

District of Easington

Partnership Framework

1. Context

- 1.1 The District of Easington Council's ambition is **to make the District great**. In order to achieve this, the Council has 9 objectives, based on understanding of local community needs and aspirations as expressed in the local Community Strategy. The issues facing the community are complex and inter-related; the Council believes that its objectives cannot be achieved in isolation, but only through a shared vision and common purpose developed with partners. Partnership working is core to the improvement of quality of life in Easington, and therefore to the Council's approach to doing business.
- 1.2 The Council is engaged in a range of partnership activities at the local, subregional and regional level. A description of key partnerships is included as Appendix C.
- 1.3 However, partnership working is a means and not an end in itself. Partnerships can provide flexibility, innovation and additional resources but they also bring risks; working across organisational boundaries can bring complexity and ambiguity that can generate confusion and weaken accountability. A proliferation of partnerships can stretch the capacity of the organisation and of individuals within it. Engaging in partnerships must therefore add demonstrable value to any activity the Council or another partner might undertake on its own for the benefit of Easington people.
- 1.4 This Partnership Framework has been developed to provide a means for the Council to make decisions about whether and how to enter into, participate in and, if necessary, leave partnership arrangements. The Framework consists of:
- a policy statement about the Council's approach to and involvement in partnerships
 - a partnership checklist to be used before a partnership is established or entered into to demonstrate the business case
 - a partnership review tool which can be used at appropriate times in a partnership's life
 - a partnerships register setting out the Council's key partnerships which is intended to be a live document.
- 1.5 The Framework draws on best practice and responds to the Audit Commission report Governing Partnerships.¹

¹ Governing Partnerships: Bridging the accountability gap. Audit Commission October 2005.

2. Policy statement

- 2.1 District of Easington Council recognises the strength and value of effective partnerships in contributing to the improvement of quality of life of Easington people. The Council encourages partnership working wherever appropriate.
- 2.2 The Council believes that partnership adds value to strategic planning and service delivery, particularly given the multi-faceted nature of the deprivation that affects the area. One of the Council's objectives under its "Quality services for all our people" priority is to **develop our community leadership and engagement role and to develop partnerships under the auspices of the LSP (QS2)**.
- 2.3 The Council believes that partnerships can:-
 - give critical mass through strength in negotiation, greater influence and better access to funding;
 - achieve outputs greater than the sum of the individual partners by sharing knowledge, finding new ways of working and pooling resources;
 - enhance local democracy by actively involving communities, businesses and the voluntary sector.
- 2.4 The Council will enter into partnerships where these demonstrably add value to any activity the Council or another partner might undertake on its own for the benefit of Easington people.
- 2.5 Partnership working where the Council has a lead role will be subject to the same decision making rigour as other Council decisions, making use of the corporate approaches to risk and value for money. The tools provided as part of this framework provide prompts to ensure this happens.
- 2.6 Within East Durham the Council considers the East Durham Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) to be the key partnership of partnerships. The Council takes a lead role in the LSP on a "first among equals" basis.

3. Types of partnership

- 3.1 For the purpose of this framework, the definition of partnership is **an agreement between two or more organisations to work together to achieve agreed objectives²**.
- 3.2 Partnerships vary in size, purpose, membership and function. This framework recognises three types of partnership:
- Formal strategic partnerships where collaboration is sought to develop a shared vision, tackle common issues or seek joint funding.
 - Relationships of mutual benefit. These may have “soft” governance structures
 - Contractual/formal partnering arrangements for service delivery. These are created through a contract or agreement for the delivery of goods and services, and as such are governed by the Council’s Procurement Strategy and Contract Standing Orders, which ensure that the proper decision making, contractual and risk management processes apply to such partnerships.

4. Reasons for partnership working

- 4.1 The Council believes that partnerships are necessary when:-
- They are statutory or subject to strong Government guidance (e.g. Local Strategic Partnerships; partnerships to deliver Local Area Agreements; Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships);
 - They are a condition of accessing funding needed to enhance the well being of the District (eg. RDA funding, LEGI);
 - Collaborative effort is required to tackle multifaceted issues identified by communities;
 - Better value for money will be derived by delivering services in partnership.

² Based on the Audit Commission definition used in *Governing Partnerships*.

5. Principles of the framework

- 5.1 The Council recognises that fruitful partnerships are based on strong relationships, clear objectives and good governance³. A successful partnership must demonstrate that it has:
- A focus on mutually agreed objective(s)
 - Shared commitment, ownership and trust
 - An ability to add value to the delivery of one or more of the Council's objectives as set out in the Corporate Plan, or the community's objectives as set out in the Community Strategy
 - Clearly stated outcomes which are capable of scrutiny and performance management
 - Clearly defined governance arrangements
 - Clear sustainability/termination arrangements
 - Clear processes for the effective use of resources
- 5.2 The key phases of partnership working have been described as **connecting, contracting, conflict resolution, collaborating and closing**⁴. The Partnership Checklist will be used to ensure good practice in the **connecting** and **contracting** phase where the parameters of the partnership are set out; this includes ensuring good governance arrangements for the delivery phase of the partnership. The Partnership Review Tool will be used as appropriate during the life of partnerships to ensure they are delivering well.

³ The Government toolkit to support strategic partnerships describes these key principles as:

- 1 – Recognise and Accept the Need for Partnership
- 2 – Develop Clarity and Realism of Purpose
- 3 – Ensure Commitment and Ownership
- 4 – Develop and Maintain Trust
- 5 – Create Clear and Robust Partnership Arrangements
- 6 – Monitor, Measure and Learn

Assessing Strategic Partnership: the partnership assessment tool. ODPM strategic partnering taskforce 2003

⁴ *Raising the Bar: Excellence in Partnerships workshop*, NE Improvement Partnership conference January 2007.

6. Partnership Checklist

- 6.1 Before entering into a partnership, the Council will formally consider the business case for the partnership using the criteria set out in the Partnership Checklist at Appendix A. The Council will only establish or join a partnership if it is satisfied, through use of the checklist, that a partnership approach is the most appropriate method for delivering the stated objectives.
- 6.2 The Council will only establish or join a partnership if it can resource the investment (of time and money) required to effectively do so.

7. Partnership Review

- 7.1 The Partnership Review checklist (Appendix B) can be used at any time in the life of a partnership. Each partnership in which the Council has a leadership role should undertake a review exercise at least every two years, using either this tool or, where standard tools are used (eg GONE tools for Local Strategic Partnerships and LAAs) using these.
- 7.2 Where the Council does not have a lead role in the partnership, the Council will seek to promote the adoption of good practice in terms of partnership review.

8. Moving from an informal to a formally constituted partnership

- 8.1 If the Council is entering into a new partnership, the decision about the tightness or looseness of governance arrangements will be taken through the completion of the Partnership Checklist. During the life of a partnership, circumstances may suggest that more formal partnership arrangements are required. A Partnership Review should be conducted in such circumstances.
- 8.2 Some of the circumstances which may point towards a more formal set of governance arrangements could be:
 - The need to specify or commission particular levels of service
 - The need to mitigate unacceptable levels of identified risk
 - The need to spell out more clearly the accountability and role of partners in relation to each other
 - The need for a more formal arrangement in order to access and allocate funding

9. Partnerships Register

- 9.1 The Partnerships Register is the statement of the Council's key partnerships, including their status in terms of the Partnership Framework. The Partnerships Register is a live document which will be kept in electronic format. A hard copy is attached as Appendix C.

Appendix A: Partnership Checklist

What is the issue or service delivery improvement you are seeking to address through the partnership?
How does this help the Council to achieve one or more of its corporate priorities?
Why does this require a partnership approach?
What is the Council's role in the partnership (e.g. lead organisation, major / minor partner)?

	Yes	No	Don't know
Have you identified the added value partnership working will bring?			
Is there already a partnership in place with a similar remit which can take on this work?			
If yes, does the existing partnership have a proven track record?			
Will the partnership contribute to streamlining existing partnerships?			
Have you identified partners critical to the success of the partnership?			
Are all identified partners committed to participation?			
Does the prospective partnership have clear measurable objectives?			
Does the partnership have agreed terms of reference?			
Does the partnership have a clear action plan and is this linked to relevant service plans within the Council?			
Are all partners clear about their roles and the resources they will need to commit?			
Will the partnership require a financial or resource commitment from the Council and / or all partners?			
Does the Council have the financial and human resources to make this commitment?			
Are there clear procedures for making decisions and resolving conflict?			
Is there a commitment to evaluating the performance of the partnership?			
Is the partnership time limited or set up on a task & finish basis?			
Is there a clear exit strategy?			
Has a formal risk assessment been carried out and mitigating actions agreed?			

Appendix B: Partnership Review

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements in respect of the Partnership which is the subject of this assessment exercise as a whole?	4 Strongly agree	3 Agree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly disagree	Comments
Recognising and accepting the need for partnership					
There have been substantial past achievements within the partnership.					
The factors associated with successful working are known and understood.					
The principal barriers to successful partnership working are known and understood.					
The extent to which partners engage in partnership working voluntarily or under pressure/mandation is recognised and understood.					
There is a clear understanding of partners' interdependence in achieving some of their goals.					
There is mutual understanding of those areas of activity where partners can achieve some goals by working independently of each other.					
Score					Total
Clarity and realism of purpose					
Our partnership has a clear vision, shared values and agreed service principles.					
We have clearly defined joint aims and objectives.					
These joint aims and objectives are realistic.					
The partnership has defined clear service outcomes.					
The reason why each partner is engaged in the partnership is understood and accepted.					
We have identified where early partnership success is most likely.					
Score					Total

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements in respect of the Partnership which is the subject of this assessment exercise as a whole?	4 Strongly agree	3 Agree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly disagree	Comments
Commitment and ownership					
There is a clear commitment to partnership working from the most senior levels of each partnership organisation.					
There is widespread ownership of the partnership across and within all partners.					
Commitment to partnership working is sufficiently robust to withstand most threats to its working.					
The partnership recognises and encourages networking skills.					
The partnership is not dependent for its success solely upon individuals with these skills.					
Not working in partnership is discouraged and dealt with.					
Score					Total
Trust					
The way the partnership is structured recognises and values each partner's contribution.					
The way the partnership's work is conducted appropriately recognises each partner's contribution.					
Benefits derived from the partnership are fairly distributed among all partners.					
There is sufficient trust within the partnership to survive any mistrust that arises elsewhere.					
Levels of trust within the partnership are high enough to encourage significant risk-taking.					
The partnership has succeeded in having the right people in the right place at the right time to promote partnership working.					
Score					Total

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements in respect of the Partnership which is the subject of this assessment exercise as a whole?	4 Strongly agree	3 Agree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly disagree	Comments
Clear and robust partnership arrangements					
It is clear what financial resources each partner brings to the partnership					
The resources, other than finance, each partner brings to the partnership are understood and appreciated.					
Each partner's areas of responsibility are clear and understood.					
There are clear lines of accountability for the performance of the partnership as a whole.					
Operational partnership arrangements are simple, time-limited and task-oriented.					
The partnership's principal focus is on process, outcomes and innovation.					
There is a clear process for risk management and actions are in place to mitigate risks					
Score					Total
Monitoring, measuring and learning					
The partnership has clear success criteria in terms of both service goals and the partnership itself.					
The partnership has clear arrangements effectively to monitor and review how successfully its service aims and objectives are being met.					
There are clear arrangements effectively to monitor and review how the partnership itself is working.					
There are clear arrangements to ensure that monitoring and review findings are widely shared and disseminated amongst the partners.					
Partnership successes are well communicated outside of the partnership.					
There are clear arrangements to ensure that partnership aims, objectives and working arrangements are reconsidered and, where necessary, revised in the light of monitoring and review findings.					
Score					Total

Appendix C: Register of Key Partnerships

District partnerships

Partnership	Type	Details	Key Council links	Date entered into	Checklist used at outset?	Review date	Comments
East Durham Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)	Formal strategic	Key strategic partnership in East Durham. Driven by statutory guidance. Purpose is to ensure the delivery of the Community Strategy and neighbourhood Renewal Strategy by agreeing priorities, assigning resources, monitoring performance. Partners drawn from community, voluntary, private and public sectors	Leader (Chair) ACE/LSP Manager (Governance) Director of Regeneration and key staff (Council representative; funding management)		N	n/a	Subject to GONE negotiation and review (to be subsumed into LAA review processes). Separate review not considered necessary.
Easington Community Safety Partnership	Formal strategic	Statutory Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. Strategic and delivery; the CDRP also acts as a thematic group in relation to the LSP Delivery activities include joint Anti-social Behaviour Unit, co-located services, shared intelligence, Licensing consultation process, etc	Director of Community Services, Heads of Neighbourhood Initiatives and Environmental Services		N		

Partnership	Type	Details	Key Council links	Date entered into	Checklist used at outset?	Review date	Comments
Groundwork East Durham	Formal strategic	Support and delivery of shared priorities	Head of Regeneration and Partnerships		N		Council is a shareholder
East Durham Positive Inclusion Partnership (EDPIP)	Relationship of mutual benefit	Design and delivery of inclusive programmes	Executive Member for Social Inclusion, Head of Neighbourhood initiatives)		N		
Town and Parish Councils	Relationship of mutual benefit Contractual	Tripartite Charter. Constitutional Advice, Members Allowances Scheme for Parish and Town Councils. Improving Consultation and Engagement opportunities. Devolved service delivery arrangements in some cases	Chief Executive, Directors, Head of Democratic Services and Administration		N		
Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders	Formal strategic	Nationally funded pathfinders in Easington/Horden and Peterlee North	Head of Regeneration and Partnerships		N		
Improving Services for Disabled People group	Relationship of mutual benefit	Informal group of partners interested in improving services for disabled people. Influence Council's policy in relation to DDA	Senior corporate development officer: Equality and Diversity	2006	N		

Partnership	Type	Details	Key Council links	Date entered into	Checklist used at outset?	Review date	Comments
East Durham Homes	Contractual	ALMO (delivery of housing services) SLA (Council services provided to EDH)	Management Team, Leader, Executive Member for Housing, Head of Housing Strategy, Heads of services the Council delivers to EDH		N		
East Durham Business Service	Formal strategic Contractual	Formal strategic and delivery partnership between the Council and East Durham Development Agency (EDDA) for the delivery of economic development of the District.	Director of Regeneration and Development; Executive Member for Regeneration	2006	N		Now in second agreement period (2006) following formal review. Relationship managed through a Joint Management Executive.
Durham County Council and Premier Waste Management	Contractual	Delivery partnership. Joint waste management strategies, promoting recycling through the kerb-it scheme, promotional campaigns.	Head of Environmental Services		N	n/a	Governed by procurement code of practice and contract standing orders
Care & Repair	Contractual	Contractual arrangement for delivery of home improvements	Head of Housing Strategy		N	n/a	Governed by procurement code of practice and contract standing orders

Partnership	Type	Details	Key Council links	Date entered into	Checklist used at outset?	Review date	Comments
Crutes legal firm	Contractual	Outsourced legal services and Monitoring Officer role	Chief Executive Head of Democratic Services and Administration		N	n/a	Governed by procurement code of practice and contract standing orders
Leisure Connections	Contractual	Contractual arrangement to deliver leisure services	Head of Neighbourhood initiatives		N	n/a	Governed by procurement code of practice and contract standing orders
Business Link County Durham	Contractual	Provider. EDBS is contracted to deliver programmes	EDBS		N	n/a	Subject to Business Link procurement and contractual arrangements. NB Business Link County Durham will be replaced by Business Link NE from April 2007
Learning and Skills Council	Contractual	Provider. EDBS is contracted to deliver programmes	EDBS		N	n/a	Subject to LSC procurement and contractual arrangements
East Durham Local Children's Board	Formal strategic	Purpose is to with partners, commission, co-ordinate and deliver children services to secure improved outcomes for children, young people and their families	Councillor Todd/ John Murphy??	March 2007	No		

Subregional partnerships

Partnership	Type	Details	Key Council links	Date entered into	Checklist used at outset?	Review date	Comments
County Durham Local Area Agreement governance arrangements	Formal strategic	LAA- agreement between central Government and top tier Council with its partners, for the delivery of agreed outcomes in return for agreed funding, freedoms and flexibilities and rewards. Participation is required under LG White Paper	Chief Executive (Board) ACE (Project team) Directors of Regeneration and Community Services (Block champions) LSP Manager (LSP input)	April 2006	N	n/a	Subject to GONE negotiation and review in which the Council has taken part. Separate review not considered necessary.
County Durham Strategic Partnership (under review)	Formal strategic	Countywide strategic partnership predating LAA. Currently under review to merge agendas.	Director of Regeneration (Council representative). ACE (part of team reviewing governance)		N	2007	Subject to countywide review of governance, outcomes etc. Separate review not considered necessary
County Durham Economic Partnership	Formal strategic	Subregional economic development partnership. Has formal status from ONE.	Director of Regeneration		N		Partnership review completed 2006, resulting in revised structure and establishment of an Executive Board; the Council is not directly represented on this Board

Partnership	Type	Details	Key Council links	Date entered into	Checklist used at outset?	Review date	Comments
Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI) Partnership	Formal strategic	Strategic partnership between 4 Districts (Easington, Wear Valley, Sedgfield, Derwentside) and other partners including the business sector, to manage the delivery of the nationally funded LEGI programme (10 year programme with funding confirmed for years 1-3)	Director of Regeneration and Development (Chair of Management Board), East Durham Business Service	2006	N		The Council is the programme's lead authority
County Durham E Government Partnership	Formal strategic	Joint delivery and procurement partnership. Based on management agreement	Executive Member for Customer Services; Head of Information Systems		N		
Supporting People Partnership	Formal strategic Contractual (DCC is accountable body)	Strategic and contractual countywide partnership for the development and delivery of the Supporting People programme	Director of Regeneration and Development (member of commissioning body and current partnership chair); Head of Housing		N		This partnership underwent an Audit Commission review in 2006 and received a 3* rating with positive prospects for improvement. The inspection reviewed existing partnership arrangements

Partnership	Type	Details	Key Council links	Date entered into	Checklist used at outset?	Review date	Comments
Adult Community Care Partnership/ Intermediate Care Partnership	Formal strategic	Strategic, commissioning and delivery partnerships between the Council, PCT and Durham County Council to deliver adult care and intermediate care	Director of Regeneration and Development; Head of Housing Strategy		N		Progress with implementation of this partnership has been agreed to cease following the merger of PCTs
Durham Councils group	Relationship of mutual benefit	Developing strategic approaches to issues facing County Durham as a whole	Leader, Chief Executive		N		
Durham Districts group	Relationship of mutual benefit	Developing strategic approaches to issues facing all Durham districts	Leader, Chief Executive		N		
Durham Housing and N'hoods Partnership. Partnership Board	Formal strategic	Sub regional partnership operating to commission activity to establish strategic housing policy framework and ensure that housing and related policies blend with other strategies for County Durham and the North East.	Director of Regeneration and Development. Head of Housing	2006	No		Formed to address emergence of Regional Housing Board and requirement to have a Sub Regional Housing strategy

Partnership	Type	Details	Key Council links	Date entered into	Checklist used at outset?	Review date	Comments
Specific thematic alliances eg Durham Heritage Coast,	Relationship of mutual benefit	Developing strategic approaches to specific issues facing the district/beyond	Various		N		
Civil Contingencies Unit	Formal strategic Contractual ?	Developing strategic approaches to emergency planning, civil contingencies and business continuity. Council provides funding to the Unit	Chief Executive, ACE		N		
Durham Procurement Partnership	Formal strategic?	Best practice. A strategic procurement partnership across the 7 Durham Districts & the County Council	Procurement Manager		N		
County Durham Children's Trust (Children's Executive Board)	Formal strategic	Partnership established under The Children's Act 2004 with purpose of improving the well being of children.	Director of Regeneration and Development.	March 2007	No		Succeeds Shadow Children's Executive Board.
Durham Coalfield Housing Partnership	Formal strategic	Partnership established to secure a Low Housing Market Demand Programme for County Durham led by English Partnerships.	Director of Regeneration and Development; Head of Regeneration	2003	No		

Regional partnerships

Partnership	Type	Details	Key Council links	Date entered into	Checklist used at outset?	Review date	Comments
Association of North East Councils (ANEC)	Relationship of mutual benefit	Developing strategic approaches to issues facing all councils in the region	Leader		N		
North East Public Procurement Partnership	Formal strategic	Regional strategic procurement partnership between the public sector, private sector and the voluntary sector.	Procurement Manager		N		
North East Centre for Excellence	Relationship of mutual benefit	Support. NECE assists councils to find and make efficiency gains and to drive the key milestones of the National Procurement Strategy	Procurement Manager		N		
Regional Improvement Partnership	Relationship of mutual benefit	Best practice; shared delivery of development activities with local government partners across the NE. Council hosts project manager for Districts strand	Chief Executive (Board); ACE (Leaning Network steering group)		N		
Tyne and Wear City Regions partnership	Formal strategic	Strategic partnership to address city regional economic, planning, skills, employment and transport issues	Chief Executive, Leader, Director of Regeneration and Development		N		

Partnership	Type	Details	Key Council links	Date entered into	Checklist used at outset?	Review date	Comments
Tees Valley City Regions partnership	Formal strategic	Strategic partnership to address city regional economic, planning, skills, employment and transport issues	Director of Regeneration and Development		N		Involvement is via consultative forums; no formal representation on strategy groups as with Tyne and Wear
Tyne and Wear City Strategy Steering Group	Formal strategic	To deliver a City Region programme (City Strategy) supported by DWP and with the North East Employers Consortium to reduce worklessness and encourage greater participation in economic activity	Director of Regeneration and Development	June 2006	No		District represented on Steering Group. One of Programme's Hubs will be in Easington. Executive Board to be established and will be linked to Tyne and Wear Leadership Board.
Specific Councils eg Durham County Council, Sunderland Council, Stockton Council, Districts	Relationship of mutual benefit	Best practice and joint delivery on a range of initiatives eg Occupational Health, Planning, Youth Engagement, Schools Sports coordinators, LA21, local transport	Various		N		