

# Partnerships & CO

CONVERSATION OPENERS

## ABOUT

Partnerships & CO: Conversation Openers was created to support those planning a partnership or wishing to reflect on, and to take stock of, an existing partnership. This tool aims to provide a framework for navigating conversations that can support an effective partnership. It is designed to be flexible and adaptable to a variety of contexts where partnership working is the focus for discussion across the social services, health and housing sectors. Some of the topics may be more relevant to work with families and to early intervention. Its coverage is not exhaustive or prescriptive but aims to provide some conversational touch points in what can be a complex area.

## WHAT IS PARTNERSHIP?

There is a range of pre-existing definitions and uses of the term 'partnership'. Those involved in developing partnerships need to be the ones to define and understand what it means in their context. This tool aims

to support them to do this. A definition of partnership cited by Lester et al (2008:494) offers a simple place to start: 'any situation in which people work across organisational boundaries towards some positive end'.

## ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

- Improved awareness and understanding of key concepts in developing and sustaining partnerships
- Increased reflective practice about partnership working
- Improved understanding of partnership working across teams and organisations
- Increased confidence about exploring and developing partnerships

## GUIDANCE

This tool comprises five themes, each with a set of related questions.

- Drivers
- Practicalities
- Culture
- Recording and measuring
- Impact

Three simple steps to use the cards:

1. Choose an individual question or theme
2. Use the question(s) to encourage reflection and discussion about what this means in your context
3. Consider how you/your organisation will action the learning from your reflections and conversations

## IMPACT

It is important for us to understand the difference our tools make to inform how we work and what we focus on. We invite you to share your feedback via this short survey: <http://s.iriss.org.uk/2A6YfrV>

## BACKGROUND

This tool is based on the learning of the Dundee Early Intervention Team (DEIT) — a partnership since 2011 of Aberlour, Children 1st, Action for Children, Barnardo's Scotland working together with Dundee City Council, NHS Tayside and Dundee Voluntary Action. The idea for the tool was inspired by the DEIT steering group and practitioners through a collaborative project with Iriss in 2017. They reflected that the success and effectiveness of the partnership lay in the quality of their conversations — continuous, reflective, cross-cutting, sometimes difficult — which were ultimately, a key mechanism to making a difference to families in Dundee.

Further resources from the DEIT project are available at: <http://s.iriss.org.uk/2h0DOU8>

Copies of Partnerships & CO can be requested at: [www.iriss.org.uk/partnershipsc](http://www.iriss.org.uk/partnershipsc)



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## DRIVERS

gaps, strengths, risks

Different partners may have different drivers and expectations for developing a partnership. How can you ensure these are shared, understood and agreed?



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## DRIVERS

gaps, strengths, risks

What policies and legislation impact on the partnership?

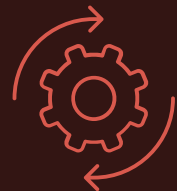


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## DRIVERS

gaps, strengths, risks

What gaps, needs, barriers or challenges does the work of the partnership seek to respond to? Who is affected? How are they affected?

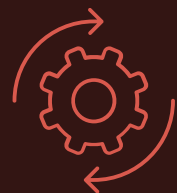


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## DRIVERS

gaps, strengths, risks

What are the enablers and barriers of the partnership?

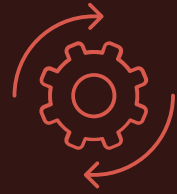


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## DRIVERS

gaps, strengths, risks

To what extent is money a driver of the partnership?



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## DRIVERS

gaps, strengths, risks

What strengths/expertise does each individual partner organisation bring?

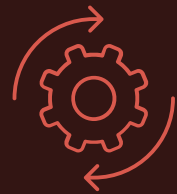


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## DRIVERS

gaps, strengths, risks

What's unique about the partnership?

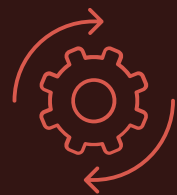


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## DRIVERS

gaps, strengths, risks

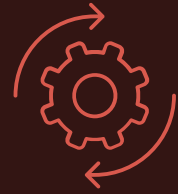
What risks might impact the partnership?



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## DRIVERS

gaps, strengths, risks



What does success of the partnership look like?

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## DRIVERS

gaps, strengths, risks



What relationships already exist between individual partners? Are there any issues / threats (perceived or real) of competition between partners?

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## PRACTICALITIES

who, where, how



What issues do you think there might be in a partnership when there is a lead organisation?

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## PRACTICALITIES

who, where, how



Who are the partnership's stakeholders? Consider those at strategic and operational levels, people who access support, unpaid carers (adult and young), communities and other local partners.

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## PRACTICALITIES

who, where, how



What documents would be useful to your partnership? (e.g. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), business plan, data sharing agreement, partnership agreements). If you already have these in place, can you review them to ensure they are still appropriate, accurate and reflective of your current partnership?

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## PRACTICALITIES

who, where, how



What are the financial implications of the partnership?  
Can any resources be given 'in kind'? How might 'in kind' resources be agreed and recorded?

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## PRACTICALITIES

who, where, how



Does the partnership have an identity / brand?  
Why might this be important?

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## PRACTICALITIES

who, where, how



How will you share information across the partnership?  
What systems can you use, share, adapt?

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## PRACTICALITIES

who, where, how



Will any of the partnership be co-located?  
What are the pros and cons of this?

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## PRACTICALITIES

who, where, how



Who are your referrers? What relationships  
exist and do any need strengthening?

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## PRACTICALITIES

who, where, how



What do the networks of each partner look like? What  
local initiatives can be linked into the partnership or  
used as signposts for people accessing support?

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## PRACTICALITIES

who, where, how



At the beginning it's important to think about the end.  
What plans can you put in place at an early stage to  
help ensure sustainability of the partnership's work?

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## CULTURE

values, attitudes, relationships

How can you establish and nurture a shared vision across the partnership?



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## CULTURE

values, attitudes, relationships

What common bonds and values are shared across the partnership?



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## CULTURE

values, attitudes, relationships

The term 'partnership' can mean different things to different people. How can you develop a shared understanding of what it means for your partnership? Where can you capture this?



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## CULTURE

values, attitudes, relationships

Effective partnership is about relationships and trust. What do you think will help develop and support positive relationships and trust across the partnership?



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## CULTURE

values, attitudes, relationships



What frameworks or approaches can you use to get people on the same page? (e.g. social pedagogy, personal outcomes approach, strengths-based approaches.)

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## CULTURE

values, attitudes, relationships



What does leadership look and feel like in the partnership?

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## CULTURE

values, attitudes, relationships



What attitudes to risk are there across the partnership?

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## CULTURE

values, attitudes, relationships



Are you concerned about how power will be shared in the partnership? What kind of things do you think might have an influence on power?

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## CULTURE

values, attitudes, relationships



What if partners disagree? How can you develop a robust approach for managing and learning from disagreements? Where might you record this?

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## CULTURE

values, attitudes, relationships



What can you put in place to develop shared policies and procedures which are responsive and evolving?

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## RECORDING & MEASURING

tools, learning, evidence



What tools will the partnership use to record and measure impact? How can these be developed around practice rather than dictating or restricting it?

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## RECORDING & MEASURING

tools, learning, evidence



How can you ensure learning from 'failure' is captured?

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## RECORDING & MEASURING

tools, learning, evidence



What reporting requirements are there in the partnership? Who is responsible for these?

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## RECORDING & MEASURING

tools, learning, evidence



How can reporting requirements be used to support reflection and improvement?

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## RECORDING & MEASURING

tools, learning, evidence



How is learning and evidence communicated in the partnership, to whom and why?

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## RECORDING & MEASURING

tools, learning, evidence



What evidence will you capture about the impact of the partnership from a range of stakeholders (e.g. people accessing support, community groups, practitioners etc)? How will this be used to inform service design and delivery?

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## RECORDING & MEASURING

tools, learning, evidence



How will the partnership communicate learning and evidence with other stakeholders, local partners and across its wider networks?

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## RECORDING & MEASURING

tools, learning, evidence



Information about the impact of support on people's lives and their personal outcomes can often take the form of qualitative data. What are the experiences across the partnership of recording and using qualitative data?

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## RECORDING & MEASURING

tools, learning, evidence



What resources can those in practice produce to share their learning with others in the partnership and beyond? (e.g. case studies, reflective logs, stories, data visualisations, blog posts)

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## RECORDING & MEASURING

tools, learning, evidence



How can learning and evidence be used to sustain the work of the partnership?

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## IMPACT

access, flexibility, early intervention

How will the work of the partnership foster hope in people accessing support?



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## IMPACT

access, flexibility, early intervention

How will the work of the partnership empower people accessing support?



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## IMPACT

access, flexibility, early intervention

How will the work of the partnership ensure people accessing support feel cared for and listened to?



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## IMPACT

access, flexibility, early intervention

How will the work of the partnership build the capacity of people accessing support?



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## IMPACT

access, flexibility, early intervention



How flexible is the support offered by the partnership?

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## IMPACT

access, flexibility, early intervention



What do the terms 'early intervention' and 'prevention' mean in the partnership? What has informed these understandings and are they a good fit for the partnership?

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## IMPACT

access, flexibility, early intervention

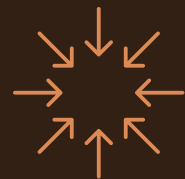


How well understood are thresholds in your partnership? What influence, if any, do thresholds of other local services have?

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## IMPACT

access, flexibility, early intervention



What can you put in place to provide opportunities to discuss and develop shared understanding of thresholds?

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## IMPACT

access, flexibility, early intervention

How accessible is your partnership / service to those it aims to support? What do pathways into your service look like for people who access support?



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## IMPACT

access, flexibility, early intervention

What do the pathways into your service look like for referrers?



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