

## **Ten lessons in partnership working**

### **1. Partnership working: Understanding differences**

"Without a process of courtship it will simply be a shotgun wedding. For a month it was basically the four of us sat in a room together learning from each other the sort of issues we each had to deal with in our own organisations and the kind of stresses we were under. I think that this was critical to the process and everybody benefited."

*Making partnerships work: a practical guide for the community and voluntary sectors published by Joseph Rowntree Foundation, NCVO and Ashridge, 1998*

### **2. Partnership working: People and organisations**

'Because partnership working involves working outside the normal organisational boundaries you cannot always rely on organisational support to keep things going when things get difficult. Partnerships are not organisations, and cannot be treated as if they were'

*Sue Goss, Office for Public Management.*

### **3. Partnership working: Skills**

- inter-organisational understanding
- the management of influence
- listening and hearing the unexpected
- consensus building
- networking and seeing connections, shared interests
- project management in an inter-organisational context

*Clarke and Stewart, Partnership and the Management of Co-operation, 1997*

### **4. Partnership working: Purposes**

"It is necessary for the (local authority) to ensure the partnership meets its own purposes, but also to understand the purposes of its partners"

*Clarke and Stewart, Partnership and the Management of Co-operation, 1997*

**5. Partnership working:  
Trust**

Most recent work on partnering has assigned a central role to trust and the avoidance of conflict. We do not. (For us...) trust is not a prime mover, a precondition, but a consequence of acting together, in contexts.

*From Anne Deering and Anne Murphy,  
'The difference engine' 1998*

**6. Partnership working:  
Risk and success**

It's not just the management of risk that needs to be managed in partnerships, it's the management of credit.

**7. Partnership working:  
Public and private domains**

Managing successfully in partnership means knowing when to raise matters in public or in private; people have different authority to speak on behalf of their organisations; and organisations are subject to different levels of public scrutiny.

**8. Partnership working:  
Autonomy and accountability**

'...individuals need a fair amount of autonomy to make progress. The problem is that the activities of the partnership will affect the parent organisations, so the individuals also need to be accountable to the various organisations and other constituencies they represent.'

*Huxham, Creating collaborative advantage, 1996*

**9. Partnership working:  
Power**

It needs to be recognised that power, like powerlessness, is never equal in a partnership. But neither is it a 'zero sum game', in which increasing *my* power means diminishing *yours*. Successful partnerships arise when all the partners find ways of becoming more powerful.

**10. Partnership working:  
Leadership**

"Leadership is like a Jazz band, where all the members of the band have expertise in their own field, but they have to be able to relate to one another and to the context they are in. They need to be able to improvise with what is given to them in terms of theme, and rhythm and to be able to pick up from one another and develop the work further. The sum is greater than the parts and the whole process is generative rather than passive."

*Zoe Van Zwanenberg, Chief Executive of the Scottish Leadership Foundation*