



Sunderland City Council's Guidance Notes For Partnerships

Revised August 2016

1.0 Introduction

This Partnership Guidance provides a single reference point for Sunderland Council to use when developing new or reviewing existing partnerships. The aim of the guidance is to ensure that there is a consistent and rigorous process in the creation of partnerships within the Council and that the creation, development and review of any partnership is carried out in an effective and efficient manner that benefits service delivery. The guidance provides a balance between a light touch and risk based approach, at a time of much reduced resources, with an enhanced set of Partnerships within the city.

1.1 Who should use this guidance?

All Officers currently involved in or considering partnership working. This guidance should be used to ensure that the Council is aware of all Partnerships and that minimum standards are achieved. This guidance is written from the perspective of the Council but awareness of the Governance arrangements of partners is vital if partnerships are to be effective. Therefore sharing this guidance with prospective partners may prove to be useful in developing arrangements.

The guidance should be used when establishing or reviewing all non-statutory partnerships. It is envisaged that any statutory partnership e.g. The Health and Wellbeing Board, Safer Sunderland Partnership will adhere to the guidance issued by central government departments or other appropriate bodies. However they will also be expected to adhere to the minimum standards set out in this document and to complete an annual check list.

Whilst the guidance will be a useful checklist for any alternate service delivery models or joint ventures these areas can be complex and legal challenges can arise. Therefore the view of the Council's Corporate Procurement Unit is to be sought before any discussions are held with potential commercial partners.

A Partnership Register will be maintained by the Sunderland Partnership Manager comprising key information about each Partnership, such as who the Lead Officer and/or Member is, whether there is a partnership agreement or terms of reference etc. It will be the responsibility of individual Directorates and Lead Officers to ensure that information contained in the register is up to date.

1.2 What is a Partnership?

For this guidance the term Partnership refers to:

A relationship between two or more independent legal bodies, organisations or individuals working together to achieve a common vision with clear aims and objectives

This guidance is only concerned with arrangements where the City Council is working with other parties towards a common vision. Essentially partnerships fall into two categories;

Partnerships permitted, required or encouraged by law or national guidance.

In these circumstances there is no requirement to undertake a procurement exercise to select the partner. For example Formal Forums, Joint Committees (Local Government Act 1972, s101), Joint procurement/commissioning arrangements (e.g. NEPO), Management Committees, Safer Sunderland Partnership, Health & Wellbeing Board.

Operational/Service Delivery Partnerships: In these circumstances the requirements of the Council's Procurement Procedure Rules must be followed in selecting the partner(s) and take precedence over the principles of this Code. E.g Joint Venture Companies.

2. Partnership Register

The Sunderland Partnership Manager will keep a register of all key Partnerships that the Council is involved in, updated on an annual basis (template 4). It is the responsibility of lead officers to notify the Partnership Manager of any potential new partnerships (template 1) or any changes in the role of a partnership or its' membership.

An annual reminder will be issued to ask officers to update their partnership details and officers must ensure that they can evidence the information requested in the Partnership Register Annual Review Sheet (template 2). Whilst the Sunderland Partnership will not need copies of all the information, Internal Audit will assess partnership arrangements on an annual basis and may ask Lead Officers to provide evidence.

The information in the Partnership Register will be reported to the Executive Management Team every six months. This will provide the opportunity to highlight any new partnerships or performance issues arising from them.

3. Assessing the need for a Partnership

Given that resources, both in terms of finance and personnel, are limited for all of our citywide partners at present, it is important to consider whether any other groups or other established partnerships are doing similar work.

Before any new partnership is set up there needs to be a clear, agreed purpose for the proposed partnership. Is there a clear, shared vision? What contribution will it make to the cities priorities?

Discussion needs to take place with other Council Directorates and key stakeholders regarding the outcomes and high level objectives that the Partnership is to deliver.

For an informed decision to be made as to whether it is appropriate for the City Council (Members or Officers) to be involved in a partnership arrangement the following information must be considered and decisions recorded:

- Who the partners are;
- Aims, objectives and desired outcomes;
- How long the partnership is expected to last;
- The legal status of the Partnership;
- Performance management arrangements;
- Risk management/liability arrangements;
- The geographical area the partnership will cover;
- The decision making and reporting arrangements;
- The role description of its Members/Officers (including duties expected);
- The regularity of meetings;
- Whether the Partnership covers expenses of its members;
- If the City Council is expected to contribute any funding or other resources;
- Insurance arrangements;
- Sustainability;
- Equality and diversity standards;
- Business Continuity Management;
- Financial accountability arrangements; and
- Proposed Exit Strategy.

The headings above provide a good starting point in developing a partnership agreement or terms of reference for a partnership.

Ultimately approval for entering into a new partnership relationship must be agreed with the appropriate Chief Officer(s), Director(s), Executive Director of Corporate Services or by Cabinet (please refer to the Council's Constitution and Delegations Scheme) and must be confirmed in writing (Template 1).

Separate detailed guidance notes are available covering the partnership agreement, finance, HR, risk management, information governance and business continuity on the Partnership Website if required.

4. Key relationships and staffing

Whilst a clear vision and purpose are important any successful partnership is built on good relationships between people and organisations. It is therefore imperative that careful consideration is given as to who represents the Council at partnership meetings. Do they have the key skills and personality traits required to work in a partnership environment, are they respected and trusted by partners, are they able to negotiate on behalf of the Council, do they have a collaborative approach to partnership working.

5. Membership

It has often been the case that whilst partner organisations send one representative to a meeting, a number of Council officers and members are in attendance. This can be intimidating for partners and thought needs to be given as to who the most appropriate officer(s) would be. Certainly no more than a maximum of three officers should be in attendance at any one meeting. This does not however taken into account officers who may be the lead officer for a meeting e.g. producing papers for the meeting and tabling agenda items as opposed to attending as a Board member.

Consideration also needs to be given to the seniority of representatives; if it is expected that a Chief Executive or Director of a partner agency should attend a meeting then it is incumbent on the Council to send the equivalent level of staff. However not every partnership requires a Chief Executive or Director to attend so thought should be given as to who is best placed to represent the Council given the work that is to be undertaken and the decisions made.

It is important that a member of staff who attends a meeting is able to make a decision on behalf of the Council if so required.

6. General role of Members and Officers

Anyone representing the Council at a meeting will need to reflect the views of the Council and not their own, individual opinions. They will need to be fully aware of Council's procedures before any decisions are made, the authorisation that is required and who needs to be consulted. In order that the Council gains maximum benefit from engaging with Partnerships it essential that appropriate feedback mechanisms are in place, not only to the individual department but to other departments/directorates that may be affected by decisions. The Lead Officer should complete a summary template outlining what was discussed and what was decided at the meeting (Template 3 shows completed Template for the Health and Wellbeing Board). This can then be shared with EMT, appropriate Directorates and other Partnerships. It is envisaged that this will help to identify opportunities for joint working across Partnerships.

Representatives must attend as many meetings as possible as this helps to demonstrate a level of commitment to the Partnership. Any substitutes should be fully briefed prior to attending the meeting.

It is the role of the lead officer to review the Partnership on an annual basis (see Template 2), to consider whether the Partnership is still relevant, whether the appropriate people are attending the meeting etc. and to ensure that partnership details are up to date and accurate on the City Council's Partnership Register.

7. Partnership agreement/terms of reference

All Partnerships must have either a written agreement signed by all partners or a terms of reference before any commitments/liabilities are entered into. The document should be proportionate for the level of the Partnership it relates to. It is evident that a partnership that is overseeing funding or is acting as an accountable body will require a more detailed document than one which has no recourse to funds. It is the responsibility of each Chief Officer to ensure that this is in place and has the agreement of the Executive Director of Corporate Services.

A partnership agreement or terms of reference captures in writing the understanding between all parties in a partnership. It must define how partners will work together, who will be responsible for what, who will report to whom, how services will be provided, how decisions will be made and how any funding will be shared etc. Any financial relationship with a partner must be fully documented and legally binding.

The partnership agreement must provide both Internal and External Auditors with rights of access.

Consideration also needs to be given to an exit strategy for both the planned and unplanned cessation of partnership arrangements.

8. Performance Reporting

Key partnerships will be expected to report their performance to the Executive Management Team on a bi-annual basis, the Partnership should have a performance management process in place including key milestones, outcomes and delivery dates. Consideration should be given as to how the partnership will tackle underperformance and any conflicts of interest that may arise.

9. Briefing Notes

A number of briefing notes have been developed to assist officers in developing their partnerships:

1. Terms of reference/partnership agreements
2. Information governance
3. Human resources
4. Finance
5. Risk register

They will be available on the Sunderland Partnership website.

If you require any assistance in developing your partnership arrangements please contact the Sunderland Partnership Manager:

Jessica.May@sunderland.gov.uk

Tel: 0191 5611476.

Partnership Register – Initial Check List

Name of Partnership :			
Contact Officer :			
Council Officers represented on the Partnership:			
Elected Members represented on the Partnership:			
	Yes	Further Action Required	
A written agreement or terms of reference is in place			
The agreement/terms of reference has been agreed by legal and democratic services.			
The roles and responsibilities of Council Officers/Council Members are clearly defined.			
There is a clear measurable plan for the Partnership activity.			
A budget holder has been identified, with clearly defined duties and responsibilities.			
Consideration has been given to the arrangements for sustaining the Service after any time limited/external funding has ended?			
The Council will receive regular reports on : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance • Financial position • Which are linked to outputs and acted upon 			
The Partnership will deliver value for money compared to other ways of providing the service?			
Where the Council is the Accountable Body or Lead Host, all procurement is carried out in accordance with the Council's Procurement Procedure Rules? If not procurement is carried out in accordance with standards of good practice?			
The Partnership has carried out a risk assessment to identify, analyse and put in place effective measures to control risks (including setting priorities, policy making, financial planning and performance management). A risk register is maintained			
There is a clear documented exit strategy in place for both the planned and unplanned cessation of the Partnership.			
The information on the on-line Partnership Register is accurate and complete?			
Signed :	Position in Council/Partnership:	Date :	

Please attach the Agreement or Terms of Reference to this document for sign off.

Partnership Authorisation Sheet

Name of Partnership :

Directorate :

Lead Officer :

Date of Partnership Agreement :

Role in Partnership :

Following consultations, I have considered the advice and the contents of the Guidance Notes and am satisfied that the Partnership, as proposed, should proceed.

Head of Service..... **Date**

Executive Director **Date**

Executive Director of Corporate Services

..... **Date**

Annual Review- Assessing the effectiveness of Partnerships

Name of Partnership :	
Contact Officer :	
Council Officers represented on the Partnership:	
Elected Members represented on the Partnership:	
Governance	Yes/No
1. The right person is representing The Council in terms of remit, experience, delivery of obligations, confidence.	
If not what do you perceive to be the issues?	
2. The appropriate governance arrangements are in place to support them.	Yes/No
If not what are the issues? How can they be addressed?	
3. The agreement or terms of reference has been reviewed to ensure it is still fit for purpose.	Yes/No
Please provide detail of any changes	
4. Have there been any changes to membership?	Yes/No
If so please provide details:	
5. The roles and responsibilities of Council Officers/Council Members are clearly defined.	Yes/No
If not please provide detail of issues:	
6. Any amendments to the agreement/terms of reference have been agreed by legal and democratic services.	Yes/No
Please provide details of changes:	
Resources	

7. The appropriate resources in place to support the partnership.	Yes/No
Please provide details of any issues	
8. There is a clear measurable plan for the Partnership activity.	Yes/No
Please provide any additional comments:	
9. We receive appropriate performance information to enable us to assess how the partnership is performing.	Yes/No
If not what are the issues?	
10. Regular performance reviews take place informed by valid, useful, and up to date evidence.	Yes/No
Please provide a brief overview:	
11. We are tackling underperformance.	Yes/No
Please provide a brief overview:	
12. The Partnership delivering what it set out to deliver in terms of genuine outcomes not just outputs.	Yes/No
Please provide any additional comments:	
Relationships	Yes/No
13. Do we genuinely feel the partnership is going well – if so why?	
Please provide any additional comments:	
14. Are relationships sufficient that awkward questions or issues can be raised? Do constructive discussions take place to resolve issues?	Yes/No
Please provide any additional comments:	
15. Conflicts of interest are being addressed.	Yes/No
Please describe any issues:	
Effectiveness	

Sunderland Health and Wellbeing Board Meeting, 20th May 2016

What We Discussed	What We Decided
Feedback from Advisory Boards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults Partnership Board • NHS Provider Forum • Childrens Strategic Partnership 	Adults Board APB 16-17 priorities were agreed as Isolation and loneliness, all age friendly cities, welfare reform, affordable warmth and fuel poverty and housing and health and the HWBB agreed that the frequency of meetings reduced to quarterly to focus on improvement actions. Provider Forum 2 reports were submitted – firstly updating the Board on the wider provider engagement event held in April and secondly a data report on workforce issues and an action plan around the key issues of recruitment, retention and retirement. Childrens Strategic Partnership The CSP reported on its new structure and frequency of reporting.
Update from the Health and Social Care Integration Board	The Integration Board is looking towards the second year of BCF and analysing information relating to the first full year.
DPH Annual Report	The full DPH annual report was submitted detailing a description of the health of the population (presented in January 2016) A focus on two of the H&WB priorities: tobacco and economy/ standard of living
Autism Partnership Update	The Sunderland Autism Partnership updated the HWBB on progress including the completion and publication of the autism JSNA
Clinical Commissioning Group Operational Plan	The CCG presented its annual plan on a page which represents year 1 of the 5 year forward view.
Better Care Fund Section 75	This highlighted the proposed Better Care Fund Agreement for Sunderland between the Local Authority and Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group for 2016/17.
Northumberland Tyne and Wear STP April 2016 Submission	Sunderland System Resilience and Transformation Board have agreed a clear and credible plan with greater focus on prevention, building on transformation to date and focusing on future model for safe sustainable acute care and delivering system financial balance. Challenges across the whole NTW patch on health and wellbeing, care and quality and productivity.
Mental Health 5 Year Forward View	The Five Year Forward Mental Health report is an independent report of the Mental Health Taskforce which emphasises the ambition of parity of esteem between mental and physical health for children, young people, adults and older people.
Domestic Violence Pathway Update	The report informed the HWBB of work to develop attached 'Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Referral Pathways and Staff Guidance' document, and asked for support for its dissemination. This is with the aim that every point of interaction with a victim is an opportunity for safe enquiry and intervention and should not be missed.
Next meeting – July 2016 - HWBB governance and systems, Indicator sets, JSNA and BCF Assurance, Mental Health Trailblazer updated position.	

