

Twenty Limiting Mindsets in Partnership and collaborative working:

A Provocation

Limiting Mindsets	Antidote
1. Agreeing a set of goals will commit the organisations to subsequent action	You cannot know how far you are willing to take the partnership before you start to work in partnership. Efforts to agree goals need to run alongside experiments in working together....only there do you develop a 'bridging' language
2. Settling shared goals is the first task in a partnership	Understanding the goals of the individual partners needs to precede the settling of shared goals.
3. For partnerships to work all partners need to be an equal voice.	Voices in a partnership are rarely equal. There are often client/contractor relationships at stake. Inequality is something to be expected.
4. Power is assumed to lie with the dominant partner.	Very often the sense of powerlessness is felt most keenly by those who are allegedly powerful. The power of exit or withdrawal is often used to hold the
5. Trust needs to be built up to enable the partnership to function	Frequent reorganisation and people churn means that memberships are usually constantly shifting. What can help is to make sure that those who manage the partnership members accept the responsibility to 'hand the baton' on to a new representative.
6. A set of agreed standards of behaviour will ensure that the partnership ethos is maintained.	Because of the difference in partner cultures it's inevitable that members 'upset' each other. What makes the difference is a willingness to practise the twin skills of forgiveness and apologising for the unintended impact our actions have on each other
7. The ability to resolve differences is	It is not differences that cause

crucial.	difficulty but attitudes to difference. Wisdom is needed to distinguish between those differences that need to be resolved and those that just need to be navigated..
8. Getting agreement about future plans will bring the partnership together	Even when agreements are made they often do not mobilise action or are overtaken by unpredicted eventsso its more fruitful to focus on what is it possible for us to <i>do</i> together now?
9. Pushing leadership out to other partners is crucial	Optimism and faith are key leadership responsibilities.....most needed when the going gets toughestand that cannot be delegated or distributed
10. Healthy debate (conversation characterised by exclusive use of advocacy) will help to shape goals	Debate can ensure that the already powerful win decisively. Dialogue which is based on a combination of advocacy and inquiry can be more helpful..
11. Mutual respect is a precondition for success	Respect has to be based on the willingness to inquire into the experience which lies behind the opinion...and the outworking of your self respect for your own story...so it requires a lot of work.
12. Training in partnership skills will build capacity	Key skill is letting go...so unlearning is more important
13. The job of the partnership leaders is to build internal commitment to the goals	The number of absent voices and stakeholders who affect the partnership context in the public service means that the major role for partnership leaders is often managing voices not in the room at all
14. Get the service user involved when you've got your act straight	Get the service user involved...straight away
15. Make hidden agendas transparent	There will always be hidden agendas....because people balance many loyalties at anyone time and not all can be voiced in the limited time that partnerships have. Making <i>assumptions</i> transparent can enable faster progress
16. Partnership is a marriage. Difficulties	Partnership as a four dimensional

with this metaphor include: partnerships are often imposed; there are many partners, and they often change; partnerships do not usually start with partners falling in love!	journey? North...to a public good; south to self awareness; east to the nature of partnership ;west to the world of your partners?
17. We expect that complex systems react in predictable ways...so change can be planned as if cause and effect were linear	The belief that the behaviour of complex systems cannot safely be predicted ...so change is more likely to be emergent
18.	Key capacity is self awareness....so that you know how the culture that shapes the way you see the world
19. Things get simpler if you define and clarify them	Not true. When you clarify and define things in a partnership context, things usually get more complex
20.	Tolerance AND Attachment need to be developed simultaneously

Danny Chesterman and colleagues at the Bath Consultancy Group Conference
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