice.

https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/global-content/publications/uk-wide/good-practice-guide-working-in-partnership

***Multi-agency working and its implications for practice: a review of the literature*. Atkinson, M., Jones, M. and Lamont, E. Centre for British Teachers (CfBT) Education Trust (2007)**

This literature review builds on previous National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) work highlighting the variety of multi-agency working which exists, the associated challenges and the key factors for its success, as well as its 'potential' impact.

http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/MAD01/MAD01.pdf

***A multidimentional framework for conceptualizing human services integration initiatives*. In J. M. Marquart & E. L. Konrad (Eds.), *New Directors for Evaluation: Evaluating Initiatives to Integrate Human Services*, 69, 5-19. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass (1996)**

http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ev.1024/pdf

Support organisations

As well as the published documents highlighted above, there are also a number of intermediary and support organisations that might be able to help you establish a new partnership or address any challenges which may arise during the course of the partnership. These include (in alphabetical order):

ACOSVO (The Association for Chief Officers of Scottish Voluntary Organisations) is a membership organisation that exists to support, strengthen and inspire third sector leaders - http://www.acosvo.org.uk/

CHEX (Community Health Exchange)
provides support to a network of community-led health initiatives and their public sector partners who are tackling health inequalities across Scotland. It is part of the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) - http://www.chex.org.uk/

Criminal Justice Voluntary Sector Forum (CJVSF)
supports voluntary sector providers to continuously improve their own criminal justice services through collaboration and sharing of good practice - http://www.ccpscotland.org/cjvsf/

Evaluation Support Scotland
works with third sector organisations and funders so that they are better able to measure and report on their impact. As well as organising training and events, its website has a number of free evaluation tools – http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/

The Improvement Service
works with Scottish councils and their partners to improve the efficiency, quality and accountability of local public services - http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/

Interface
provides a free and impartial service which connects businesses from a wide variety of national and international industries to relevant academic expertise within Scotland's 23 higher education and research institutes – http://www.interface-online.org.uk

IRISS
promotes positive outcomes for people who use social services in Scotland by enhancing the capacity and capability of the social services workforce - http://www.iriss.org.uk/

Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC)
supports best practice in community development and is recognised by the Scottish Government as the national lead body for community development. The organisation works across sectors and with a wide range of professions to support community engagement and community capacity building in any context and at strategic and practice level - http://www.scdc.org.uk/

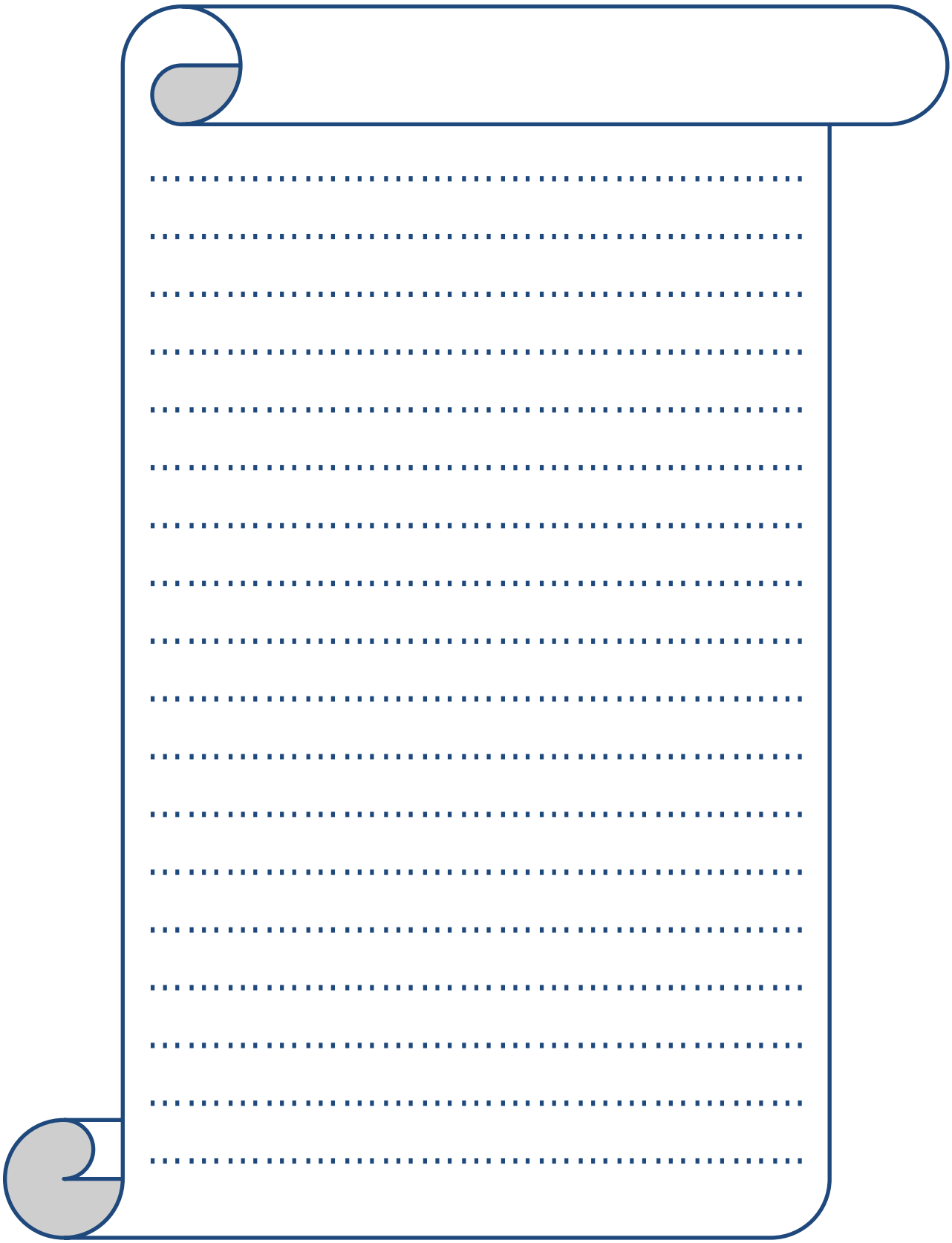
The Scottish Co-Production Network
is a free network that is open to anyone who is interested in co-production in Scotland. It provides a forum to share learning and exchange ideas around co-production practice through its website, learning events, and practical support for local activity. It is facilitated through the SCDC - http://www.coproductionscotland.org.uk/

Scottish Knowledge Exchange Community of Practice (SKECP)
is a free network of knowledge exchange (KE) practitioners and researchers who share practices and experiences, build peer relationships, build capacity for KE and share KE events and activities. It is organised jointly by Centre for Research on Families and Relationships, Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice, Evaluation Support Scotland and Healthcare Improvement Scotland – https://skecp.wordpress.com/

Scottish Universities Insight Institute
supports programmes of knowledge exchange between academics, policy-makers and practitioners, which address and provide insight on substantial issues that face Scotland and the wider world - http://www.scottishinsight.ac.uk/

Third Sector Interface (TSI)
There are 32 TSIs in Scotland – one in each local authority – and they play a key role in brokering third sector and cross-sector relationships as well as providing support for existing partnerships - http://www.vascotland.org/tsis/find-your-tsi

My notes about my partnership experience



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- Highlands and Islands Enterprise
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- The Robertson Trust
- Voluntary Health Scotland
- University of Stirling
- Social Enterprise Scotland
- Volunteer Scotland
- NHS Education for Scotland
- Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations
- Social Value Lab
- Glasgow Centre for Population Health
- Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator
- Joint Improvement Team
- Scottish Enterprise
- University of Edinburgh
- Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland
- Iriss
- Reach Community Health Project
- University of Aberdeen

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