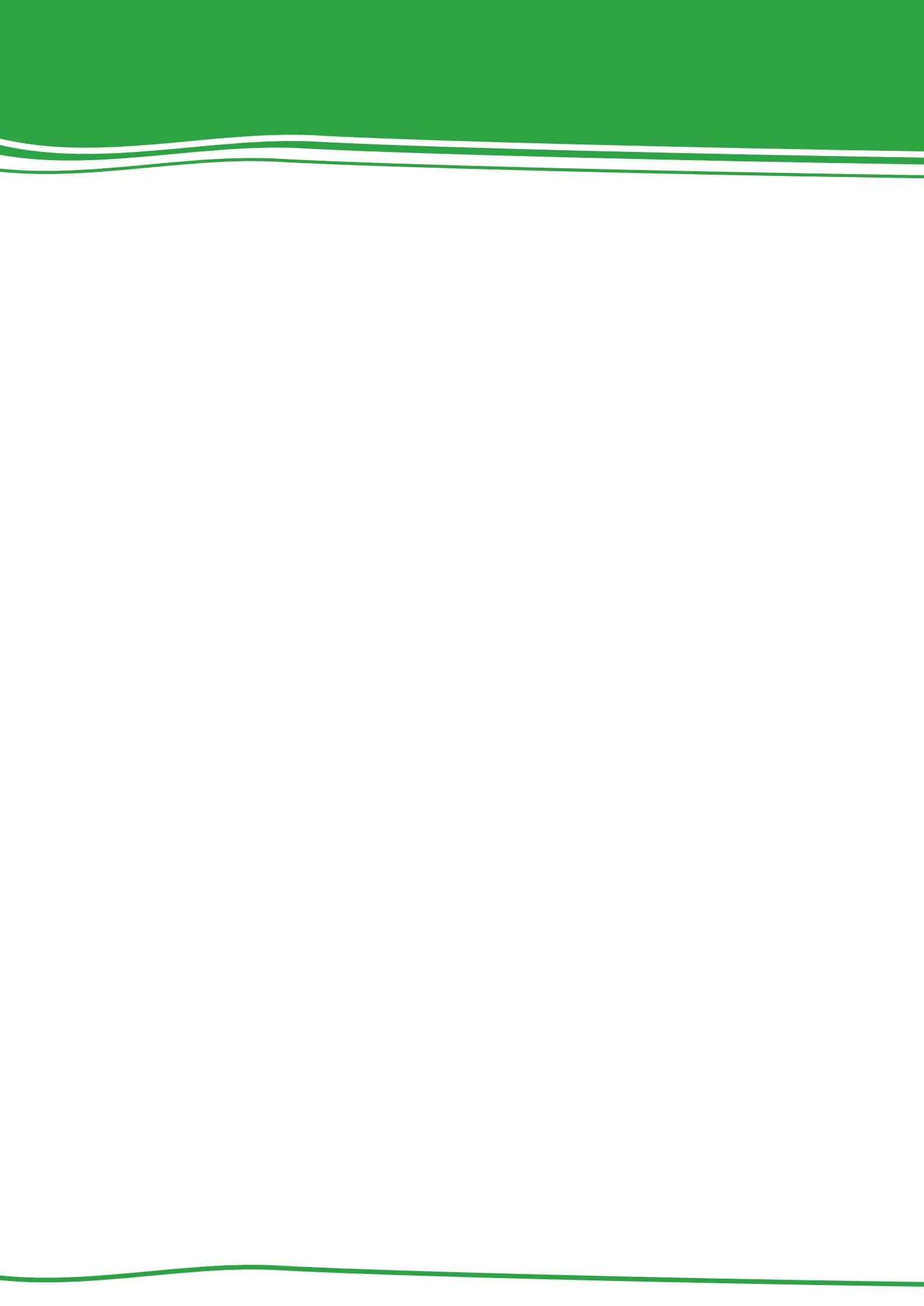


The cooperate sector

Evaluating partnership approaches in the voluntary sector



by James Murray



Contents

Foreword 2

1 Introduction 3

1.1 Objectives 3

1.2 Approach 3

1.3 Supporting contributors 4

2 Critical key learning 5

2.1 Collaborative working key learning 5

2.2 Co-location key learning 10

2.3 Quantitative analysis 13

2.4 Resources required for partnership 13

3 Collaborative working case studies 14

3.1 The Eastern Region Families Partnership 14

3.2 Case study X 18

3.3 Off the Streets and into Work 19

3.4 The Breeding Bird Survey 22

3.5 The Hull and East Riding Leisure and Play Project 25

3.6 The Service Audit Partnership 26

3.7 Alcohol Concern and Drugscope co-location 29

3.8 Community Action Network co-location 30

3.9 Trade Justice Movement 31

4 Collaborative working checklist 34

5 Co-location checklist 40

Foreword

Whilst there is a lot of interest in joint working, there appears to be little information or understanding among voluntary organisations of the range of options available to them. Many organisations are now under pressure to develop partnership working, but are not well informed about the best methods to use, and do not feel confident about how to go about exploring the process.

Our aims were positive and optimistic: to identify a range of partnerships, to map the progress of a number of case studies and identify key learning from their collaborations. CCP hopes that the research will foster a greater understanding of the different models of collaboration and alert the voluntary sector to the many benefits of partnership working.

There is an urgent need to build partnerships in our own sectorial groupings, with the wider voluntary and community sectors, and the emerging social enterprise sector. We need to build our capacity to work in partnership with the statutory sectors in local government, the police and the health service. And we need to examine how effective we are in engaging the public and working with communities to develop services and reduce inequality.

This publication is the work of many hands, and I am afraid there are too many people to thank by name. We are greatly indebted to the staff from those organisations featured in the case studies, who collaborated with the production of this report. We asked a lot of these individuals and were greatly appreciative of the positive response we received from extremely busy people.

Special thanks go to a number of staff that were employed in developing the Collaborative Working Unit at NCVO. CCP is grateful for the support, advice and feedback provided throughout this project. NCVO is carrying out further work in this area, including the provision of information and advice, good practice events and referrals to specialist advisers and other sources of support.

The Children's Centre Project is a strategic planning project that hopes to bring long-term benefits to the children's voluntary sector and improve services for children and young people. We are extremely grateful to the funders of this project, in particular Michael Thornton and his team at the Invest to Save Budget at HM Treasury who funded the research and David Cutler and the trustees of The Baring Foundation who funded the costs of dissemination.

A final word of thanks to Sally Whitaker from the National Children's Bureau, who initiated the research as part of her work in developing the original brief for the Children's Centre Project.



Dominic Fox, Director

1 Introduction

Due to a range of internal and external pressures there has been a clear and considerable increase in the desire by voluntary and community organisations to enter into collaborative working arrangements.

A prime example of this trend is the Children's Centre Project (CCP), a group of children's charities wishing to work together collaboratively in a new building. In order to add to research being undertaken to implement this objective CCP has commissioned Hanson Consulting to investigate partnerships which have already been established to support the process.

The process is not however straightforward and many procedures involved are new to staff. Although this research contains examples of a number of successful undertakings, there are still activities, in almost all, where they have agreed that significant improvements could have been made. Indeed the questions that have been asked in the process of gathering the evidence for this report have encouraged and helped organisations in reviewing their own partnerships, and in helping them determine future steps.

Learning from those involved with collaboration is the basis upon which this research was commissioned and it is recommended that all organisations considering this type of work spend some time noting what went well and what did not, as this critical self assessment will be invaluable in setting up future partnership initiatives.

Over the last three years there has been a call from various parts of the sector for more information on the subject and as a result the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) has established the Collaborative Working Unit to enhance the sector's ability to access further information.

Combining resources and expertise can be difficult, but consideration of all that is involved in partnerships will be the difference between success and failure. For many it will be the difference between meeting and exceeding users' expectations of what can be delivered.

The good news is that from the case studies it is clear that the total outcome of a partnership can be greater than the individual organisation's separate outcomes.

1.1 Objectives

The objective of this research is to describe nine types of collaborative working, undertaken by a range of organisations in the voluntary and community sector, and the different approaches applied.

The aim is to use this data to inform the voluntary and community sector of some of the critical success factors involved, and to produce a checklist which sets out key steps.

Out of scope

The focus of the research was not on collaborative working arrangements where only limited informal contact or information existed, or where organisations had merged or were progressing towards merger.

1.2 Approach

Research was undertaken to establish a range of different types of collaborative working arrangements using networks, internet sources and direct mail-outs.

Over 60 organisations, across the voluntary sector were contacted to ascertain whether they were involved in a partnership that could be researched.

Twenty-five of these organisations, identified as being involved with suitable collaborative working arrangements, were then asked to complete a questionnaire to ascertain a high level view of the approach that they had taken, individual strengths and areas for improvement.

Sixteen organisations returned questionnaires (some returned more than one), and twelve were

asked to complete a more detailed questionnaire and to participate in a one-to-one interview.

Nine case studies were then completed and sent back for confirmation as to their accuracy. Key learning points were then developed from the information gathered, and included in a checklist.

Issues

Establishing a range of suitable examples was difficult as:

- ▶ Key members of staff involved had often left organisations.
- ▶ Documentation describing the process and other key information had often not been produced or retained.
- ▶ Organisations took time to agree to participate fully. It was particularly important while developing the research to have regard to the sensitive information provided, and the different points of view of individual partners.

A detailed objective of the research was to review examples where there has been an integration of existing activities between voluntary organisations. Although the research does review examples of collaborative working where partners have combined resources and staff to undertake joint service delivery, the research has not established examples where significant integration of back office functions has occurred between organisations. It is apparent from discussing with a number of experts in this field that this type of back office integration has not occurred to any great extent within the voluntary and community sector.

1.3 Supporting contributors

Organisations that provided partnership information which was used in the conclusions to this report, but not in the nine case studies, included:

ActionAid
Help the Aged
Marie Curie
RE:generate
National Trust
Oxfam
Red Cross
Scope
Shelter

We would like to thank these organisations for their contribution to the evidence.

2 Critical key learning

The key learning has been taken from the nine case studies, and other information gained during the research, which identify different approaches to collaborative working/partnership/co-location in the voluntary and community sector.

Where key learning can be directly attributed to a partnership case study contained in this report, a reference to it has been included (e.g. Case study X), otherwise the information has been drawn from general research and is referenced using '(General)'.

Key points have also been developed in section 2.2 regarding collaborative working involving the sharing of premises between voluntary organisations (co-location).

The case studies have focused not on gathering quantitative data, but on a range of informative experiences that illustrate different approaches, from which key learning points have been identified.

Significant thanks must be given to the participating organisations for their support in developing a range of good practice that will hopefully be beneficial to others within the voluntary sector who are contemplating some form of collaborative working.

The case studies reviewed are:

- ▶ Eastern Regions Families Partnership (ERFP)
- ▶ Case study X
- ▶ Off the Streets and into Work (OSW)
- ▶ The Breeding Bird Survey (BBS)
- ▶ The Hull and East Riding Leisure and Play Project (HELPP)
- ▶ The Service Audit Partnership (SAP)
- ▶ Alcohol Concern/Drugscope (AC/D) co-location
- ▶ Community Action Network (CAN) co-location
- ▶ Trade Justice Movement (TJM)

2.1 Collaborative working key learning

Setting objectives

- ▶ The case studies, in general, show that the development of common aims, objectives and expectations – underpinned by joint planning, is critical to developing successful partnerships. (General)
- ▶ Setting short-term objectives or 'quick wins' has helped the momentum of a partnership during the early stages. (General)
- ▶ Those entering into established partnerships, particularly those involving more than five partners or those which have been in existence for some time, need to be aware that their ability to influence and make changes to core objectives, in the short term, may be limited. (General)
- ▶ Setting SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely) objectives is critical in any partnership or project. (General)

Rationale for partnerships

Clarity over the underlying reasons why organisations want to enter into partnership has allowed a better assessment of whether they should be undertaken. (General)

The evidence of this research shows that organisations who enter into partnerships can demonstrate advantage and added value in a number of areas. These are outlined below.

- ▶ ERFP wanted to involve and work in partnership with a statutory body and at the same time leverage in other funding, and to combine expertise to provide guidance in delivery by an operational charity.

- ▶ OSW wanted to improve the coordination of the delivery of a wide range of services for homeless people, and to meet the requirements of Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) funding to adopt a holistic partnership approach to service delivery.
- ▶ BBS wanted to pool resources and expertise to extend the geographical and habitat scope of bird surveying.
- ▶ HELPP wanted to pool resources and experiences to more effectively bid for the necessary funding for the project.
- ▶ SAP wanted to respond to an enquiry into the death of a volunteer, Jonathan Newby, which suggested that there should be an improvement in the quality controls of organisations in this field.
- ▶ Organisation A and organisation B wanted to combine their complementary skills and expertise to deliver a new service focused on developing the literacy skills of children from African and Caribbean backgrounds.
- ▶ Alcohol Concern/Drugscope wanted to reduce office costs, improve security of tenure, and enhance areas of capacity.
- ▶ TJM wanted to replicate the strengths of the Jubilee 2000 campaign in the field of international trade by pulling together a large number of organisations to speak with a common voice.
- ▶ CAN wanted to set up affordable office space with like-minded organisations in a good location.
- ▶ Often, but not always, a good partner is one with whom effective and productive contact already exists in some capacity and where an understanding of working practices and key personnel is in place. (ERFP)
- ▶ Involvement of a statutory body either as a representative on a management committee or as a full partner can add extra credibility, recognition and impetus to the partnership. (ERFP)
- ▶ Transparent and open relationships are key features of an effective partnership. (General)

Gaining internal consensus

- ▶ A partnership business plan/brief which outlines the potential benefits, costs (set up and running), and risks involved, provides a board with a sound understanding of their likely commitment. (ERFP)
- ▶ Often significant effort is given to developing senior level buy-in to a potential partnership and not enough time spent with the operational staff who are delivering the project. (General)
- ▶ It has been important when developing buy-in to ensure that a cross-section of staff are involved, including volunteers and stakeholders, and that they have a good understanding of the methods, approaches and the reasons for the partnership. (BBS)

Identifying partners

- ▶ The research has shown that when searching for a suitable partner that a set of criteria should be developed with which to assess compatibility, e.g. size, objectives, values, depth of expertise, geographical scope and networks. This process is preferably undertaken without any one organisation in mind. (General)
- ▶ The use of umbrella and government bodies to identify suitable partners was found to be useful for an overview of a particularly sector or geographical area, and an understanding of where duplication could be reduced. (Case study X)

Understanding partners

- ▶ Undertaking a pilot phase can allow an organisation to develop their understanding of their partners' working practices. (SAP, BBS)
- ▶ Often partnerships have been set up by organisations that have had relationships before, and as a result feel that they do not need to spend significant extra time and resources in developing their understanding of each other's styles of working. Where there is an existing relationship between potential partners there is still a need to spend extra time in exploring the implications of a deeper relationship. Previous contact may have been at a more superficial

level and knowledge of the other organisation's working styles may not have been fully understood. The differences, as well as the similarities between partner organisations, need to be fully understood. (General)

- ▶ When partnerships include statutory bodies and voluntary sector groups it is necessary to be aware of potential differences in decision making speeds and hierarchical structures. (ERFP)

Recognising risks

- ▶ Evidence shows that undertaking a risk analysis, captured in a risk log, is a key factor in ensuring the future effectiveness of a partnership, and in developing contingency plans for use if needed. (General)
- ▶ A change in government policy can radically alter a partnership's effectiveness especially when a statutory body is part of the partnership. By assessing potential trends over a medium term time scale, and by having regular review, plans can be made in advance of possible changes. (ERFP)

Using consultants

- ▶ Consultants have been used to provide an overview of the critical success factors involved in collaborative working and for explaining and facilitating key steps. (General)
- ▶ Consultants have been involved with conducting independent objective assessments of the impact of a partnership which has helped to ensure that its activities are delivering the desired services to their target groups. (OSW, SAP)

Assessing set up and running costs

- ▶ It is important to recognise and budget for all costs, including time spent by staff in setting up the partnership, core costs and the management of any partnership staff based or seconded to an organisation, as well as capital costs. (Case study X)

- ▶ Often potential partners have been frustrated regarding the time and cost spent on setting up a partnership. Additional time spent deepening the relationships and clarifying exactly what is to be achieved and how, can improve the operation of the partnership. (General)
- ▶ A pilot phase has been shown to help partnerships determine more accurately the costs of involvement. (BBS)

Assessing funding

- ▶ Working in partnerships is increasingly attractive to a range of funders. (ERFP, Case study X)
- ▶ Sources of statutory funding have been gained by partnerships between grant-making trusts and statutory bodies. (ERFP)

Developing agreements

- ▶ Partnership agreements have been seen to vary in their detail and scope but have included:
 - ▶ The partners and their roles
 - ▶ Vision, outcomes and outputs (high level)
 - ▶ A detailed description of the financial and other resources to be committed
 - ▶ Reporting procedures
 - ▶ Rules of engagement/common values
 - ▶ Exit strategies (see below)
 - ▶ Criteria for accepting new partners
 - ▶ Major risks
 - ▶ The length of the partnership
 - ▶ Key timings for review of the agreement.
- ▶ Agreements are seen as critical for setting up and running successful partnerships as they clarify expectations and confirm the commitment of the partners. (General)
- ▶ Explicit financial commitments for all partners have not always been set. The evidence of one case study involving a statutory body and two grant-making trusts showed that because the statutory body had not undertaken partnerships of this nature before, they needed significant flexibility in negotiating internally their desired financial commitment to it. (ERFP)

- ▶ Many partnerships do not adequately plan for the dissolution of partnerships, often due to the fact that the discussion of potential failure can often be seen as defeatist. Including exit strategies in the partnership agreement are vital where the separation of partnership assets may be involved. (General)
- ▶ Planning regular reviews of the partnership agreement has been essential in providing an opportunity for refining objectives and reacting to potential changes in internal and external environments (e.g. IT, government policy, funding challenges, reduction in the client base, etc.). (OSW)
- ▶ For complex partnerships where significant assets have been created or used, and/or where there have been a large number of partners, legal advice has been essential in preparation of the partnership agreement. (Alcohol Concern/Drugscope)
- ▶ Procedures for clarifying confidentiality issues have been developed to satisfy the terms of the Data Protection Act, where partners share sensitive information about their users. (OSW)

Setting up management and operational structures

- ▶ For large partnerships where management committees and structures can potentially become unwieldy, a layer of management with a smaller membership has been developed – made up of elected representatives. (General)
- ▶ Representatives from parties with an interest in the activities of the partnership are often used on partnership boards or steering groups without being full partners. Care needs to be taken to keep these members of the board fully involved and engaged. This could be achieved partly by way of job descriptions identifying their roles. (ERFP)
- ▶ The decision making process does inevitably vary between different partnerships – some requiring unanimous voting, others majority voting. Changes to this process sometimes need to be made as partnerships grow in size, where unanimous voting may not be appropriate. (General) Some have formed a smaller elected executive committee. (TJM)

- ▶ Management staff located some distance away from operational staff can cause difficulties. (Case study X)
- ▶ The operational activities of a partnership are sometimes undertaken by:
 - ▶ One of the partners who might be best placed due to their location (Case study X), or because they have staff with the relevant skills. Some larger organisations are better able to take on the management of day to day operations. (HELPP). This however may result in greater influence and control for that organisation and procedures need to be put in place to protect the interests of the other partners. (General)
 - ▶ A number of partnerships have secondees based within one of the partner organisations. This method can lead to tensions between staff due to their different styles of working. Team building exercises for these new teams have helped to create a sense of identity. (General). Where two organisations are involved with management of operational staff on a day to day basis, ensuring clarity of roles and responsibilities has helped to reduce the potential for inadequate project accountability. (HELPP)
- ▶ Secondment of staff to a partnership has kept hiring costs low, and is often seen as an attractive career development opportunity. (SAP) Sometimes where staff have felt isolated efforts have been made to keep them involved with the activities of their own organisation. (General)

Monitoring performance

- ▶ The standard performance measures – output and outcomes – have been used in all the partnerships to assess impact and effectiveness. (General)

- ▶ Partnership reporting procedures, in some examples, have required significant time to develop as they have involved gathering data from many different levels within the organisation. As a result, attention has been given, where possible, to developing reporting procedures that do not require constant changes in the future. (OSW)
- ▶ When setting up monitoring procedures, partnership activities can overlap with existing activities undertaken by a partner outside the scope of the partnership. Achieving a true assessment of the partnership's effectiveness has therefore been difficult to achieve and procedures have been developed for separating out reporting procedures to gain a fair view of impact. (ERFP)
- ▶ The involvement of users in gaining feedback has been a powerful tool for understanding the impact of a partnership. Additionally users have been asked to become involved with the collection of feedback from other users which, when done professionally, can provide an additional depth of information, due to their independence from the delivery body. (SAP)

Publicising

- ▶ Positively publicising partnerships can help to raise morale amongst operational staff and increase the opportunities for accessing funding streams. (ERFP)
- ▶ Branding issues have caused most partnerships some problems, especially where a new legal entity has been created, as the new brand can compete with the individual partner's own branding. (General)
- ▶ In some cases the partner that undertakes the operational activities of the partnership are seen by the press as the lead body, as its staff are involved with the day to day operations. Processes should be in place to ensure recognition of partners not always visible to external bodies. (BBS)

- ▶ Joint branding policies, e.g. wording of press releases, have been useful in providing a consistent image and avoiding the potential for a partner to intentionally or unintentionally misrepresent the partnership. (BBS, OSW, ERFP)

Managing changes in the size of partnerships

- ▶ When partnerships grow the influence of the original partners, in some instances, has been reduced, and this should be considered when taking on new members. (General)
- ▶ It has been appropriate, especially when a partnership has grown significantly, to undertake a period of consolidation during which all the partners have a chance to review, redevelop and confirm objectives and approaches. (ERFP)

Developing momentum

- ▶ Many partnerships that have been running for some time can be seen to continually reassess the impact of their services, and in doing so develop new services which focus on change needed from the target groups. (OSW, SAP) Consultants can be used as a resource to help undertake this activity.
- ▶ The speed of advances in information technology is one factor that may radically effect the way partnerships deliver their services, and as a result partnerships have spent time regularly reviewing the potential impact. (BBS)

Handling key personnel changes

- ▶ A high staff turnover within a partnership can cause instability and inadequacies of data retention if clear partnership documentation and processes are not in place. This is particularly important where a key founding member of staff with vision and energy leaves the partnership. (General)

- ▶ Clear documentation, and time spent revisiting the objectives/key drivers for the partnership, has allowed new staff to get up to speed more quickly when entering into a partnership. (HELPP)
- ▶ When a partnership has involved a statutory body, changes to key personnel can happen quickly and without significant warning, and so maintaining good contact at various levels within government bodies has been important. (ERFP)

2.2 Co-location key learning

2.2.1 Description

A co-location, or shared resource centre or cluster, involves the sharing of premises and other resources.

2.2.2 The benefits

The evidence from the case studies and additional research shows a number of benefits of co-locating with other organisations, including:

- ▶ Reducing costs through
 - ▶ gaining economies of scale
 - ▶ a more efficient use of office space
 - ▶ greater purchasing power
- ▶ Increased capacity achieved through
 - ▶ networking and collaboration
 - ▶ access to higher standards of office infrastructure
- ▶ Increased visibility through a greater throughput of users accessing conference venues and other organisations in the shared facility.

2.2.3 The capital, development and ongoing activities and costs

Capital activities and costs

The capital costs vary dramatically according to:

- ▶ The size, location and quality of the building to be purchased or leased
- ▶ The extent of the refurbishment.

Specific examples of capital costs incurred have not been included due to this variation.

A co-location centre typically works best where the office space is more than 5,000 sq ft with more than four organisations occupying it, as the economies of scale that drive the efficiency of clusters become significant at approximately this size and above. There are a number of clusters in London for example of approximately 12,000–20,000 sq ft in size.

Development activities and costs

The development costs have included:

- ▶ Agency fees associated with the property search (1%–1.5%)
- ▶ Letting fees associated with finding tenants (10% of rent per annum)
- ▶ Space planner fees (variable but on a 15,000 sq ft building potentially £3,000 +)
- ▶ Consultants, project management fees
- ▶ Solicitors' fees (1%–2%)
- ▶ Stamp duty (0%–4%)
- ▶ Surveyors' costs.

These costs also vary dramatically on a case by case basis. They are usually calculated using ratios applied either to the capital costs or the cost of leasing space per annum. An indication of these cost ratios has been included against each of the activities highlighted above.

Ongoing activities and costs

The ongoing costs and activities have included:

- ▶ Centre management (£25,000–£35,000)
- ▶ Cleaning
- ▶ Centralised services, e.g. finance function
- ▶ Maintenance of the building
- ▶ Electricity
- ▶ Gas and gas inspection
- ▶ Oil
- ▶ Boiler maintenance (including health and safety tests)
- ▶ Internal and external repairs
- ▶ Rates (if applicable)
- ▶ Insurance – public liability, contents and building
- ▶ Gardening
- ▶ Cleaning (window cleaning)
- ▶ Receptionist
- ▶ Information technology
- ▶ Furniture
- ▶ Telephone
- ▶ Accountancy costs
- ▶ Legal costs
- ▶ Water rates
- ▶ Lifts
- ▶ Fridges and microwaves
- ▶ Water coolers
- ▶ Air conditioning
- ▶ Health and safety (fire drills, log book, fire equipment maintenance, audit, maintenance contracts, asbestos survey and signage)
- ▶ Car parking costs.

2.2.4 The methods and difficulties involved with finding a suitable property

Identifying a suitable property to locate a group of voluntary organisations can be a difficult process. A property agent can be used to undertake the search.

The difficulties have included:

- ▶ Finding the right size of building as typically the building will be more than 10,000 sq ft
- ▶ Finding an agent that will achieve the desired results
- ▶ The time that can be required to finalise a building purchase, and synchronising existing lease/ownership with the acquisition of the new building
- ▶ The possibility, if leasing a property, that the landlord will not allow the sharing of space with other tenants.

2.2.5 The approaches used in developing shared asset ownership

Shared asset ownership for a co-location involves a number of partners sharing in the ownership of the same asset, i.e. the lease or freehold. Research has shown that for many co-locations the ownership of the asset is taken on by one organisation who would also typically provide the majority of the resource and project management. However where a number of partners want to work together to implement a co-location on a more equal footing, there is a need to set up policies and agreements to manage this ownership.

Consideration should also be made for partners setting up a co-location who are of significantly different size (income or personnel) as different methods and resources employed pre- and post-implementation may cause tensions between the partners.

The proportion of the asset owned by each of the partners

This is typically based on the partners' input into the process including the capital and development costs, the project management and leadership expertise.

A 'trust deed' has been used to set out the shared asset agreement.

The ownership structure if one of the partners sharing in the ownership of the asset wants to leave

Case study examples showed that the partners involved in the shared ownership would typically have to give their consent to any new organisation taking part-ownership of the space.

The governance structure set up to manage the co-location

Typical governance structures have involved a management committee, using consensus decision making. Additional layers may be appropriate where more than two or three partners are involved.

The proportion of the building running costs that should be charged to each of the partners

Typically the running costs are charged according to the proportion of the building that each occupies.

2.2.6 The success or failure of integrated activities and cost savings

There are a number of different activities that can be integrated when voluntary organisations occupy the same premises. Successfully integrated basic activities have included:

- ▶ Office management
- ▶ Photocopiers
- ▶ Telephones
- ▶ Cleaning
- ▶ Auditing activities
- ▶ Franking machines
- ▶ Meeting and conference facilities.

More advanced integrated activities have included finance, purchasing, information technology and human resources, although the complexity of sharing these functions is much greater.

Actual cost savings – Cost savings taken from the evidence collected shows that the cost savings that can be achieved for a range of integrated activities can be as much as:

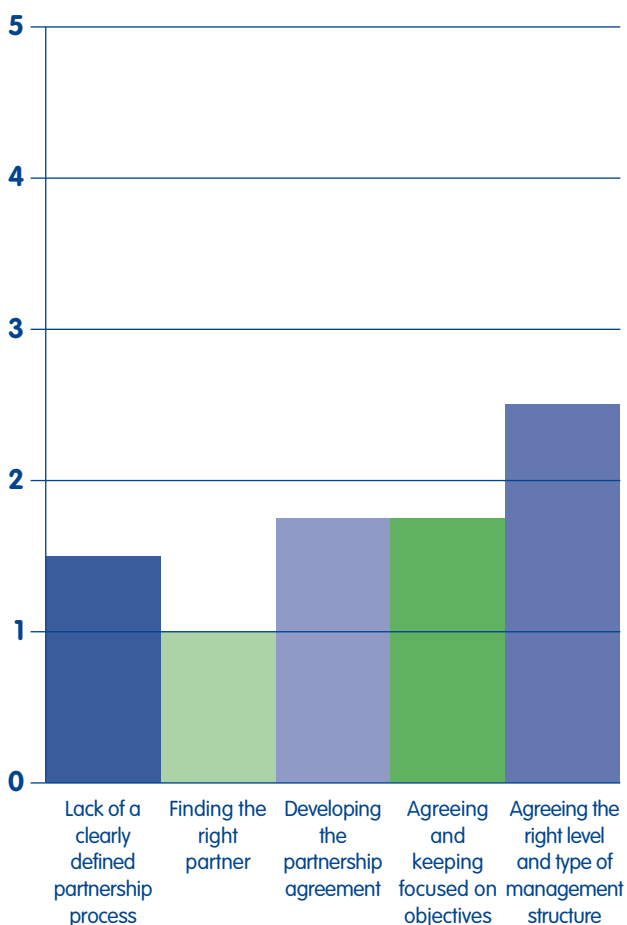
- ▶ Cleaning (65%)
- ▶ Franking machines (30%)
- ▶ Photocopying (57%)
- ▶ Telephone (50%–75%)
- ▶ Conference room (17%)
- ▶ Meeting and conference facilities room (65%)
- ▶ Filtered chilled water (70%)
- ▶ Recycling collection (84%)
- ▶ Office management (78%).

2.3 Quantitative analysis

A number of organisations, involved with this study, were asked to score each of five issues according to the difficulty that they caused their partnership (1 being the least difficult and 5 being the most difficult). The results are outlined below. The five issues were: lack of a clearly defined partnership process; finding the right partner; designing and agreeing the partnership agreement; agreeing and keeping focused on the objectives; and agreeing the right level and type of management structure.

The average of the scores are set out below in Figure A

Figure A



The highest scores (the most difficult issues to deal with) were for 'agreeing the right management structure', 'agreeing and keeping focused on objectives' and 'developing the partnership agreement'.

The lowest score (the least difficult issue to deal with) was for 'finding the right partner'.

2.4 Resources required for partnership

These are the responses from individuals interviewed during this study, to the question 'What support and/or advice would you like to see developed within the sector to help you and your organisation, as you work in partnership in the future'.

'The need for the dissemination of partnership best practice to the wider sector.'

Thames Reach Bondway

'A general blueprint for the partnership process.'

Help the Aged

'A guide to help undertake the partnership process, particularly how to work with an organisation with different working styles.'

Mencap

'Information on factors that undermine partnership working and how to deal with them.'

Birmingham Partnership 4 Change

'Information on cross-sectoral partnerships.'

Paddington Waterside Partnership

'Setting up educational and private sector partnerships within the VCS.'

Paddington Waterside Partnership

'How to deal with issues over branding a partnership.'

Ormiston Trust

3 Collaborative working case studies

The case studies have been developed through the completion of questionnaires and one-to-one interviews.

Each partnership provided information on a number of areas.

These areas were:

- ▶ Objectives
- ▶ Outputs and outcomes
- ▶ Key drivers for the partnership
- ▶ Identifying partners
- ▶ Gaining internal consensus
- ▶ Understanding partners
- ▶ Perceived risks
- ▶ Using consultants
- ▶ Assessing costs – set up and running
- ▶ Accessing funding
- ▶ The partnership agreement
- ▶ The management and operational structures
- ▶ Monitoring performance
- ▶ Publicising
- ▶ Changes in the size of the partnership
- ▶ Checking the need for the partnership/refining the services offered/keeping the momentum
- ▶ Handling key personnel changes.

Some partnerships have not been able to provide all the information desired. Where this is the case a heading has not been included.

3.1 The Eastern Region Families Partnership

Partnership overview

'Time for families' is an initiative supported by the Eastern Region Families Partnership which comprises three key funding partners: the Lankelly Foundation, the Ormiston Trust and the HM Prison Service. The delivery and operational management of the initiative are the responsibility of the Ormiston Children and Families Trust, sister trust to the Ormiston Trust.

It was established in response to a range of identified and emerging needs of the children and families of prisoners. The vision for the partnership is to develop appropriate support services for children and families of prisoners in each of the prisons in the Eastern Region, within the lifetime of the project.

'Prisoners who are able to maintain a secure family environment are six times less likely to re-offend.'
Social Exclusion Unit

Objectives

- ▶ To consult extensively with children and families, including prisoners, and to develop a range of prison based and community based programmes that respond to their needs and expressed choices.
- ▶ To enable children to maintain relationships and regular contact with an imprisoned parent/carer.
- ▶ To recognise and value prisoners in their parenting role and to enable them to recognise the impact of their offending behaviour on children and families and to retain an active sense of family and parental responsibility throughout and following their sentence.

- ▶ To ensure that other service providers (schools, health professionals, social workers) and community based groups become aware of and responsive to the experience and issues faced by children/families with a member in prison.
- ▶ To demonstrate to government, policy makers and the general public the longer-term impact of supporting families with a member in prison and the value of investing in family support services as a resource in the process of rehabilitation.

Output/outcome

- ▶ Report of baseline data of existing provision for children and families of prisoners in all prisons in the Eastern Region.
- ▶ Report completed and published highlighting issues for families of prisoners, 'Sentenced Families' published 2004.
- ▶ Development of a Communication and Promotion Strategy (2004) to highlight the issues for children and families of prisoners and to enable the sharing of best practice.
- ▶ Implementation of two new projects at HMP Chelmsford and HMP Bedford.
- ▶ Development and accreditation for a programme of learning in relation to Parenting from Prison ('You and Your Child' accredited by OCN in July 2004).
- ▶ Development of community based/outreach programme(s) to support children with a parent or carer in prison in Norfolk and Essex, funded by the Children's Fund.

Key drivers for the partnership

Key: To involve and work in partnership with a statutory body and at the same time leverage in other funding. To combine expertise to provide guidance of delivery by an operational charity.

Identifying partners

The Ormiston Trust and its sister trust the Ormiston Children and Families Trust, believed that the Lankelly Foundation would be an excellent partner based on a number of factors:

- ▶ Good working relationships were already in place between the two organisations.
- ▶ The administrator at the Lankelly Foundation was well known to key staff at the Ormiston Children and Families Trust.
- ▶ The Ormiston Children and Families Trust knew of the Lankelly Foundation's well regarded work with voluntary organisations in and around prisons in the UK.
- ▶ The Lankelly Foundation had previously provided funding for work delivered by the Ormiston Children and Families Trust.

Following a meeting between the chair and the chief executives of the Lankelly Foundation and the Ormiston Trust, it was decided to make a formal approach to the Prison Service to invite their involvement in the partnership. It was agreed this would significantly strengthen the partnership and potentially bring additional funding and increased credibility to the project. In order to achieve this, the two trusts approached the Head of the East of England Area Prison Service, who was already familiar with the existing and long-standing work of the Ormiston Children and Families Trust in HMP Norwich and HMP Wayland prisons, and successfully secured involvement of the Prison Service at area level.

As the proposed initiative's activities did not directly involve prisoners, and thus did not fall neatly within a funding area of the Prison Service, it was essential for the Prison Service to recognise and acknowledge how the work would dovetail with and complement their own objectives. The Ormiston Trust and the Lankelly Foundation secured, in principle, the commitment of the Minister in Charge of Prisons, as the partnership's aims and objectives could be clearly linked to the Prison Service's wider agenda for the successful resettlement of prisoners through the strengthening of family ties.

Gaining internal consensus

Initially, and in order to gain internal support from the trustees of the Lankelly Foundation and the Ormiston Trust, a partnership proposal was developed and presented to the two partner boards

of trustees, setting out the costs, benefits and risks of entering the partnership. The trustees of both organisations granted their approval based on this information.

Understanding partners

The voluntary sector partners already had extensive existing professional relationships and experience of working with each other and with the statutory sector, which helped in the setting up of the partnership. However, in the early stages of the life of the partnership, there was still a need for some adjustments to be made in order to accommodate the different working practices and management structures of the partners.

There was also some frustration with the slower decision making process of the statutory body.

Perceived risks

- ▶ The potential for a change in government policy which could have led the Prison Service to disengage from the partnership.
- ▶ There were some initial reservations about the amount of additional time the work for this partnership would involve, as well as its financial implications for the Trust.

Using consultants – setting up and running

No consultants were used in setting up the partnership.

Accessing funding

The two grant-making trusts and the Prison Service are committed to contributing a total of approximately £3 million to this initiative over a period of five to seven years. This includes the secondment to the project of a prison governor. One of the key achievements of this partnership was that it successfully secured a long-term funding commitment from a statutory body, which is unusual within the voluntary and community sector where short-term funding often presents difficulties for the sector.

Assessing costs – set up and running

A considerable amount of time has been invested in the setting up of the partnership and in establishing strong links with relevant parties. Time was allocated for the development of detailed plans, the forming of the partnership board and the development of terms of reference. This has ensured a strong foundation to the initiative.

Documenting the partnership agreements

There is no contractual or legally binding arrangement between the partners, but there are detailed supporting documents setting out the commitment of each partner. There are now working agreements in place between individual prisons and the operational partner, Ormiston Children and Families Trust, and these will be regularly reviewed and renegotiated to reflect changes in work programmes as they develop and grow.

The Prison Service not having entered into partnership of this kind before was more comfortable during the early stages that no formal commitment existed, as it afforded them the chance to develop and define their involvement over a period of years.

However there is a slight concern from the voluntary sector partners that because the area Prison Service is somewhat separate from the national Prison Service that any disagreements and/or inconsistencies between their two agendas could possibly result in planning difficulties.

No exit strategies have been developed but issues of sustainability are central to the planning for future work.

Management and operational structures

The Partnership Board meets quarterly to share information, to make strategic decisions and to support and steer the operational partner, the Ormiston Children and Families Trust.

Broad board representation, and the partnership's involvement with a range of statutory bodies, is seen as a significant strength.

Monitoring performance

At the beginning of the partnership, a deliberate effort was made to keep the financial reporting and budgeting for the Eastern Region Families Partnership's 'Time for Families' initiative separate from that of the Ormiston Children and Families Trust's other prison related work. This allowed the board to effectively measure investment and to appraise impact of the work brought in by the Eastern Region Families Partnership. However two years into the project, it was felt that this is no longer needed and the two accounting systems are now in the process of being amalgamated. The resulting restructuring and consolidation of all prison related work has enabled Ormiston to 'streamline' the staffing structure across all of its Ormiston Children and Families Trust prison related work.

Publicising

The partnership is continuing to provide sustained and credible services. It serves as a good model for collaboration between private and statutory organisations in an area that would not have necessarily fallen under a state initiative. Although 'branding' the initiative has not been a first priority in the early stages, it is nevertheless recognised that publicity will maintain the drive and momentum of the partnership as well as share best practice across the region and nationally. The partnership has developed a communication and promotion strategy that will include the use of press and journal articles, internet, research and consultation reports, conferences and events to best advantage to highlight the issues for children and families of prisoners and to promote the 'model' as an effective way of working. The promotion of 'Time for Families' is a key priority within the Annual Plan 2004–2005 and will continue to be so into the future. In order to develop and maintain this profile Ormiston Children and Families Trust has recently appointed a Communications and Monitoring Officer with a specific remit for the promotion and monitoring of 'Time for Families'.

Change in the size of the partnership

As a result of the 'bringing together' of existing and new work, the partnership went through a thorough process of internal restructuring and consolidation in 2003. This has enhanced a sense of ownership of partnership activities at project level, and brought a clearer understanding of the way forward.

Checking the need for the partnership/refining the services offered/keeping the momentum

There is a strong belief by all partners in the effectiveness and impact of the work of the partnership and in the financial benefits of working together. This belief has ensured that political and organisational will has remained robust.

To ensure continued effectiveness and momentum, the 'Time for Families' project plan is regularly reviewed and developed at the partnership board's quarterly meetings in order to ensure objectives are clear and are being met, and that each of the partners is satisfied with the services provided.

Handling key personnel changes

Organisational structures within the government and the Prison Service can change quite regularly; so keeping incoming government representatives up to speed and maintaining relationships by revisiting objectives, while requiring significant resources in terms of time, has proved particularly beneficial in maintaining the momentum of the partnership and the ongoing commitment of key partners.

3.2 Case study X

Partnership overview

Two charities (organisations A and B) working in partnership to deliver improvements to standards in education in a specific geographical area. The partnership began activities in 2002.

Choosing partners

Organisation A in the South of England wanted to use its expertise to develop a project in the North of England in an area that it had not worked in before. The organisation approached an Education Authority for advice on potential partners and to gain funding for this project. Organisation B was suggested as being a potential partner as it was well respected in the local area for undertaking similar projects. After initial discussions the two organisations felt that they had complementary expertise particularly as organisation A had good connections at strategic levels within the sector and organisation B had good connections with local stakeholders and local funding streams.

Gaining internal consensus

The partnership project workers developed the business case for the project and presented this to the boards of each of the partners to gain their agreement. This senior level support was important in ensuring the alignment of the partnership's objectives to the organisations' strategic aims.

Understanding partners

A small amount of time during initial meetings was spent developing the partners' understanding of each other's organisational hierarchy, styles of working and past projects.

Using consultants – setting up and running

No consultants were used in setting up the partnership.

Assessing costs – set up and running

Setting up costs – actual: The costs of setting up the partnership, which included activities such as objective setting meetings and building relationships through visits to local schools, were not included in the original forecasts.

Running costs – actual: Running costs were higher than expected. The costs included the hiring of a self-sufficient project manager but the time spent in the day to day support of this individual at the offices of organisation B, although not high, were not included in the original forecasts.

Accessing funding

Funds were continually being raised throughout the project by both the partners.

Documenting the partnership agreements

The partners produced a document which stated the objectives, the partner's responsibilities, the roles and the partnership's core values. This was a real plus, and helped the partnership greatly.

Organisation B did feel that it would have been useful to have included, within the document, a timetable for the review of expectations and an assessment of whether they were being met. In addition, further clarity regarding the responsibilities and ownership of activities could have been included in the agreement, as well as planning for more regular meetings. No exit strategies were included in the agreement.

Management and operational structures

A management committee, which provides guidance to the project, has been set up and includes representatives of both partners, the project schools, and representatives from the Education Authority.

A full-time project manager is employed by organisation A as they had raised the majority of the funding, but is located at the offices of organisation B due to the proximity of the target group to their offices. Formal line management is provided by organisation A, and some day to day guidance is provided by organisation B.

There have been a number of issues regarding line management.

- ▶ The project manager was employed by organisation A, but based at the offices of organisation B, which were a considerable distance away. This meant that there was some confusion over which organisation's policies to employ, particularly in relation to HR policies. It may have been easier for organisation B, where the project manager was based, to have controlled the funds, which would have expedited expense claims and bill payments.
- ▶ There were lengthy discussions over who should manage the project, as there was a perception that whoever did manage would gain the most credibility and exposure.
- ▶ The distance of organisation A from the project base has resulted in that organisation playing a less integral part in the project's development than was originally expected.

These issues however have not compromised the delivery of the partnership. This has been mainly due to the mature, non-confrontational working style adopted by both the partners, who were focused on the delivery of the project's aims and objectives.

Monitoring performance

Clear joint outcomes have been developed.

Publicising

Any publicity that the partnership develops has logos from both organisations clearly visible.

3.3 Off the Streets and into Work

Partnership overview

Off the Streets and into Work (OSW) aims to support people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless by providing guidance, training, and employment.

The partnership was set up in 1994 and originally comprised FOCUS Central London, TEC and funding partners Homeless Network and the City of Westminster. OSW now coordinates employability services in thirteen different homelessness agencies across London, engages with or coordinates a range of strategic partnerships, and links in with hundreds of employability projects across the UK and Europe.

The initiative has been funded from various sources, including the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), local authorities and private funds.

Objectives

- ▶ To reduce homelessness, and increase sustainable employment and learning outcomes.
- ▶ To work effectively across sectors in order to enable clear progression routes for clients, to maximise resources, to reduce duplication and to build delivery capacity.
- ▶ To deliver well informed improvements by measuring impact and the cost of learning and employment services.
- ▶ To provide its clients with various services to help them progress towards employability. Within its capacity-building role, OSW also complements and enhances the work of its partners by providing services such as joint training and development programmes, facilitating exchange of knowledge and helping in the development of good working practices.

Output/outcome

- ▶ Since 1999, OSW has worked with over 8,500 individuals who were homeless or at risk of homelessness
- ▶ More than 1,500 have achieved qualifications
- ▶ Over 1,700 went into employment
- ▶ Over 3,100 went on to further education or training.

Key drivers for the partnership

Key: To improve the coordination of the delivery of a wide range of services for homeless people, and to meet the requirements of SRB funding to adopt a holistic partnership approach to service delivery.

Identifying partners

The partnership includes a number of the main homelessness providers in London. They chose to work together as they had identified a common need.

Understanding partners

OSW came into being as an SRB funding driven partnership with expectations to deliver services from day one. Relationships and an understanding of working practices and styles amongst partners were only really developed in depth after the start of the project and the first two years of the partnership can thus be defined as a period of trial and error, where partner organisations were testing whether their newly put in place funding structures and delivery models would work.

Accessing funding

OSW is funded by a range of statutory sources as well as corporate and trust donations. The OSW's SRB funding is due to finish in March 2005. When OSW was set up as a legal entity in 1999 this increased the opportunities for accessing funds from community and charitable trusts.

In the mid-1990s, the need to address homelessness issues was high on the government's agenda and the SRB was a sizeable fund available to the OSW to address this problem.

OSW has also found that many trusts prefer to fund front line delivery organisations, and as OSW is a second tier organisation, it has at times found it difficult to access funding from these sources.

Documenting the partnership agreements

The principles of the partnership from its inception were clearly set out in a formal terms of reference document. A key part of this agreement was to ensure that decisions taken at a partnership level would not impact the lead partner's responsibility to meet the funder's delivery targets. The high number of partner organisations that make up OSW and the complexity that this brings in terms of management meant that there has always been a need for a clearly defined legal framework to fall back on which outlines the risks, targets and governance structure of the partnership.

Data protection issues have also had to be clearly set out as some customer information is shared between the partners to support referrals and progression between different services, and reduce paperwork and bureaucracy from the point of view of service users.

Over the last ten years some of the OSW's partner organisations have developed their own expertise and experiences, refining and developing their core objectives. The existence of shared objectives, and contractual agreements with delivery partners has helped to keep the partners focused on the objectives, which has helped the partnership remain relatively stable.

OSW has a contingency plan for how to proceed if the partnership was to be wound up.

Management and operational structures

(Phase 1: 1994–1998): OSW originally consisted of a board which had representatives from the partner organisations, and operational staff consisting of a project manager and a team manager. Although the partnership board was responsible for the overall strategic direction of the project, the managerial structure at the beginning remained rather rigid as the core partners wanted to retain much of the control over the decision making process. In some ways this was because the new project was a step into the unknown.

(Phase 2: 1999–2004): After four years, OSW was formally set up as an independent company limited by guarantee with charitable purposes, with a board of trustees and a regional partnership board

which determines the overall strategy and direction of the partnership.

Lead delivery agencies within the partnership undertake delivery of services in their respective London sub-regions, supported by smaller local partner agencies.

OSW now has a central team of twelve staff that commission and coordinate training and employment services.

Since setting up as a legal entity there has been a slight change in the power dynamic within the partnership, as the legal entity now has more formal powers to control its direction.

With funding from SRB and the Community Fund, a remote access monitoring system (OSW Link) was introduced across the programme in 2000. After several years of use, the database has become a significant source of evidence around which OSW has developed the largest study into homelessness and employment in the UK. An ongoing training programme is run to ensure new staff coming into the programme are trained and proficient in using OSW Link.

Publicising

Although a limited amount of time was spent on the branding of the OSW partnership at the beginning, mainly not to overshadow the identity of its individual partners, more than ten years into the partnership OSW feels the need to focus more on publicising the partnership for its work. Developing recognition of the work of the partnership across the sector will enhance the credibility of the partnership and help them to secure funding.

Developing a strong brand in a partnership, where there are significant differences in the size of organisation involved, was seen as being difficult, partly due to the differences in importance that each of the partners gives to the partnership and its objectives, and the corresponding desired strength of their brand. Over time the partnership did develop agreed wording to be used in publicising the partnership in different sources and contexts. Professional and well presented annual reports are also being produced.

Checking the need for the partnership/refining the services offered/keeping the momentum

Following a large-scale external independent evaluation programme in 2001 and the production of a new business plan for 2002–05, it became increasingly clear that the organisation needed to develop a more evidence-based approach to its work, driven by the needs of its client base. A new research project has been put in place to carry out and commission research to feed into the strategic development of OSW's work. This allows the organisation to gather more evidence-based information in order to build up reliable data to assess the progress and impact of the partnership, and in clarifying the focus of delivery. Today, OSW commissions front line services that are based on research and on wider government policy and initiatives.

The partnership continues to encourage cross-sector working and is constantly on the look out for new service agencies, which can meet the ever changing needs of its client base.

The partnership has also had to recognise and adapt to changes in government policy which has had a major effect in changing the nature of the partnership.

It also continues to test and fund new services and approaches.

Handling key personnel changes

A number of key changes in the personnel of the partnership have occurred. This often caused some short-term disruption, even though new members of staff were given considerable support in understanding the partnership's background, objectives and activities.

3.4 The Breeding Bird Survey

Partnership overview

The UK Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) partnership aims to measure changes in the populations of widespread bird species. Apart from the core partners, the main clients for the BBS data are conservation agencies and government bodies.

The partnership has been in existence for ten years, and comprises the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC).

The partnership scheme is funded equally by the three partners.

Objectives

- ▶ To produce estimates of the population trends of widespread breeding bird species for the UK as a whole, and where possible for individual counties, regions and habitats within the UK.
- ▶ To relate these population changes to habitat changes in the area, the distribution of habitats and to other environmental variables.
- ▶ To describe geographical variation in the distribution and abundance of widespread breeding bird species within the UK and to relate this variation to environmental variables.

Output/outcome

- ▶ Exceeded expectations, in terms of the number of volunteers (more than 2,000) that have become involved in data collection.
- ▶ Monitored population changes of over 100 bird species.
- ▶ Used reports to set bird conservation priorities by policy makers and other non-governmental organisations, and to relate to data collected in other schemes.
- ▶ Contributed data to one of the UK government's 15 headline indicators of sustainable development.

- ▶ Developed an impressive international reputation, with similar schemes based on the UK model being adopted by several countries in Europe (e.g. Ireland, Poland and Bulgaria).

Key drivers for the partnership

Key: To pool resources and expertise to extend the geographical and habitat scope of bird surveying.

Detailed: The BBS was developed from the Common Birds Census (CBC) which was a partnership established in the mid-1960s between the BTO and the JNCC's predecessor body the Nature Conservancy Council to conduct an extensive bird population survey. Despite the scheme's successes, it was apparent by the mid-1980s that the CBC had some limitations, in particular the limited geographical scope of the information being collected. The BTO and the JNCC set up a technical group to review the CBC in order to consider possible alternative approaches to bird surveying. At the same time the RSPB were lobbying for improvements to the survey and were also keen on becoming involved with the partnership. Following a two-year pilot project, instigated to test the different methods in the field and to find the most suitable alternatives, the BBS was formally launched in 1994 between the three partners.

It is important to recognise that before the newly created BBS partnership was formed in 1994 that the RSPB was in discussion with partners who had been working towards existing objectives for over twenty years. The BTO and the JNCC had invested a huge amount of financial and intellectual effort into the CBC and were, entirely understandably, protective of it, when discussing changes to it. These initial debates on future aims and methods served the partnership well as it meant significant early effort was made in clarifying and developing shared objectives for the new partnership.

Identifying partners

The complementary expertise of the three partners and the close alignment of their objectives brought this group of partners together.

Gaining internal consensus

Developing buy-in from operational staff has not been a high priority as only one partner is involved with the implementation of the scheme, and they see this work as part of their core objectives.

Understanding partners

The RSPB, the BTO and the JNCC – in existing and previous forms – had worked together over a period of decades and so had a good knowledge of each other's working practices, ethos and values. The pilot phase of this partnership did allow the partners to develop further their understanding of each other's working practices.

Perceived risks

Risk 1: The potential lack of resources required to deliver the increase in the scope of the partnership from 300 to 2,000 volunteers and the chance that the volunteers would not want to get involved with the scheme – especially as it involved a significant change from the monitoring of sites selected by the volunteers to monitoring randomly selected sites. Mitigation: Significant effort was made in selling the concept to volunteers, which included simplifying the scheme to make it easier for the volunteers to get involved. The involvement of volunteers confirmed that the approach being developed was one that they were comfortable using.

Risk 2: There were concerns from the RSPB that, although the BBS was a jointly funded and managed partnership, the BTO as the operational body might be seen externally as the lead body, to the detriment of the brands of the other partners. Mitigation: Some joint branding policies were set out, including the use of joint organisational logos on letterheads and other material.

Assessing costs – set up and running

Running costs – perception: The partners had a good idea of the potential costs of running the partnership. This understanding was developed further during the pilot phase, because they established how many people would be involved and how much time might be spent on the activities of the partnership. Their forecast of the potential cost

was also helped by the partners' understanding of the previous CBC survey partnership.

Actual running costs: £135,000 per annum (2003) which is split equally between the partners.

Accessing funding

Each partner provides one-third of the funding for the scheme.

Documenting the partnership agreements

At the end of the two-year pilot, the three partners produced a five-year agreement that formally set up the BBS. The agreement has been renegotiated twice since its inception, mostly with little change. Although the agreement is not reviewed that often, the act of producing a formalised document ensured that many of the issues that could lead to conflict or tension between the partners were at least discussed. Each of the partners thus had a good understanding of their role and responsibilities within the partnership.

The partnership agreement is for a fixed term. However internal or external events can change the context in which the partnership was set up and this fixed period for review provides a dedicated event for making any necessary changes. The RSPB believes the BBS works very well, due in part to the strength of the partnership agreement. In other partnerships that the RSPB has been involved with, the renegotiation of similar agreements has been quite fundamental, impacting quite dramatically on the work and funding of the individual organisations in the partnership. A limited amount of legal advice was sought in preparation of the partnership agreement.

The agreement between the partners includes a section which sets out a nine-month written notice break clause if a partner wants to leave. Additional exit strategy information has not been included as there is little perceived fear of failure. There are no explicit exit plans in the event that the partnership cannot continue operating the BBS.

Management and operational structures

The BBS is overseen by a steering group, which meets twice a year, made up of the partner organisations.

The JNCC and the RSPB bring funds, technical expertise to guide the survey, and have the ability to promote the scheme and disseminate the results to government, policy makers, media and the public. The BTO provides further funding and the management of the project's operational staff. The JNCC and the RSPB are the main conservation policy customers of the BBS data, whilst BTO uses the data for scientific research. The BBS is run by a small team of staff located and managed at the BTO and also involves about 2,000 volunteer bird-watchers, many of whom are BTO members. The BTO and members of its own staff provide the operational side and reporting for the partnership as they have a history of running long-term volunteer-based monitoring schemes, the technical capacity to deal with data collection, analysis and reporting, and a network of volunteers to undertake the work. While the partners continue to share the broad objectives of the scheme, all of them retain subtly different angles on its development. For example, the JNCC needs to fulfil statutory requirements that the other partners do not have. An example would be that the BBS reports UK-wide trends and trends for the individual countries (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland). Within England, it also produces trends for English regions. These regions match the government office regions, as the JNCC has to report within these regions. This makes sense but unfortunately they are not the same as the RSPB's English regions. This is difficult for the RSPB as to get data for specific RSPB regions they have to negotiate a separate contract to the BTO. However, the RSPB accepts that over time its regions may come to match those of the government offices and so they are content to keep the existing geographical reporting even though it is not ideal for their current needs.

Monitoring performance

Each year the BTO have an agreed work programme which they report on at management meetings.

Publicising

Even though the scheme is an equal joint partnership between the three organisations, tensions have arisen over how the partners have

branded and publicised the partnership, particularly those partners for whom their public profile and brand is an important asset. The BTO thinks that, occasionally, the RSPB try to promote the BBS as the RSPB's; the RSPB thinks that, occasionally, the BTO tries to promote the BBS as the BTO's. There have been minor misunderstandings that have contributed to this perception. For example, the RSPB is a large organisation with many staff. Those RSPB staff that are closely involved with the BBS are well aware that the BBS is a joint venture, and promote it as such. Those staff that are less aware of the BBS – and the BTO for that matter – may well assume that the BBS is the RSPB's and unintentionally promote it as such in their communications. Another example is that whenever the BBS makes it into the media, mostly from proactive joint press releases, sometimes reactively, journalists are not interested in crediting all the organisations involved, so sometimes they just mention the RSPB as the better known organisation. The BTO sometimes thinks that this is intentional on the RSPB's part; mostly, it isn't. On the other hand, as the BBS is run by the BTO, most of the volunteers involved in doing the work report to the BTO and, as a consequence, feel that the BBS is BTO's scheme. The BTO take many opportunities to state that it is a joint scheme, but it does not necessarily sink in amongst the BTO audience.

Change in the size of the partnership

The partners have remained the same.

Checking the need for the partnership/refining the services offered/keeping the momentum

The success of the partnership, and its associated approach, has ensured that the partnership has retained momentum over the last ten years. In the most recent (third) version of the agreement, which has just been renegotiated, the impact of new technology – in particular the collection and dissemination of data via the web – has been discussed. This technology was barely thought of at the time of the original agreement negotiations, but is now an essential component to improve the operations of the partnership.

3.5 The Hull and East Riding Leisure and Play Project

Partnership overview

The Hull and East Riding Leisure and Play Project aims to provide a playscheme for children with a severe learning disability.

The partnership was set up in September 2002, the key partners were Mencap, Ability, Hull City Council and Hull and East Riding Community Health NHS Trust.

The partnership is funded by the Hull Children's Fund.

Objectives

To obtain funding and provide management support for a playscheme for children in Hull with a severe learning disability.

Output/outcome

The playscheme is currently holding three half-day sessions a fortnight.

Key drivers for the partnership

Key: To pool resources and experiences to bid more effectively for necessary funding for the project.

Detailed: A previous playscheme run by Mencap's Housing and Support Business Unit had closed down due to a withdrawal of external funding in the summer of 2001. A letter received from a parent who was negatively affected by the closure of this playscheme prompted Mencap and Ability to try to set up a partnership between interested parties to re-establish a similar facility. The need for a new playscheme was confirmed through local research carried out by Mencap and the 'Listening to Families' Project which reiterated the need for this kind of provision.

Identifying partners

Mencap and Ability had an existing working relationship and felt that they would be good

partners to drive the setting up of the partnership. The Mencap District Officer and the Chair of Ability took the lead in inviting potential partners from key local stakeholders to a meeting (e.g. Social Services, KIDS, NCH, Barnardos and parents), to explore the potential for working collaboratively.

Gaining internal consensus

The project's clear fit with the objectives of Mencap meant that it was not necessary to spend significant time developing senior level buy-in.

Understanding your partners

The partners discussed their organisational backgrounds in the context of setting up management arrangements for the anticipated service, and in relation to the sharing of knowledge and skills.

Perceived risks

The potential that funding would not be secured.

Using consultants – setting up and running

No consultants were used in setting up or running the partnership.

Assessing costs – set up and running

The Chair of Ability spent significant time developing the policies and procedures that were necessary for the group to become an employer.

Actual running costs: The management of the partnership involved approximately one two-hour steering group meeting a month.

Accessing funding

The partnership has secured funding from the Hull Children's Fund until 2006, subject to an annual review.

Documenting the partnership agreements

A partnership agreement was developed describing the range of operational and management procedures (e.g. partnership objectives, activities, job descriptions, staffing structures and salary scales to be used) that were required. These were based on previous work done by Mencap, Ability, Social Services and Health and were agreed by the steering group members. Hull City Council provided some professional advice.

Management and operational structures

An initial steering group was set up by Mencap and Ability to develop the project objectives. Membership included parents, and a representative from Health and from larger voluntary organisations such as KIDS, NCH and Barnados. A special meeting was held to which other parents and local councillors were invited. The purpose of this was to try and obtain further support for the project. Although the initial involvement of people from a wide range of organisations was helpful in publicising the intended project, attendance from these representatives began to tail off. The special meeting did not generate any financial support

The project has a rather complex but well coordinated management structure. At the time of the inception of the project Mencap was not in a position to manage it, so it was agreed that Ability would take on the role of manager/employer. Social Services act in a joint supervisory role with regard to the everyday running of the playscheme, Health provide the premises where the playscheme is held and related health and safety and risk assessments. Mencap's role is now an advisory one. Had Social Services not been willing to initially take on a professional supervisory role there may have been problems obtaining this type of support, as at that time Ability did not have the resources to provide this. Initially there was some concern from project staff over a lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities as both Ability and Social Services provided elements of operational activity. This was resolved through close communication.

Once the project had been set up the steering group was merged with the team meetings for the project. Formal meetings are held quarterly. Informal contact occurs regularly between project staff, Ability and the Social Services Short Breaks Co-ordinator.

Exit strategies

None were produced at the time that the project started, however they are now being developed.

Publicising

The project was publicised through Social Services which was the referral point for families wanting to

use the service, and through a local newsletter about children's services. The partnership's name HELPP appeared on publicity.

Checking the need for the partnership/refining the services offered/keeping the momentum

The partnership has maintained its momentum through the commitment of the organisations and individuals involved and through team building. This has been further assisted by the appointment of a coordinator from Ability who has responsibility for this and other Ability projects.

Handling key personnel changes

Consistency of staff involved at all levels has helped the project develop.

3.6 The Service Audit Partnership

Partnership overview

The Service Audit Partnership (SAP) aims, in response to the high profile death of a volunteer in a homelessness project in Oxford, to improve the quality and safety of projects delivering support to homeless people by setting up a system of mutual self-audit.

The partnership was set up in 1999 and originally comprised of Thames Reach, the Housing Services Agency, the Single Homeless Project, Riverpoint and Eaves Housing for Women.

The partnership was initially funded from the Housing Corporation's 'Innovation and Good Practice' grants with matched funding from the John Ellerman Trust. The last three years' funding has come from the Association of London Government.

Objectives

- ▶ To ensure that risk within homelessness organisations is better managed, and to develop the safety and quality of projects in order to avoid a tragedy similar to that which

befell Jonathan Newby. To raise standards overall within homelessness agencies.

- ▶ To celebrate and disseminate best practice in service delivery.

Output/outcome

- ▶ Set up an effective audit methodology and a comprehensive toolkit for use by auditors.
- ▶ Carried out more than 60 audits.
- ▶ Trained managers and staff as auditors which has increased their skill sets and developed their understanding of best practice.
- ▶ Increased understanding by board members of activities occurring at the front line for which they are ultimately accountable.
- ▶ Used audit reports as mechanisms for levering in change at underperforming projects.
- ▶ Improved standards and the sharing of learning.

Key drivers for the partnership

Key: To respond to an enquiry into the death of a volunteer, Jonathan Newby, which suggested that there should be an improvement in the quality controls of organisations in this field.

Understanding partners

A pilot phase of the audit process over a two-year period allowed the partners to embed and deepen their understanding of each other's working practices.

Perceived risks

There was a fear that the SAP, which would involve an audit of service delivery activities by other organisations, would prove to be too intrusive a process – touching upon information that was too sensitive to be viewed by potential competitors.

Using consultants – setting up and running

Consultants have been used to help set up outcome monitoring tools for the Client Audit Evaluator pilot programme. They have been used to evaluate the partnership and identify options for its future when current funding sources end in March 2005.

Assessing costs – set up and running

Setting up costs – perception: The CEO at Thames Reach was well aware of the costs of setting up the partnership.

Running costs – perception: Running costs were well understood partly due to the partners' understanding of existing auditing procedures.

Accessing funding

The partnership originally received funding from the Housing Corporation's 'Innovation & Good Practice programme' and the John Ellerman Trust. At the end of the initial two-year pilot phase, continuation funding was secured from the Association of London Government.

Documenting the partnership agreements

A service level agreement (SLA) sets out the objectives, the financial commitment, the roles and the responsibilities of the partners. It was developed and agreed at director level which ensured senior level buy-in and ownership.

One member left as the organisation was concerned that following the increase in membership the disparity in size between the organisations had become too great and would lead to problems in terms of a power imbalance amongst members. Procedures for handling new and exiting partners have now been clarified.

As this partnership meant the sharing of information on service users, a confidentiality clause was a critical part of this partnership agreement. It clarified how the partnership would meet the legal requirements of the Data Protection Act.

No significant legal support was sought in setting up the agreements for the partnership.

No exit strategies were included in the agreement.

Management and operational structures

A steering group, which meets three times a year, is made up of the chief executives of each organisation, and is responsible for overseeing the project's overall direction and development. A working party, which meets every eight weeks, includes the senior service delivery managers from each organisation and is responsible for overseeing the day to day management of SAP.

A project manager, based at Broadway (the new organisation after the merger of HSA and Riverpoint), was originally on secondment from a member agency and is now directly employed. The project manager is responsible and accountable for the activities of the project on a day to day basis. This one point of contact has helped in managing the delivery of the project.

The secondment of a member of staff to a project/partnership can keep hiring costs to a minimum, and provide valuable career experience for staff.

The project coordinator is employed directly by one of the partners. Although there is a fear that this can lead to an imbalance in the influence that this partner can have over the day to day operations there are structures in place to mitigate this.

The relative size in terms of income of the partners can also lead to the larger organisations directing more resources (for example, through greater attendance of staff at management meetings/ working groups) towards the partnership and in turn this can increase their influence on it. This may or may not be desirable for the other partners and clear procedures should be in place to manage partnership inputs and resources.

It was decided from the outset to base the audit on an existing framework – that of the National Housing Federation's Framework for Housing with Support. The use of an existing set of service standards as a basis for SAP's own standards increased member confidence that the auditing system would be effective and allowed the partnership to begin to deliver results more quickly.

Monitoring performance

The partnership's performance is monitored by progress against outputs and outcomes.

In 2004 the SAP began to involve former homeless member agency clients in the audit process. These specially trained client audit evaluators take over the task of interviewing audited team service users that was previously carried out by staff auditors. Initial indicators are that this is proving beneficial to the quality of client feedback and hence the subsequent report, as well as to the interviewers themselves.

Publicising

The SAP has not raised its profile outside of the partnership as much as it would have wished. The dissemination of the best practice results from the audits has been limited, and the partnership is currently looking at ways to do this more effectively – possibly through the introduction of an internal annual best practice award. The SAP website has provided an effective and efficient way of sharing learning.

Change in the size of the partnership

The SAP has grown to include a further five organisations. It now includes over 850 staff providing services to over 4,000 clients.

Checking the need for the partnership/refining the services offered/keeping the momentum

The SAP continues to develop its customer base by offering small agencies, which do not have the capacity to become directly involved in the partnership, 'one-off' audits. These have proved popular and the partnership is currently considering increasing SAP's capacity in this area.

The partnership has also had to adapt to changing government policy which came early in 2004 with the introduction of a new funding/monitoring policy in the supported housing sector called 'Supporting People'. This new process, managed by the local authorities, provides a further layer of auditing of controls in the homelessness sector. The SAP is currently refining its offering in response to this development.

The partnership's service audits have recently been introduced within day centres for homeless people.

The involvement by the board in reviewing and acting on audit reports helps to ensure both accountability for all member agency staff up to and including chief executives and that the objectives of the partnership are maintained.

3.7 Alcohol Concern and Drugscope co-location

Partnership overview

This charity co-location has been running successfully since 1994, when Alcohol Concern and Drugscope, which was at the time of the co-location two separate organisations – the Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence (ISDD) and the Standing Conference on Drug Abuse (SCODA) – pooled their resources to purchase the freehold of offices in Southwark.

Objectives

Key focus: Premises sharing partnership:

- ▶ To provide easy access to a comprehensive resource for members, users and the public.
- ▶ To assist in the development of collaborative projects where partners have mutual interests and complementary knowledge and skills.
- ▶ To provide administrative efficiency and effective use of shared resources.

Examples of project collaborations

As a result of working within close proximity a number of other joint projects have been undertaken, including:

- ▶ a Welsh Drug and Alcohol Unit
- ▶ an Education and Prevention team
- ▶ the development of organisational standards (QUADS) for the alcohol and drug fields
- ▶ the development of national occupational standards (DANOS)
- ▶ publications on equal opportunities and on confidentiality
- ▶ a project on alcohol and drugs in the workplace
- ▶ work with black and minority ethnic communities.

Approximately 10 per cent of activities are currently carried out in partnership.

Originally IT infrastructure and support staff were shared by the partners but they have now separated this out as the partners have recognised that they have increasingly had different software and hardware requirements.

Joint objectives were developed and published in a prospectus.

Output/outcome

In 1994 the partners moved into a building in Southwark.

Key drivers for the partnership

Key: Reduce property costs, improve security of tenure, and enhance capacity through joint working.

Detailed: The ISDD and SCODA had previously shared the same premises and since this co-location worked well they decided to combine resources to purchase a building with Alcohol Concern. They also wanted to develop joint working activities as they were operating in similar fields.

Choosing partners

The similar fields in which the partners worked (i.e. drugs and alcohol), their existing working relationships and their resultant understanding of each other's working practices, combined with senior level professional relationships, brought this group of partners together.

Gaining internal consensus

The partners' chief executives were heavily involved and they undertook activities to explain to staff what they were doing and why.

Accessing funding

A commercial loan was taken out with the Cooperative Bank for capital purposes. A fund-raising committee was set up to raise capital and development funding for the purchase of the building. Funding of £1.5 million was gained.

Documenting the partnership agreements

A trust deed sets out the ownership terms of the building in the event that the partners decide not to continue to work together and/or want to move their offices. The building is owned 75 per cent by Drugscope and 25 per cent by Alcohol Concern.

Management and operational structures for the co-location

The deputy CEO from ISDD took a lead, allocating some of his time to the project while the other partners contributed to the cost. A steering group was formed made up of the three CEOs and a project manager.

An estate agent was employed to help find a suitable building.

The facilities management for the building was outsourced until 2001 when the partners decided that many of the activities could be undertaken internally for less cost.

On some project initiatives the organisations have been in competition. The governance and partnership agreement between the organisations therefore had to be sufficiently robust to cope with this.

Publicising

Joint projects between Alcohol Concern and Drugscope often found themselves debating whose name should go first when describing the project, whether it was 'alcohol and drugs' or 'drugs and alcohol'. This was important as each organisation had a strong desire to build and maintain their reputation, and not feel that they were being subsumed by the other.

Changes in the objectives and ethos of the partners

Although there is quite an amount of overlap in areas of the organisations' work, the external agendas for alcohol and drugs are very different. The partners found in some instances that external drivers would change, meaning that one partner's view of the world and their objectives would shift while the other would want to maintain the originally agreed objectives and plan.

3.8 Community Action Network co-location

Partnership overview

In 2001 CAN developed 'The Mezzanine', office space which brings together a wide variety of people – thinkers and doers, creators and practitioners. The space houses social sector organisations in a high quality, low cost, open plan office.

Objectives

The development of offices which are affordable, prestigious and welcoming in a good location, with like-minded organisations. The space has also been designed to maximise interaction and collaboration.

Output/outcome

The Mezzanine houses 22 organisations and has been running successfully at over 85 per cent occupation for four years.

Key drivers for the partnership

The Mezzanine co-location concept was originally driven by the need of organisations that shared a common ethos and values to occupy reasonably priced office space.

Assessing costs – set up and running

The overall time spent setting up the co-location by CAN staff was approximately 120 days.

Key professionals and set up costs

- ▶ Estate agents (1%)
- ▶ Solicitors (0.5%)
- ▶ Project manager
- ▶ Operational Issues Consultant (£12,000)
- ▶ Systems, Accounts, Controls Consultant (£12,000)
- ▶ IT Consultant (£5,000)
- ▶ Marketing/Creative – (£12,000).

Shared facilities

A number of activities are shared between the tenants. All have been successful in improving the standard of facilities or reducing costs.

- ▶ Cleaning (65%)
- ▶ Franking machines (30%)
- ▶ Photocopying (57%)
- ▶ Telephone (50%–75%)
- ▶ Conference room (17%)
- ▶ Meeting and conference facilities room (65%)
- ▶ Filtered chilled water (70%)
- ▶ Recycling collection (84%)
- ▶ Office management (78%).

Property searches and implementation issues

- ▶ The use of a recommended external agent was found to save time and costs. The process from briefing agent to moving in was in the order of twelve months.
- ▶ Some landlords will not permit sub-letting. A licensing or membership arrangement with the occupying organisations has been used for occupation.
- ▶ Much of the twelve-month implementation period was taken up with securing finance/funding and negotiating the lease with solicitors and the landlord.

3.9 Trade Justice Movement

Partnership overview

A group of approximately twelve organisations comprising aid agencies, environmental and human rights campaigns, fair-trade organisations as well as a range of religious and consumer groups set up an alliance with the aim of encouraging joint lobbying, campaigning and media work among member organisations in order to change unjust rules and institutions governing international trade today.

The policy statement 'For whose benefit?' is the agreed policy position for the alliance.

The partnership was established in 2000.

Objectives

- ▶ To stop poor countries being forced into open market economies, and to protect their rights to manage their own economies.
- ▶ To stop rich countries from promoting the interests of big business and to regulate investment in areas harming the poor and the environment.
- ▶ To ensure fair, transparent and democratic approaches to trade policies.

Agreeing a common set of objectives was more difficult than had been found when undertaking the Jubilee Campaign alliance, mainly because the issue of trade justice and the scope of the alliance's intentions meant that there were added complexities which resulted in many more aims having to be established.

Output/outcome

- ▶ Developed a wider forum for joint planning and mass lobbying, campaigning and media work.
- ▶ Held a well attended and publicised mass lobby of Parliament and of MPs in their own constituencies.

Key drivers for the partnership

Key: To replicate the strengths of the Jubilee 2000 campaign in the field of international trade. By working together, participating organisations felt they could build a global movement for justice in international trade practices which would allow them to have a greater impact in advocacy and influence on government policies than by working in isolation.

Choosing partners

TJM was mainly built around an existing network of organisations which had previously been actively involved in the Jubilee 2000 campaign. The movement's membership base remains open to all agencies except for political parties.

Gaining internal consensus

A lack of buy-in from some of the partners at senior levels did hamper the alliance's ability at the start to develop consistent and common strategic aims between its partners.

Documenting the partnership agreements

The key larger organisations participating in the TJM signed up to 'Rules of Engagement', which outlined the alliance's aims and principles for working together. There is no formal partnership document, partly because many of the members wanted to retain much of their autonomy. The members are also free to determine their own level of input.

Although the lack of a formal partnership document allows each TJM member to retain control over its own contribution, and decide upon their level of involvement, the absence of a formally documented charter has led to uncertainties over the nature of the alliance and made it more difficult to establish a well coordinated broader strategy for the campaign. No constitution was developed.

There is a documented agreement on the criteria for accepting new members, which has since been further simplified to make it easier for new members to join.

No exit strategy has been included in the rules of engagement.

Management and operational structures

The aim of the movement is to encourage members to adjust their own individual trade campaign plans and strategies in the light of joint and effective campaigns; it is not about creating a new and centrally funded organisation.

Structures for control of the alliance have had to be carefully developed, as it has been essential for the TJM to ensure that members with more resources do not override the interests of smaller participants. The structure of the movement is designed in such a way as to ensure its member organisations remain in control of their own level of involvement, and contribution.

Attendance by alliance members at management meetings during the early stages was fairly inconsistent, with different people being sent to attend the monthly meetings and this, coupled with staff turnover, has led to inconsistencies in the commitment and involvement of various alliance members. This undermined the alliance's ability to undertake truly consensual decision making, especially when issues had to be discussed with one set of attendees and then reviewed again at the next meeting with different attendees.

By the end of summer 2001, TJM member organisations agreed on the need for the establishment of a small secretariat in order to better coordinate and carry out the work of the campaign movement and also to help manage the expansion of the membership. The secretariat included one full-time coordinator and one full-time administrator. To avoid the costs involved with setting up a new legal entity and constitution, CAFOD, an alliance member, employed the secretariat on behalf of the alliance.

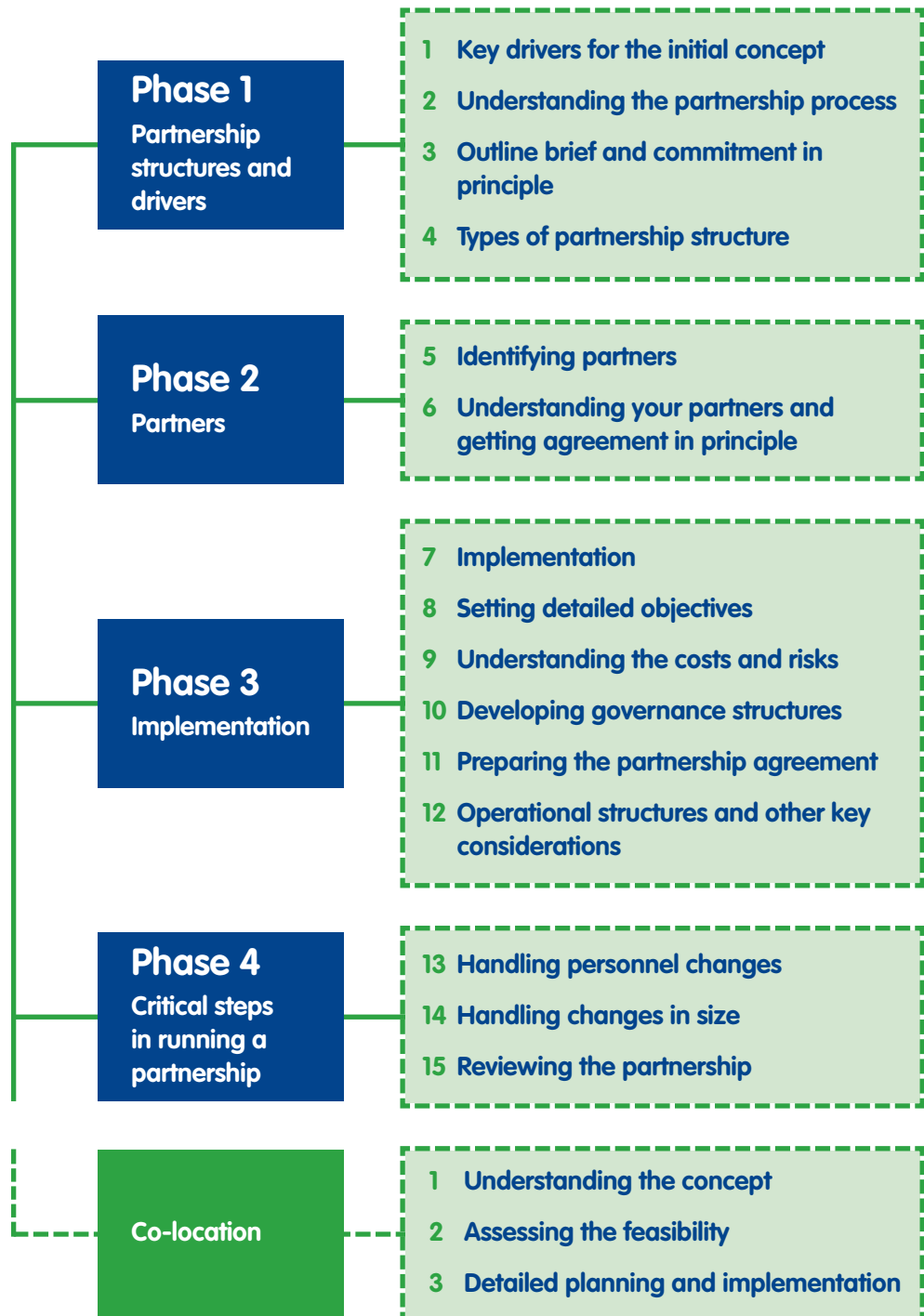
In 2003, TJM became a limited company and established a board of directors who are democratically elected. The board meets every three months and is responsible for the running of the secretariat as well as guiding the Strategic Planning Group. The Strategic Planning Group provides a forum for campaign strategy. It is appointed by the board in order to ensure all of the key players responsible for delivery are being involved in the

main decision making process. These layers of management worked well.

Publicising

The alliance is about strengthening the member organisations through publicity and profile, and allowing members to do better in various areas than they would through campaigning individually. Members are asked to represent the alliance at events and this helps to develop ownership. However, the TJM aims to retain a low profile so that alliance members do not feel in direct competition with it as a separate organisation. The visibility of all member organisations alongside each other is deemed to carry far greater influence than simply promoting a single TJM brand.

4 Collaborative working checklist



This symbol indicates evidence from 'Evaluating Partnership Approaches' (February 2005) developed by Hanson Consulting.



Each green star indicates good practice steps that are desirable but not essential.

TICK BOXES AS APPROPRIATE

 1. Key drivers for the initial concept

- A** Identify and document the need or key drivers for the concept. This would normally be within the initiating partner's organisation.
- B** Assess if provision of the activity can be adequately undertaken internally.
- C** Assess the provision of similar activities by other organisations to avoid duplication (market research).

 2. Understanding the partnership process

- A** Set out a partnership process that will guide your organisation through the process of setting up and running partnerships.
- B** Identify the strengths and areas for improvement of previous partnerships (if any) that your organisation has undertaken to help guide your current and future partnership processes.
- C** Develop a knowledge repository for all previously undertaken partnership information (e.g. partnership agreements, values frameworks, costs, etc.).
- D** Use external sector resource to provide an objective view of the strengths or areas for improvement of previous partnerships and to establish a best practice partnership process that fits your organisation.

 3. Outline brief and internal commitment in principle

- A** Outline brief.
Prepare a high level outline of the proposed partnership that includes:
 - ▶ Key need and drivers
 - ▶ Key aims and objectives
 - ▶ Key output and outcomes
 - ▶ Target users
 - ▶ The extent of existing provision
 - ▶ Potential funding streams
 - ▶ Financial and other resource commitment inputs
 - ▶ High level costs
 - ▶ Risks.
- B** Ensure existing funding streams can be used for the purposes of the partnership.
- C** Present and discuss outline brief with your senior management to gain their commitment in principle.

 4. Types of partnership structure

- A** Review the range of partnership structures that might be suitable in your situation.



'Having a clear idea of all the key steps involved and confirming this with our partners helped in clarifying and coordinating our expectations.'

Grant-making Trust
Chief Executive



Recent research suggests a number of reasons why organisations work in partnership. These include:

These include:

- ▶ Building capacity
- ▶ Reducing and/or sharing costs
- ▶ Accessing additional funding
- ▶ Combining expertise to enhance provision
- ▶ Extending geographical reach
- ▶ Improving coordination of delivery
- ▶ Benchmarking sector standards
- ▶ Added credibility and profile
- ▶ Access to additional networks

□ 5. Identifying partners

- A** Develop a set of criteria to assess potential partners.

Criteria might include:

- ▶ Objectives
- ▶ Profile
- ▶ Size
- ▶ Sector
- ▶ Values and ethos
- ▶ Financial stability
- ▶ Decision making hierarchy
- ▶ Experience in partnership working
- ▶ Geographical scope
- ▶ Expertise.

- B** Identify a list of partners and weigh each partner against the criteria to develop a short list of desired partners.

- C** Discuss with staff at umbrella bodies, and your own senior management, their suggestions concerning potential partners.

□ 6. Understanding your partners and getting agreement in principle

- A** Find the appropriate person from a potential partner to open discussions.

- B** Prepare summary background material to give to potential partners concerning your organisation.

- C** Arrange a meeting with your potential partner/s to discuss your outline brief for the partnership and to develop an understanding of their interest and suitability.

- D** Prepare and agree meeting notes for all discussions to:

- ▶ Help ensure clarity in understanding between the potential partners
- ▶ Provide a historical detailed record of the partnership's initial stages to assist the understanding of staff who may be involved with the partnership at a later date.

- E** Be sensitive to potential negative feelings from other existing partners who may feel threatened by the development of the new partnership.

- F** Undertake a visit to your partners to gain a better understanding of their operations.

- G** Allow adequate time for potential partners to gain consensus from their trustees.



Often, but not always, a good partner is one with whom effective and productive contact already exists in some capacity as an understanding of working practices and key personnel is in place. Time should still be spent recognising similarities as well as strengths.

Key learning point



'The process of learning about each other's organisation is continuous and should be embedded as an ongoing process throughout the life cycle of any partnership.'

Charity Chief Executive



A pilot phase has been shown to help partnerships determine more accurately the costs of involvement.
Key learning point

Ensure the objectives are SMART:

▶ **Specific**

Do they specify what is to be achieved?

▶ **Measurable**

Can you measure whether you are meeting the objectives?

▶ **Achievable**

Are the objectives you set achievable and attainable?

▶ **Realistic**

Can you realistically achieve the objectives with the resources you have?

▶ **Timely**

When do you want to achieve the set objectives?



Management staff located some distance away from operational staff can cause difficulties.
Key learning point

7. Implementation

- A Set up a steering group made up of key individuals from the partners and other stakeholders to guide the partnership through implementation.
- B Agree an outline timetable for completing this stage. Additional time spent at this stage can significantly reduce future confusion.
- C Include key operational staff and stakeholders.

8. Setting detailed objectives

- A Agree what you each want to achieve from the partnership. Agree a vision (high level aim), outcomes (how your users will be affected) and outputs (what activities will be undertaken to achieve outcomes).
- B Clarify reporting procedures (be aware of different reporting systems and procedures used by your partners).
- C Setting short-term output targets (i.e. for the first six months) is particularly important as their achievement will help to maintain the momentum of the partnership before outcome targets have or can be achieved.

9. Understanding the costs and risks

- A **Costs** – Understanding the costs is essential when assessing the overall benefits of the partnership. Ensure that you have documented the time and other resources spent.
- B **Costs** – Prepare detailed budgets/cash flow/and financial forecasts.
- C **Risks** – Assess and document any perceived risks to the partnership in a risk log.
- D **Risks** – Develop plans to help reduce the risk.

Common areas of risk or concern within partnerships are:

- ▶ Different approaches to working and decision making styles
- ▶ Tensions over partnership branding
- ▶ Differences in importance that the partners give to the partnership (e.g. due to a changing external environment, such as government policy/priorities).

10. Developing governance structures

A Develop governance structures by setting up a:

- ▶ Steering group that will oversee the project
- ▶ Management committee that will guide the partnership when running
- ▶ Operational committee together with staff who will run the partnership on a day to day basis.

Depending on the size, scope or lifespan of a partnership, consider setting up a new legal entity to provide a sound foundation for the partnership.

Finance and trustee development sub-committees have been used to support the main management committees.



'The additional time spent putting together the partnership agreement, I believe, significantly reduced the potential for disagreement.'

Charity partnerships manager

B Create terms of reference for each governance structure that sets out:

- ▶ Objectives
- ▶ Decision making methods
- ▶ Membership
- ▶ Constitution
- ▶ Timing of meetings
- ▶ Standing orders for management committees to set out the way a trustee is appointed and the length of time they will serve.

11. Preparing the partnership agreement

A Include in a partnership agreement:

- ▶ The partners and their roles
- ▶ The length of the partnership
- ▶ Vision, outcomes and outputs (high level)
- ▶ A detailed description of the financial and other resources to be committed
- ▶ Reporting procedures
- ▶ Rules of engagement/common values
- ▶ Exit strategies (see below)
- ▶ Methods and criteria for accepting new partners (see below)
- ▶ Key timings for review of the agreement.

B Exit strategies – When a partner leaves a partnership there is often a destabilising effect particularly where there are a small number of partners. To reduce this risk set out clear procedures that include:

- ▶ A clear notice period, e.g. 3/6/12 months
- ▶ Financial arrangements (i.e. funding streams/cash reserves) for continuing the partnership
- ▶ Asset sharing agreements.

C Introduction of new partners – As a partnership develops it may be desirable to include additional partners. To plan for this eventuality in advance, develop criteria (e.g. size, sector, location, expertise, impact, etc.) which characterises the type of partner you may want to include and the procedures for their inclusion.

12. Operational structures and other key considerations

- A** Set out job descriptions for key roles in the partnership.
- B** If staff are to be seconded to work in a different organisation then determine the pay rates and human resource policies to employ.
- C** Consider the difficulties involved with staff reporting to a management committee located some distance from the partnership's operations.



'Consultants provided us with independent confirmation that the partnership's objectives would need to change to adjust to the changing demand for services from our users.'

Partnership
Project Manager

D Develop a range of policies for:

- ▶ Banking and finance
- ▶ Insurance
- ▶ Human resources, e.g. staff development and training
- ▶ Health and safety
- ▶ Fund-raising
- ▶ Equal opportunities.

13. Handling personnel changes (running a partnership)

- A** Ensure that all partnership documentation is up to date to provide new personnel with a full historical account of activities, meetings and responsibilities.
- B** New senior level staff within a partnership should be inducted into the partnership at a meeting with all partners which reviews aims and objectives, risks, costs, difficulties to date and main achievements.

14. Handling changes in size (running a partnership)

- A** **When expanding the number of partners within a partnership, even when including a single new partner, ensure that you consider the effect it will have on:**
- ▶ Decision making processes
 - ▶ Individual partner influence
 - ▶ Existing relationships.
- B** Consider the use of a consolidation period that will allow new and existing partners a chance to review aims, methods and successes. This will help to ensure the partners remain focused and clear about the partnership's key objectives.

15. Reviewing the partnership (running a partnership)

- A** Review existing methods and approaches to partnership working (internally or with your partners) to undertake partnerships more effectively and efficiently in the future.
- Key areas of review include:**
- ▶ Costs (time, staff, physical) – perceived versus actual
 - ▶ Impact on target users, e.g. outputs and outcomes
 - ▶ User and stakeholder satisfaction
 - ▶ Ongoing risks.

5 Co-location checklist



'In the medium to long term co-location more than makes up for the short-term effort involved.'

Charity Chief Executive

1. Co-location concept

- A** Highlight issues facing your organisation. Co-location can be a potential solution for the issues highlighted below.
 - ▶ A lack of security of tenure
 - ▶ High office rental costs
 - ▶ High facilities management costs
 - ▶ Poor quality standards of office equipment
 - ▶ Poor quality or expensive meeting and conference facilities
 - ▶ Isolated location of offices.
- B** **Develop an understanding of the benefits, costs and risks of the concept by:**
 - ▶ Meeting with development staff at an existing co-location
 - ▶ Meeting with co-location experts
 - ▶ Reviewing publicly available material.
- C** **Co-location is not an ideal option for those:**
 - ▶ Whose lease on current office space prevents moving premises in the medium term
 - ▶ Who have a significant amount of highly confidential information that may be at a slight risk in a shared office environment.
- D** Set out a detailed long-term plan (based on this guide) which sets out all the key steps involved. It is particularly important to allow enough time (six months or longer) to access capital funding and/or find a suitable property.

2. Co-location feasibility study

- A** **Clarify:**
 - ▶ The type of organisations you want to share office space with
 - ▶ The geographical area for a possible office location
 - ▶ Moving into a shared office space is a fundamental decision for any organisation. A feasibility study should be undertaken to assess:
 - ▶ The specific measurable benefits to your organisation
 - ▶ The development, capital and ongoing costs
 - ▶ The risks
 - ▶ The likelihood of accessing funding or financing
 - ▶ The cluster theme, e.g. arts, health (if appropriate)
 - ▶ The demand for space from other potential tenants

- ▶ The availability of suitable property
- ▶ An indication of the overall feasibility
- ▶ Recommendations to improve the chances of successful implementation.

3. Co-location – Detailed planning and implementation

- A** Use the feasibility evidence to refine, if necessary, the vision, costs and risks for the project.
- B** Use the feasibility study as the basis for a business plan/marketing tool to engender support from stakeholders and other potential partners.
- C** Staff, particularly those involved with managing this stage, should have good project management skills as there are a wide range of elements and activities to undertake.
- D** Confirm the resource commitment of the partners involved.
- E** Apply for funding/financing.
- F** Seek advice from accountants, solicitors, surveyors and bankers (as needed).
- G** Find an appropriate building.
- H** Continue to engage with local stakeholders (political, sector, private groups).
- I** Determine the management structures and who will manage the centre.
- J** **Gain legal support for creating:**
 - ▶ Shared asset and governance arrangements
 - ▶ The tenancy/membership/licence agreements
 - ▶ Exit strategies.
- K** Market the space to potential tenants.
- L** Design the internal layout of the space to maximise its utilisation.
- M** Hire centre manager, receptionist and facilities management staff (if appropriate).
- N** Move to the co-location.

**The Children's Centre Project (CCP)
promotes improvements in the quality and cost-
effectiveness of the children's voluntary sector.
We aim to support existing services, develop
new services through collaborative working,
and intend to develop a flagship building for
the children's sector in London.**

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