

National Standards and Partnership Development

Report to Local Government NTO

March 2000

EDuce Ltd

St John's Innovation Centre

Cowley Road

Cambridge

CB4 0WS

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1 Introduction

Background

The Local Government White Paper 1998 and the Modernising Government White Paper 1999 demonstrate a clear drive towards the reform and improvement of public services making these more responsive to local needs. Community leadership, effective consultation and the promotion of best practice and Beacon status all require the development of effective partnerships at different levels and with different interests.

Clauses 2 and 4 of the Local Government Bill set out legislative powers for local authorities “to do anything which they consider is likely to achieve” the economic, social and/ or environmental well-being of their areas, and to prepare community strategies. Clause 2 also provides for greater freedom and flexibility in working in partnership with others. Recent research for DETR by Newchurch (1999b) highlights the growing importance of partnerships, with 70% authorities expecting to increase their partnership activity.

At the same time, the Government sees local authorities as core partners in a host of other policy developments and institutional reforms, in many cases with both strategic and operational dimensions.

Partnerships & Policy Implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Local Learning Partnerships▪ Community Safety Partnerships▪ Primary Care Groups (health)▪ Local Agenda 21▪ Early Years Childcare and Development Partnerships▪ National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal▪ New Commitment to Regeneration▪ New Deal for Communities▪ Youth Offending Teams▪ Single Regeneration Budget▪ Education Action Zones▪ New Deal Delivery Partnerships▪ Sure Start <p><i>The list is not exhaustive...</i></p>

A characteristic of each of these policy areas is their “cross-cutting” nature, going beyond traditionally defined service and professional boxes in the search of solutions and progress which cannot be achieved by working within such bounds. This is a major challenge, given traditional institutional and professional structures. The recent DETR (1999b) report, “Cross-Cutting Issues in Public Policy and Public Service” found “a fundamental problem of capacity to handle cross-cutting issues in the public policy system”.

Greater collaboration, co-operation, co-ordination and networking, variously referred to as “partnership” and “joined-up working” is central to the Government’s Modernisation agenda in general, alongside raising standards, devolving power, exploiting information and communications technologies (ICT), and consulting and engaging citizens.

“...many of the issues that most exercise citizens cut across agency boundaries, and citizens have little awareness of (and respect for) traditional demarcations” (DETR 1998)

A series of recent Cabinet Office reports has signalled major changes in central government's own approach to working with others and tackling cross-cutting issues. The recent Performance and Innovation Unit (PIU, 2000a) report, “Reaching Out: The Role of Central Government at Regional and Local Level” illustrates the scale of the job to be done in improving the effectiveness of the delivery of Government objectives. The report heavily criticises existing approaches to area-based initiatives and the lack of joined-up approaches across central government. There is a very real opportunity for local authorities to help provide the coherence that could otherwise be lacking.

Partnership working is not new - what is new is the greater scale of partnership working, across a wider range of local authority activities and higher expectations about the need for partnership to deliver:

“... the shape, scope and structure of local authority partnerships has been evolving and maturing... It has changed from one where their scope, framework and potential was increasingly defined, required or prescribed when councils had or chose to develop partnerships to one where Partnership itself was being championed as an essential ingredient of local service planning and an attractive and often better vehicle for the delivery of local services.” (Newchurch 1999b)

There is now much greater acceptance of the contributions that partnership can make, and that local authorities can *only* meet local needs effectively by working in harness with others.

“...although partnership working is challenging and more partnerships fail than succeed, successful partnerships can achieve goals that individual agencies cannot.” (Audit Commission, 1998, p42)

Successful partnership and joined-up working do not happen naturally, and often require changes in systems, skills and resources. Successive research and evaluation projects have illustrated the many obstacles that can come into play, the significance of key partnership skills and behaviours, and, directly or by inference, the need for advice, training and support for practitioners who have to make collaboration and co-ordination work.

The recent LGA Urban Commission (1999) hearings on partnership working, (“Take Your Partners”) expresses concern that many of the required skills are under-developed in local government. The Newchurch/ DETR research ranks lack of skills and experience in partnership working as second only to lack of officer and member support for partnership working as an obstacle to progress.

LGNTO must respond to this challenge in order to represent the needs of its sector. It needs to promote thinking outside the boxes of individual occupations and researching the cross-cutting skills, competencies and potential qualification requirements these

challenges present. If partnerships are a key to a future modern local government then we must ensure that local authority staff have the necessary skills to contribute fully.

This short research project therefore seeks to provide an up-to-date picture of the key issues and the potential contribution a competence framework would offer to partnership development as well as pointing to what is available in the way of support and from whom.

Objectives

This review sets out to:

- define the challenges for local authorities in promoting economic, social and environmental well being for their communities and the role of partnerships, and
- define the potential contribution a framework of national standards reflecting the skills and competencies required in partnership development .

The findings of this project, funded by DfEE, will be disseminated to local authorities, with a request for feedback on what they see as needs and priorities for LGNTO/ IDeA development activities. The *intent* is to enable LGNTO to formulate a strategy for future development activities in this area, contributing to LGNTO's strategic aim "to establish and define a comprehensive picture of training and development needs of the local government sector"

There is an accompanying summary and consultation questionnaire, prepared for distribution to local authorities. This is aimed primarily at Chief Executives and Chief Officers and other senior local authority staff with lead partnership roles. It should also be of interest to council leaders and other senior members, on whom the main responsibilities for the exercise of community leadership fall. The project should also contribute to discussions and planning where LGNTO/ IDeA are engaged with other national interests (eg, Local Government Association, DfEE, Joseph Rowntree Foundation) in taking forward the Modernising Local Government agenda.

We are also distributing a copy of DfEE's publication (DfEE 1998) on the four pilots conducted by TECs using the economic development standards framework commissioned by the TEC Strategy Team for TEC use. This report illustrates practical application of the standards.

Content of the Report

Subsequent chapters in this report:

- ◆ summarise the main policy developments which are promoting partnerships involving local authorities
- ◆ review:
 - the challenges and key issues
 - key skills needs from existing research and experience, and
 - how local authorities and other bodies are responding
- ◆ review the contribution that national standards can make
- ◆ suggest steps for LGNTO/ IDeA

2 Policy Developments and Partnership Implications

The Government in its first two years in office has promoted a large number of policy initiatives which have local authorities as key players. This chapter summarises some of these, in keeping with the “cross-cutting” theme, and draws some key points for later consideration in looking at skill and competence requirements for partnership working.

The themes covered below, relating to economic, social and environmental well-being, are:

- ◆ Modernising Local Government
- ◆ lifelong learning, skills and employability
- ◆ regional and local economic development
- ◆ sustainable development
- ◆ regeneration/ neighbourhood renewal
- ◆ health and social care
- ◆ crime and disorder

In some cases the local authority participation in partnerships is a *statutory* requirement, in others there is an *obligation* (such as where partnerships will not attract Government funding without local authority participation), while in some areas there is considerable *discretion* open to authorities in determining the best way to deliver services, in partnership or not according to local decision.

modernising local government

Local Government White Paper 1998 (Local Leadership, Local Choice) and the Modernising Government White Paper 1999 demonstrate a clear drive towards the reform and improvement of public services and to make them more responsive to people’s needs. As Martin (1999) remarks, the former “*proposes a fundamentally different approach to engaging with local people, involving not just service users but the direct involvement of different communities of place, identity and interest in determining priorities and designing services*”. Associated with this are new forms of procurement (inter-authority and with the private sector) and better external relationships with other agencies - generally wider and deeper partnerships at different levels and with different sectors. The Government’s ambition for better public services is great: a step change in quality and sustained, year on year improvements.

The current Local Government Bill provides new powers (below) - but their successful use will depend critically on how good local authorities are at working with others.

Local Government Bill
<p><i>“Every local authority is to have the power to do anything which they consider is likely to achieve any one or more of the following objects:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>a) the promotion or improvement of the economic well-being of their area</i><i>b) the promotion or improvement of the social well-being of their area</i><i>c) the promotion or improvement of the environmental well-being of their area</i> <p>Clause 2(1)</p> <p><i>“Every local authority is to have power to prepare a strategy for promoting or improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area”</i></p> <p>Clause 4(1)</p>

“...local authority leadership cannot be taken for granted, and must be won through interaction with communities who participate in the processes of defining the issues and priorities for local governance”
(LGMB 1997, p55)

All local authorities have been reviewing their political management structures in the light of the Local Government White Paper. This stressed the role for the Executive in these new arrangements for leading the community planning process, plans and strategies, and being *“the focus for forming partnerships with other agencies and the business and voluntary sectors locally to address local needs”* (para 3.29). A number of authorities (eg, Sandwell MBC) are undertaking substantial reorganisations to equip themselves for new and sharper roles and responsibilities in pursuit of community well-being.

The Bill also provides for new forms of partnership, including outside the area of the individual authority:

Local Government Bill
<p><i>“The power under subsection (1) includes power for a local authority to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>a) incur expenditure</i><i>b) give financial assistance to any person</i><i>c) enter into arrangements or agreements with any person</i><i>d) co-operate with, or facilitate or co-ordinate the activities of any person</i><i>e) exercise on behalf of any person any functions of that person, and</i><i>f) provide staff, goods services or accommodation to any person”</i> <p>Clause 2(4)</p>

Under the Best Value legislation, local authorities have a statutory duty to consult and engage with their local communities, expressly consulting on Best Value with taxpayers, business rate payers, service users and others with an interest in the area. DETR guidance (1999e) states *“a council-wide approach to partnership under best value is essential”*. There are partnership dimensions for local authorities in each of the “4Cs (challenge, compare, consult and compete), around the analysis of needs, prioritisation, delivery options and the participation of users and wider communities. In the interim evaluation

of the Best Value pilot programme, DETR (1999f) notes that collaboration “*has been treated as an ‘unofficial’ fifth ‘C’*”, as authorities develop new forms of partnership with the private and voluntary sectors and other public bodies. In this, Best Value pilots have been trying to improve co-ordination and integration, develop new and innovative approaches to services delivery, increase resources and the synergy that can be achieved through partnership.

Local Challenge is being developed by the LGA with a small number of authorities, with the intention of allowing localities a freer hand in the delivery of national targets in areas such as transport, health, post-16 education and economic development - all themes requiring partnership working.

lifelong learning, skills and employability

Under the new post-16 arrangements for education and training - where local authorities are seen as not just providing and securing learning opportunities but also as organisations which are uniquely placed to provide vision and leadership for local communities (DfEE 1999a). Current legislation proposes that Learning and Skills Council (and its local arms) will be required to work with and support local authorities in their community planning function.

Lifelong Learning Partnerships have been established over the last 15 months as a vehicle to promote collaboration amongst providers of post-16 education and training. With the publication of the Learning and Skills Council Prospectus (DfEE 1999b), this role has been confirmed, along with the task of “reaching out into local their communities to find out what people really need in terms of learning opportunities”. It is proposed that Learning Partnerships be charged with prototyping new ideas and area-based initiatives, though the Prospectus indicates that these Partnerships will need to demonstrate their value over the next three years if they are to have a longer life. Learning Partnerships are expected to bring greater coherence to related initiatives such as adult **Information, Advice and Guidance** partnerships, and TEC-led workforce development plans, and local authority lifelong learning plans.

Local authorities are members of all **New Deal Delivery Partnerships**. While the great majority of such partnerships in their earlier days were solely concerned with introducing the programme and achieving targets, more have recently have been able to turn their attention to social exclusion issues in the labour market, in keeping with the original intent for these partnerships. Typically local authorities have led this move.

Education Action Zones (EAZs) are intended to challenge communities of schools and local/ national partners (including business) to put forward and implement radical proposals to raise levels of achievement in schools. Typically, EAZs follow a multi-agency approach, bringing together schools, education authorities, colleges, careers, and health and social services, and crime reduction.

regional and local economic development

The new **Regional Development Agencies** (RDAs) are progressing with the implementation stage of their Regional Economic Strategies. RDAs have a catalytic and co-ordinating role, but lack resources to match the scale of their tasks and their ambition. They are highly dependent on their ability to galvanise regional efforts through sub-

regional and local partnerships, in which local authorities are major players. The LA role has become all the more critical to these recently, given the demise of TECs and Business Links, and the loss of TEC funding and staff resources which have been devoted to such partnerships and joint projects.

The Audit Commission (1999), in reviewing local authority involvement in economic regeneration, argues that the time is ripe for local authorities to take the lead in looking afresh at the range of partnerships with which they are involved.

“At the moment, fragmentation and duplication on the ground persists, underpinned by a maze of strategies, partnerships and organisational configurations” (para 103)

They proceed in their conclusions to suggest that “local authorities which prove themselves to be capable and inclusive could make a strong case for greater discretion over the use of funds”, provided that Government is convinced of the ability of partnerships’ ability to plan and deliver activities in ways that ensure best value for the taxpayer.

Local authorities have been partners in **Business Links** since they were established as one-stop shops for small business support in the mid 1990s. Typically they are members of local groups bidding for franchises under the Small Business Service. A partnership structure is *not* a requirement; indeed there is a desire on the part of the DTI to avoid some of the partnership-related difficulties experienced by Business Links in the past. However, it is likely that local authorities will play prominent roles in helping to resource small business support services, and to ensure that the SBS succeeds in reaching “all small businesses, including those in communities with specific social or economic disadvantage” (a change from the Business Link remit).

Under the **Agenda 2000** reforms of the European Union Structural Funds, there is a strong emphasis on partnership, at all levels, from programme design and monitoring to individual project development and management. There are also suggestions that past performance in delivering projects will become a more important factor in bid appraisal, requiring partners to pay more attention to the design and deliverability of projects on a partnership basis.

sustainable development

Local authorities have made a major contribution in implementing **Local Agenda 21**, with many innovating in their approaches to building partnerships and addressing contentious environmental issues. All authorities are expected to have LA21 strategies in place by the end of 2000. Guidance (DETR 1998c) stresses the need for collective approaches engaging all stakeholders, action to improve the authority’s own sustainability performance, awareness raising and education, and integrating sustainability with other policies and activities.

Regional Sustainable Development Frameworks are to be in place by the end of 2000, to provide greater coherence and a more holistic approach to the activities of a wide range of stakeholders at regional level. They are to be agreed by Regional Chambers but are not statutory. Their content is broad, extending beyond the Regional Economic

and Regional Planning strategies, encompassing health, community safety, education, transport and housing.

regeneration/ neighbourhood renewal

The consultation version of the **National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal**, prepared by the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) will be published in April. This will set out proposals for a major expansion of neighbourhood management, involving local communities in neighbourhood renewal strategies and services. It will address a number of major concerns identified in the original “Bringing Britain Together” White Paper (SEU 1998), such as:

- ◆ mainstream policies not helping, or making problems worse
- ◆ lack of local co-operation and partnerships of hugely varying quality
- ◆ strategies not joined up
- ◆ community commitment not harnessed
- ◆ “what works” neglected

Local strategic partnerships will play a prominent role. These are described by Joseph Rowntree Foundation as fulfilling the role of a “joined up centre”:

- ◆ ensuring commitment by all local partners to joining up at neighbourhood level to combat social exclusion
- ◆ bringing into an overall framework plans for modernising local government, Best Value, community planning, other partnership activities
- ◆ developing a strategy for “knowledge production, capacity-building, technical support and community development”
- ◆ co-ordinating special initiative and mainstream funding

IDeA has been involved in discussions with the SEU on how community players and professionals can achieve a more joined-up approach to neighbourhood renewal, and the implications there are for professional development on social exclusion issues.

Proposals under the Neighbourhood Renewal strategy relate also to the objectives of the **New Commitment to Regeneration**, promoted by the Local Government Association, are to influence mainstream funding in support of area regeneration strategies and establish a new relationship between central government and local partnerships, seeking to maximising local freedoms and flexibilities. The approach requires cross-service, cross sector, multi-agency approach to policy making and delivery.

7 *Health & Social Care*

The Health Act 1999 gives NHS bodies a duty to co-operate with local authorities and specifically provides for partnerships to be able to apply to the Secretary of State for flexibility in the pooling of budgets; lead commissioning; and integrate provision.

Primary Care Groups play a key role, as groupings of family doctors, community nurses and other health and social services professionals with responsibility for commissioning health care and ensuring that provision is sensitive to local needs

Health authorities lead the preparation of **Health Improvement Plans** (HimPs) (local health strategies linked to the achievement of national targets), working in partnership with local authorities. The HimP process is intended to give local authorities greater insight and involvement in the formative stages of NHS planning, influence social services plans, and provide for Joint Investment Plans.

Health Action Zones (HAZs) are partnerships between the NHS, local authorities, social services, community groups and the voluntary and business sectors designed to trigger health action programmes in deprived areas with poor health status and significant pressures on services. Their three strategic objectives (identifying and addressing the health needs of the local area, modernising services, and developing partnerships) will be achieved by means of new and augmented finances, freedoms and flexibilities which allow HAZs to support innovative ways of responding to the health needs of their communities.

Sure Start partnerships aim to improve the health and well-being of families and children before and from birth, through better access to family support, advice on nurturing, health services and early learning by creating the conditions for change, reshaping and adding value to existing services and identifying the gaps that need to be filled. Partnership working is at the heart of Sure Start which is run at the local level by partnerships including voluntary and community organisations, practitioners from health, local government and education, and local parents.

Local authorities have been expected, as a statutory requirement, to form **Early Years Childcare and Development Partnerships** and prepare local plans to ensure the provision of good quality, free early education places for all four year olds whose parents want one, and good quality childcare in every neighbourhood. Again, these are multi-agency and involve private and voluntary sector providers.

8 Crime and Disorder

The formation of **Community Safety Partnerships** required under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, bringing together local authorities, the police, other key agencies and the community to work together to develop and implement strategies for reducing crime and disorder in their district. Police, health and probation authorities have a legal obligation to co-operate fully in this work.

Each local authority with social services and education responsibilities is required to establish one or more **Youth Offending Teams** for their area, in conjunction with the police, probation committee and health authority for their area. The duties are to co-ordinate the provision of youth justice services and carry out functions agreed in the area youth justice plan.

Modernising (Central) Government

Cross-cutting issues are rapidly gaining more attention within central government, as part of the overall Modernising Government agenda. A spate of Cabinet Office reports have made strong recommendations for change. These include the PIU reports, “Wiring It Up” (2000b) and “Reaching Out: The Role of Central Government at Regional and Local Level” (2000a), and the Strategic Policy Making Team (1999), “Policy Making in

the 21st Century”. The new Centre for Management and Policy Studies provides the focus for internal organisational change and staff development.

“Wiring It Up” calls for:

- ◆ improving policy formulation and implementation to take better account of cross-cutting problems and issues, by giving more emphasis to the interests and views of those outside Government who use and deliver services
- ◆ equipping civil servants with the skills and capacity needed ...
- ◆ using budgets and audit to reinforce cross-cutting working

The **Invest to Save** budget is provided by the Treasury to develop projects which bring together two or more public service bodies (including local authorities) to deliver services in innovative and more efficient ways. Projects may include seamless linking of services to match better the needs of service users, use of ICT, and/ or co-location of services.

KEY POINTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ partnerships are ever more prominent and ubiquitous as a device for delivering policy goals➤ the stakes are now higher, in terms of focus on the ability of partnerships to perform➤ there are big issues for local authorities in managing the plethora of partnerships - eg:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ how you manage scarce resources (including time) and become smarter at collaboration (including increased delegation and reforming existing partnership arrangements)◆ how you develop and maintain the “big picture”, seeing how all the bits fit together◆ how you work through - and simplify - the maze of different reporting, monitoring, evaluation requirements◆ how you manage internal changes necessary for success on cross-cutting issues➤ community planning offers a device to bring more coherence - and is likely to be promoted further by Government recommendations on neighbourhood renewal

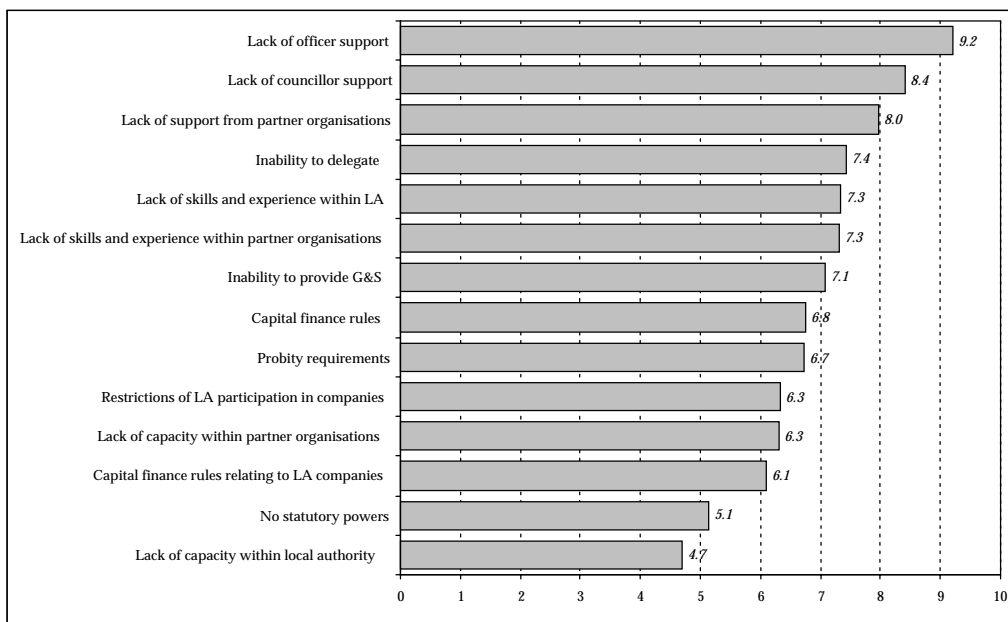
3 Working in Partnership: Key Demands and Challenges

Performance Issues

The scale of partnership working is described by the Newchurch (1999a) research for the DETR. The main areas of partnership activity are economic development, environmental services, housing, sport and leisure - with education and environmental services also featuring significantly. Some 70% of local authorities are expecting an increase in partnership activity, spread across a very large range of local government activity. The Audit Commission (1999) cite examples in some localities where the numbers of partnerships involving the local authority are very large¹.

The Newchurch research provides evidence of lack of capacity, support and skills as obstacles to successful partnership (alongside legal barriers, controls and regulations). Lack of skills and experience in partnership working was ranked by local authorities as second only to lack of officer and member support for partnership working as an obstacle to progress. Such lack of support can reflect inward thinking felt by many respondents to Newchurch's survey to be dominant in many local authorities.

Average Ranking of Barriers to Partnership Working



Source: Newchurch (1999a)

This research also drew out other obstacles to partnership working, including:

- ◆ historical barriers between public sector bodies
- ◆ lack of a strategic approach to partnership
- ◆ lack of trust and openness between partners, accompanied by cynicism about likely outcomes

¹ In one Audit Commission fieldwork area, 40 local economic development partnerships were identified within four metropolitan areas, with a further three at sub-regional level. In another area, there were 21 regeneration partnerships.

- ◆ difficulty in managing cultural issues and change, eg, across professional domains and in working with the private and voluntary sectors

Bridging cultural gaps is a common theme in other reviews, eg, Stewart (1999, p6):

“Different organisations bring to partnerships different cultures, ways of working and patterns of accountability which have to be understood if the partnership is not to flounder in mutual frustration”

Many reviews and evaluations of partnerships (across the “cross-cutting” range of themes) have tended to conclude that partnership performance is akin to the Curate’s Egg: good in parts, with few demonstrating unequivocally sustained success across all aspects of partnership activity. The LGA Urban Commission (1999) concluded that,

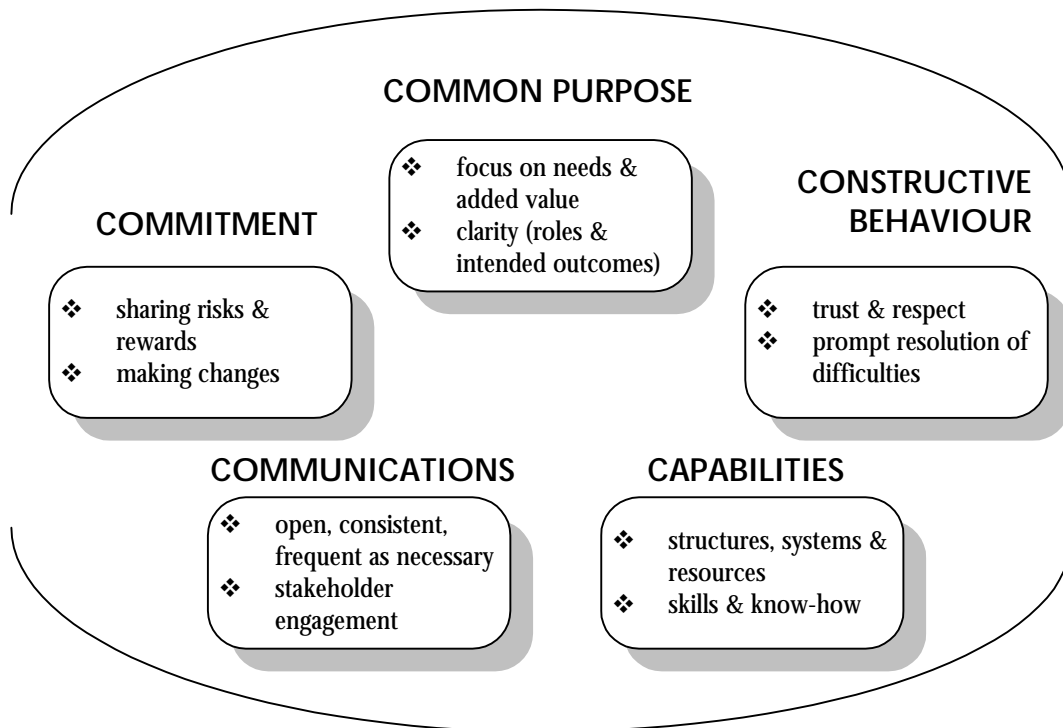
“there is evidence to show that it is not easy to make partnerships work well. Some real difficulties remain and even some ‘good practice’ localities are struggling on some issues.”

Many reports have catalogued partnership failings, and drawn out success factors of one kind or another. Newchurch/ UNL (1999) stressed three particular challenges:

“developing effective partnership relationships which maintain commitment and build trust; creating appropriate management arrangements which strike a balance between flexible arrangements and the necessary control and influence; and placing sufficient emphasis on the need to resource partnerships effectively; most importantly, in relation to the management and development of staff.”

The LGA made use of the diagram below to draw out critical success factors in partnership working:

Five C's of Partnership Working



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“Alliance building” is identified as a core organisational competency in the Local Government Improvement Programme, linked to the criteria of the “fully effective” authority which, amongst other factors:

“ recognises its community leadership role and the distinction between commissioning and providing services, listens, analyses community needs, forming partnerships with other bodies where necessary to achieve this...”*

** operates as a corporate entity, recognising and demonstrating the inter-relationships between all of the authority’s activities and services, and works with other government agencies and voluntary organisations to ensure ‘seamlessness’ for service users wherever practical”*

Partnership Development Needs

Partnership development needs can often be grouped in terms of actions concerning:

mission & strategy: developing the common vision that drives the partnership, articulating partnership added value, and providing for mutual advantage amongst the partners

structures for collaboration (finding the most appropriate means for working together - not least in the context of multiple, overlapping partnerships)

systems for supporting joint working (where ICT may increasingly open opportunities for easing collaborative tasks)

resources (the right people, the right tools - and adequate funding...)

skills & learning, to ensure real and continuous improvement

and last but not least,

leadership - where too often in the past there has been a leadership vacuum or competition

Many people in local authorities are tussling with partnership practicalities, eg, about how you strike the right leadership style, how you can best influence (and be open to influence), how you can best facilitate change. Numerous partnerships, especially of a strategic nature, are more or less “stuck”, failing to achieve real synergy. A key need is to understand the dynamics of partnerships, their life cycles, and how you can intervene positively to help them become more productive.

“Without a shared analysis of the problem and shared vision of the desired outcomes, progress is likely to be slow. Integrated working is still in its infancy, and too often, while lip service is paid to integration, implementation remains fragmented.” DETR (1999c, para 3.3.3)

Newchurch/ UNL (1999) quote Maddock & Morgan (1999) in relation to comparable experience in the health service:

“It is relatively easy to identify barriers to change such as short-termism, constant change, political clashes and an unwillingness to change. It is much harder to characterise the conditions and learning needs which can sustain partnership.”

There are dimensions which relate to leadership both within partnerships *and* within partner organisations:

leadership within partnerships

There is a common need for senior partner representatives to adopt leadership styles appropriate to partnership circumstances, enabling and supporting the participation and commitment of the other players, and accepting the requirement for *shared* leadership. The essential requirements of shared leadership are:

- ◆ partners are well-informed
- ◆ each partner participates fully
- ◆ each partner has an equal voice
- ◆ all input is valued
- ◆ partners share decision-making as appropriate
- ◆ partners accept equal responsibility for the success of the partnership

This can be difficult to practice - and there are very common criticisms and concerns of the behaviour of local authorities - and the larger public agencies (health and transport bodies, TECs, etc) in situations working with local communities, trades unions (EDuce 1999), etc.

These notions of shared leadership are linked to the need for influencing skills, knowing how to build mandates for change, encouraging ownership of ideas - and when and how to give impetus to partnerships where leadership might otherwise be lacking.

leadership within partner organisations

There are implications too for leadership *within* partner organisations as well as within the partnership: senior managers (and councillors) to demonstrate that their commitment to partnership is real, rather than rhetorical, and to ensure that they conduct their management roles in ways which reinforce appropriate partnership working. There are implications, eg, for the definition of roles, for performance management, for support and encouragement, and for internal communications.

We use the word, “appropriate” in relation to partnerships advisedly, as the partnerships are not always the best solution. The Audit Commission (2000), in referring to Primary Care Groups notes,

“But although quality and cost-effectiveness can be significantly improved when organisations work well together, it does not necessarily follow that a partnership is the answer to any problem; partnership working can be costly and potential gains are often difficult to realise in practice. Alternatives such as consultative arrangements, networks of personal or professional relationships, or contractual relationships should be considered first”

The partnership “alternatives” suggested can, however, be seen as part of a wider set of activities relating to “joined up government” and dealing with cross-cutting issues.

Research Agenda

As an indication of the perceived state of the art, research needs identified by the recent DETR Local & Regional Government Research Unit Mid-Year Consultative Seminar (1999) are of interest:

Research Needs Identified by DETR Consultation
<p><i>“Further work needs to be undertaken on partnership working including defining what partnership working means, identifying what types and structures of partnership exist and could be developed, measuring the costs and benefits of partnership working and how to bring accountability and longevity to partnership working” (p47)</i></p> <p>Specific issues raised included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ what do we mean by joined up working and integrated strategies?▪ how do we move partnerships on through their different stages of development?▪ what are the barriers to joined up working?▪ how do you bring about community ownership and engage the community?

- what motivates and influences how authorities and individuals behave in partnership?
- what forms of performance measurement need to be developed to apply to cross-cutting working?
- what form might a robust and universally accepted approach to analysing the effectiveness of partnership working take?

There are clearly opportunities in this list of issues for IDeA and LGNTO to pursue in conjunction with DETR². We note the view expressed in DETR (1999c) (“Cross-Cutting Issues Affecting Local Government”), calling for a systems approach to addressing the “*real difficulties*” which persist in addressing cross-cutting issues. The authors stress that “*Breaking the cycle means working to share the definition of problems and outcomes, better learning and capacity building clear accountability for goals and incentives for achieving them, greater local freedom to act and better evaluation of what works.*”

The interim evaluation of the Best value pilot authorities (DETR 1999f) also highlights “*real difficulties...*”

“associated with undertaking performance reviews and developing performance indicators on a partnership basis. It seems clear that this is an area in which there is a need to support and build up the capacity of both best value authorities and potential partners.” (para 12.30)

KEY POINTS

- “Curate’s Egg” typifies the performance of many partnerships: good in parts but failing to deliver as much added value as could be achieved
- weaknesses in skills and experience partly explain this - along with, eg, organisational and cultural factors, legal restrictions, Government policies which fail to mesh, complicating and confusing action at local level
- partnership success factors are well-documented, but not necessarily easily translatable into practice: “we know that trust is important, but if our partners define what they want in very self-interested terms ,what do we do about it?”
- partnership development needs likely to relate to some combination of action on partnership mission and strategy, structures for collaboration, systems for supporting joint working, resources, skills and learning...
- ... and leadership - within partnerships and within partner organisations

² A different research arm of DETR - Housing and Regeneration - are commissioning research into community capacity building, which overlaps with the interest in this report with partnership working with local communities.

4 Successful Collaboration: Skills & Ways of Working

The demands for collaboration, cooperation and joined-up working have encouraged more of a focus on the skills and competencies for partnership working, applicable to different forms of partnership, strategic and operational. Clark & Stewart (1999) note that:

“Community planning and partnership processes and innovative ways of involving citizens and communities will be needed as the local authority becomes more open and outward-looking. These changes will make new demands on elected members and officers. Different relationships, more emphasis on networking and brokerage and new skills and competencies will all be required.”

Various reports have expressed concerns about the adequacy of skills (eg, arising from the experience of the New Deal for Regeneration Pathfinders - LGA NCR Newsletter, January 2000). Typically, these draw out a range of skills, knowledge and understanding, and behaviours - all of which contribute to a specification of effectiveness in, or standards of competence for, partnership working.

“...there is much evidence of the need to recognise and not underestimate the level of resource that will be required to support partnerships and to provide appropriate training for new skills and competencies.” (Newchurch/ UNL 1999)

“Some of the new competencies of coalition-building and inter-agency working are still insufficiently understood in many local authorities. There is a need to refine and develop competencies in these areas.” (LGMB 1997 p57)

“Working in partnership requires new skills - listening, negotiation, leadership through influence...” (DETR 1999, “Cross-Cutting Issues Affecting Local Government”, para 3.7.1)

“...as it becomes ever clearer that professional knowledge must be applied in a cross-cutting way, leadership competences must be redefined. Professional leadership needs a frame of reference involving effective inter-organisational work, in addition to older models which stressed intra-organisational competence.” (DETR 1999c, “Cross-Cutting Issues in Public Policy and Public Service”, para 6.37)

“A new culture and set of competencies may be required in the local authority, in its partner organisations and in the local communities themselves” (LGA 1999, Community Leadership and Community Planning)

The LGA Urban Commission (1999) hearings into Partnership Working highlighted a range of skill needs:

LGA Urban Commission: Partnership Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ inter-organisational understanding and the ability to empathise with others' cultures▪ listening and hearing the unfamiliar and the unexpected▪ the ability to help others see the big picture▪ facilitation to engender interest in issues not normally of interest to some partners▪ skills in seeing connections and shared interests▪ the management of influence (rather than just of action)▪ consensus building▪ project management skills in an inter-organisational context▪ team building skills within partnerships▪ being hard-edged about measuring achievements and justifying costs

Stewart (1999) points to public dispute resolution, mediation and consensus-building as instruments required for community leadership (p6). In conclusions more generally, he refers to the need for “learning the management of co-operation” (p10). Roles and skills include:

Requirements in Managing Co-operation (Stewart)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ mappers of conflict and consensus and of shared interests and possible conflicts, who can plot ways ahead in uncertain terrain▪ interpreters who can read and speak the language of organisations and relate it to the languages of the local authority▪ mediators who can enable the process of consensus-building▪ builders of partnerships who recognise that they have to be built over time, taking opportunities but aware of the need for an adequate organisation design if the partnership is to be sustained▪ networkers who can sustain and develop multiple contacts▪ project managers who can enable partnerships to result in action▪ inter-organisational understanding or the capacity to read the nature of other organisations▪ the management of influence which has its own requirements that differ from the management of action▪ listening and hearing the unfamiliar and the unexpected▪ consensus building▪ networking or linking skills in seeing connections and shared interests▪ project management in an inter-organisational context

There is an argument that, while for some people in local government, partnership working involves the application of existing skills and competencies in new ways, there is a need for something more radical. This is trenchantly argued in DETR (1999b), “Cross-Cutting Issues in Public Policy and Public Service”: *“The competences built up over years of working [within vertical professional networks] create their own ‘path dependency’, resulting in problems being redefined to fit the competences that are available to deal with them, rather than the other way round”* (para 6.29)

Another set of analyses of what’s important to partnership effectiveness in partnership working can be drawn from two reviews, by the Audit Commission (1998) and Newchurch/ UNL (1999):

Partnership Clusters of “Competence”	
Audit Commission “A Fruitful Partnership: Effective Partnership Working”	Newchurch/ UNL Literature Review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ deciding when to work in partnership ▪ understanding partnership functions ▪ partnership models ▪ choosing partners ▪ maintaining commitment and involvement ▪ getting things done ▪ making good use of staff ▪ building trust between partners ▪ keeping a focus on outcomes/ partnership added value ▪ linking partnership and mainstream work ▪ measuring progress ▪ testing value for money (assessing costs & benefits) ▪ being accountable ▪ planning a partnership’s end 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ selecting suitable partners ▪ shared values and objectives ▪ recognising differences in practices between partners ▪ agreed shareholding of partner organisations ▪ good open communication and trust ▪ understanding roles and responsibility ▪ maintaining influence and control ▪ balancing ‘tightness’ and ‘looseness’ ▪ managing complexity ▪ continued assessment and development ▪ managing change ▪ managing staff resource

partnerships and community leadership

Analysis of requirements for effective partnership working inevitably overlap with considerations of community leadership. Earlier work by the LGMB (1997) provides these headings:

Competencies for Leading Communities
<p>Working with Grass Roots Communities <i>“shaping and supporting the development of grass-roots communities”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ putting people at their ease ▪ learning to think about services from a user’s perspective ▪ listening to interests as well as voices ▪ recognising the different pace and processes of community groups and individuals ▪ capacity building ▪ managing conflict and difference ▪ managing expectations ▪ influencing skills ▪ coalition building ▪ detailed local knowledge ▪ professional skills ▪ maintaining a strategic focus ▪ working constructively with elected members ▪ working constructively with departments
<p>Coalition Building <i>“negotiating and mobilising effective partnerships with other public, private and voluntary agencies”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ being aware of different interests in the partnership ▪ understanding strategy and strategic opportunities ▪ working with partners as equal but different ▪ awareness of different sector and organisational cultures ▪ influencing skills

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ vision and imagination about how to involve partners ▪ inter-agency teamworking skills
<p>Representation Upwards and Outwards <i>“voicing the needs and interests of the local community in regional, national, European and international arenas”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ influencing skills ▪ recognising different interests ▪ understanding and learning about political and national structures and cultures ▪ working with members to interpret and communicate policy and policy opportunities ▪ networking skills

More recent work by LGA (1999a) sets out competencies for members, senior managers and front line staff in relation to community planning:

	The Elected Member	The Senior Manager
LEADERSHIP/ FACILITATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ able to develop a clear policy framework ▪ can balance party issues with wider representative role ▪ has chairing/facilitation skills available when required ▪ has good understanding of role and purpose of other agencies ▪ can live with “losses” along the way ▪ is prepared to say no and explain why ▪ can share credit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ able to develop and manage external partnerships and alliances ▪ capable of securing an alignment of strategy and of operational focus between public sector agencies ▪ demonstrates to staff that involvement in community leadership shares equal worth with more established forms of activity ▪ can set desired outcomes and monitor progress towards them ▪ capable of developing a holistic view of the hard and soft resource that is potentially available ▪ gives a strong sense of purpose and direction to staff ▪ helps members recognise fully the value and uniqueness of their role
TRUST & APPRECIATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ able to engage successfully with a wide range of players ▪ understands the perspectives and motivations of other players ▪ can operate through persuasion and negotiation rather than through command and control ▪ is prepared to forgo short-term political advantage for longer-term community gain ▪ has the patience to allow initiatives to develop organically ▪ comprehends the skills and resourcefulness of local communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ accepts that the authority’s right to engage with the community has to be earned ▪ can be honest about what contribution the authority can make ▪ can find areas of common ground and complementarity without creating a false consensus

	The Elected Member	The Senior Manager
OPENNESS/ LEARNING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ is open to persuasion and prepared to change position ▪ understands the route map around other organisations and can direct people accordingly ▪ can act as a “graphic equaliser” - filtering out excessive representations ▪ can call upon and adapt good practice from elsewhere ▪ is able to understand why some things have succeeded and others have failed 	<p>balances the strength and type of views expressed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ compiles a picture of the authority as seen from the community’s perspective ▪ gives appropriate weight to soft information - anecdotes and impressions ▪ shows flexibility in terms of engagement and response ▪ empowers staff to experiment, using failure as an opportunity to learn ▪ recognises the value of information coming into the authority, harness it and use it

partnerships and Best Value

Newchurch (1999c) suggests that Best Value partnership developments place greater weight on commercial and commissioning skills alongside changes in cultures, characterised by more entrepreneurial, performance-driven and risk-taking behaviours. These points relate in particular to joint ventures developed for service delivery purposes, though there is a broader point about the need for more people working in local government to develop the traits and capabilities of “social” or “civic” entrepreneurs. Many of the requirements identified in the research described above apply equally to this concept.

Work reviewing the implications of Best Value typically highlights the need for enhanced skills and knowledge regarding performance measurement. There is a partnership dimension to this, as measures and reporting often need to be agreed between the funding partners, to avoid wasteful, overlapping and time-consuming reporting requirements placed on suppliers and grant-aided organisations.

The interim evaluation of the Best Value pilot programme DETR (1999f) notes the importance of local authority partners (business, voluntary and community sectors, other public bodies) learning the lessons from Best Value, and recommends:

Given the increasing recognition of the inter-linkages between policies and the need to address ‘cross-cutting’ issues and problems, it will also be important to ‘join up’ dissemination and capacity building relating to Best Value with similar activities associated with other experimental/ demonstration initiatives” (such as HAZs, EAZs, Better Government for Older People) (para 14.68)

partnerships, professionals and regeneration

One of the focuses of recent work has been on professionals working with the community on regeneration. This was a particular concern of the Urban Task Force

“To engage the full range of stakeholders will require professionals .. to become far more skilled in a range of participative mechanisms” (p160)

The success of genuine participation exercises depends on the quality of independent facilitators who have the negotiating skills and understanding necessary to make projects happen” (p161)

This theme recurs in the literature on capacity building (eg, Skinner, 1997; Civic Trust Regeneration Unit 1999).

Research by PriceWaterhouseCoopers (1999) for the Task Force drew out the following needs for continuing development across urban development professions:

CPD needs expressed by Urban Task Force consultees

CPD Topic	Issues
Urban development	Innovative approaches
Project management	Team creation, team working
Partnership working	Understanding aims and objectives, resolving conflict, identifying partners, understanding time and bureaucratic needs of partnerships
Partnership boards	Understanding of roles and environment
Delivering objectives	Understanding and obtaining who/ what is needed to deliver the objectives of urban regeneration
Organisational management	Overcoming organisational constraints/cultural expectations and attitudes
Public/private partnerships	Strategies for private sector involvement in urban development projects
Leadership	Communication skills, problem solving, leadership, enabling
Finance	Financing projects, costing, value analysis
New development models	Mixed use developments
Economic development issues	Training, employment, community participation
Policy	Public policy issues affecting urban development at a local level - English Partnerships, RDAs, Housing Associations
Technical expertise	Brownfield site assembly and contamination issues

Engaging the private sector more effectively has also been identified by the LGA under New Commitment to Regeneration, and by the Audit Commission (1999) in “A Life’s Work”. The LGA have published (1999b) The Association of Town Centre Management (ATCM) has recently announced (Urban Environment Today, 10/2/00) a major project to identify the critical factors in attracting private sector investment into town centre management and development.

demands of different job roles in relation to partnership

We have noted previously distinctions which need to be drawn on different job roles in relation to partnership working. This has been brought out by work for the Training Organisation for the Personal Social Services (TOPSS) (Whittington, 1999). This preparatory project investigated partnership working in the health and social services and the nature of job requirements. This drew out distinctions in relation to:

- ◆ joint planning (strategy/ services)
- ◆ joint and lead commissioning
- ◆ joint work on regulation and standards

- ◆ multi-disciplinary service delivery teams
- ◆ case-by-case collaboration by front-line staff

While this breakdown is not universal, it does highlight the need to look further at partnership and different job roles. It serves to emphasise that partnership is not just about strategic partnerships, but also at a day-to-day service delivery and project management level. This links to recent research by the Cabinet Office (2000) which investigated people's experiences of major 'life episodes' (such as leaving school, becoming unemployed, having a baby and needing long-term care at home). Amongst other trenchant criticisms, it was found that, typically, *"staff are poorly trained and facilitated to know their way around their own organisation, let alone others', and are therefore unable to offer joined-up advice"*.

analysing the requirements for effective partnership working

The examples above of partnership skills, competencies, etc serve to show that there is now much documented on what the requirements for effective partnership working are, but these have not been pulled together in a structured, evidence-based way. Occupational standards offer a proven methodology for doing this and open up additional advantages in taking forward development work. We consider this further in the next chapter.

We argue that it will be helpful to take the occupational standards model to clarify the requirements of what is needed for effective performance in partnership working, setting out the outcomes needed of people involved in partnerships, criteria which indicate effective performance, and the necessary skills, knowledge and behaviour which need to be brought to bear.

The model involves looking at the full range of what's required and usefully highlighting critical gaps which may be otherwise missed. This approach is recommended by the draft TOPSS strategy (the NTO for personal and social services).

Appropriate Responses

The very nature of partnership and joint working suggests joint responses to identifying and meeting learning needs:

- ◆ much of the learning that is needed requires you to find out more about your partners: what motivates them, what constrains them
- ◆ trust as a critical component of partnership depends critically on the existence of personal relationships - built through networking, socialising, working and learning together
- ◆ developing competence in partnership working often requires experience in dealing with other people in such settings and sometimes significant changes in your own behaviour
- ◆ key skills, such as facilitation, can only be developed in practical situations

"Capacity building also means investing in people through improving the ability to work across boundaries. Everyone thinks that it is the other person that needs capacity building but in practice all parties

to partnerships require time to learn collective capacity building skills - negotiation, influencing brokering networking resource packaging information sharing building trust and so on.” (DETR 1999b, para 3.7.2)

It is interesting to note that the PIU report (2000b), “Wiring It Up” recommends that “more civil servants should be given immediate practical experience of handling the conflicts of interest and complex reporting lines of genuine partnership working”.

Partnership in Action (DoH, 1998) reinforces the desirability of both developing new competencies and learning across organisations – in this case across health and social services:

“It is important that training and education support and develop improvements in the way health and social care sectors work together.This will be achieved, in part, by working with employers, education providers and health and social care professions to ensure that staff have opportunities to learn together and receive relevant education and development...”

This relates to the conclusion in the DETR (1999b) report, “Cross-Cutting Issues in Public Policy and Public Service” that:

“there is no simple, ‘silver bullet’ solution; rather there is a series of interlocking aspects to the problem, and ways of developing capacity to overcome them.”

Henderson and Mayo (1998) echo this in “Training for Urban Regeneration” for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation stressing the importance of developing a range of different formats to promote effective learning: short courses, longer courses (including modules within professional education programmes), placements, secondments, mentoring and action-based learning. They relay criticisms of existing courses “parachuted” into areas with little attention to clarifying and meeting local needs.

Any such developments need to be supported by a range of other actions, which seek to ensure that people give commitment to these learning activities, making time amongst other pressing work priorities, while organisational leaders create the conditions for effective learning and partnership working.

While the emphasis on learning together is valid, such activities are **not** a sufficient condition for partnership success. The TOPSS research (Whittington, 1999) found that, as yet, there was no firm evidence that such learning does make a difference.

KEY POINTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ increasingly frequent references to skill and learning needs for partnership working➤ core needs relate to, eg, understanding partner roles, motivations, relationship building, influence, etc...➤ but capabilities are less well-developed in relation to developing/ managing change in partnerships➤ need to tease out common strands/ requirements across cross-cutting activities➤ necessary responses include actions in-house, cross-partnership <i>and...</i>➤ in relation to professional education/ CPD

5 Responding to Needs

How has education and training provision been developing to meet emerging learning needs? We argue that the response has not been focused or strong, though with some shining lights.

The dominant forms of learning remain within professional and institutional areas - each to their own box. In the regeneration context, the Urban Task Force (1999) has been vocal expressing concern:

*“Research undertaken by the Task Force demonstrates that there is a general and on-going separation of career training amongst the various professions that militates against an appreciation of the wider urban development context and the role of other professions”
(p161)*

“The main problem is a lack of cross-disciplinary learning with strong vocational relevance”

Much continuing professional development is primarily concerned with updating professional knowledge, not with widening or deepening skills. There are many opportunities of a seminar or conference nature which offer a platform to bring people together from different areas, disciplines and interests but far fewer that are oriented to improving work-based competence and the products of partnership working.

examples from economic development

As an example in one field, economic development, in the Postgraduate Certificate/ Diploma/ MSc in Local and Regional Development (IED Education Trust with Dundee, Coventry and Sheffield Hallam Universities), partnership issues appear in the context of management of economic development and treatment of specific technical subjects like inward investment. The Institution for Economic Development (IED) define a key role of partnership management in terms of knowledge and understanding of “interpersonal skills: the development of trust, persuasion, communication, agreeing common objectives, defining roles and responsibilities, agreeing action plan, maintaining regular communications and feedback”. Sheffield Hallam University is itself notable for its stress on a cross-cutting, multi-disciplinary approach to urban regeneration studies through its set of MSc/ Diploma and Certificate courses. The Certificate is aimed in particular at people working for or with community groups on regeneration.

Other distance learning provision such as the Local Economic Development Qualification (developed in Scotland) and New Perspectives in Economic Development (Northern Ireland) treat partnership working as an ancillary part of the main content (being concerned, as IED, first and foremost with developing the candidate’s professional knowledge base - underpinning for professional competence in the working environment).

More recent developments in provision in England include the introduction of the Project Appraisal programme by University of the West of England (funded by DETR). This is linked to a new MSc in urban and rural regeneration at the university.

institutional responses

Responses by higher education include the North West and North East Change Centres. The NW Centre, at Manchester Business School, aims to support social regeneration agencies manage change and reinforce collaborative practices. Activities include self-managed learning, mapping barriers to change and partnership, and learning networks.

cross-sector models & initiatives

The model of **Common Purpose** is relevant to partnership development, in preparing the ground for cross-sector working. Typically, Common Purpose recruits senior (or aspiring senior) managers or representatives across the public, private and voluntary sectors in a given locality to participate in a seminar programme. These events typically feature themed events on current civic issues. Common Purpose do not seek learning outcomes per se, but rather stress the role of the programme in creating the conditions and common understanding that will support partnership working in the future amongst their “graduates”. They stress individual benefits: more rounded people, capable of greater lateral thinking, etc.

We note also:

- ◆ the establishment of the **Local Government Professional Organisations Network**, which is beginning to provide a forum for looking at cross-cutting issues
- ◆ proposals for a **Society of Urban Practitioners**, to be “open to anyone committed to developing multi-disciplinary approaches to the needs of urban areas which involve local communities”. They have support from the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and the Association of Town Centre Management (ATCM), but not the IED
- ◆ **Service First Quality Networks**, promoted by the Cabinet Office. There are now 24 throughout the UK. Their objectives are to share developments in best practice, compare progress in areas of common interest, build partnerships between public service organisations, and encourage problem sharing and solving.

response in central government

For the first time, the Civil Service College now offers short courses in Collaborative Working. Other areas of their programme also focus on topics “*central to the reform process*” such as systems thinking, evidence-based policy making, benchmarking and evaluation. The PIU (2000b) in “Wiring It Up” calls for revisions to core Civil Service competencies, highlighting those required for cross-cutting working: leadership, policy vision, strategic management, exploiting IT, managing change and managing stakeholders. Proposals include “more movement and interchange of staff within and outside the Civil Service” and “immediate practical experience” for civil servants “of handling the conflicts of interest and complex reporting lines of genuine partnership working”. Further developments can be expected, as a result of the evolving role of the Centre for Policy and Management Studies.

innovations

The practice of partnership working has encouraged many participants to think that “there *must* be a better way” to work in partnership, leading to a variety of responses, with “awaydays” a common activity. Most recently, there has been a mushrooming of interest in highly participative events (such as “open space”), linked to the prevailing emphasis on finding better ways of engaging and involving stakeholders in community planning, service development, etc.

More concerted, innovative approaches have included:

a) Kent Partners Skills Programme

The Kent Partners Skills Programme (Kent TEC, 1997) has sought to meet critical skills and partnership requirements emanating from the Kent Prospects (economic development) and Kent Learning (lifelong learning) strategies. It has taken a top-down and bottom-up approach to identifying and meeting needs, prioritizing work on inward investment, business sector development, and managing partnership projects. It has sought across these themes to promote networking and partnership, and help develop skills in managing change.

b) Merseyside TEC

DfEE (1997) features both the Kent Partners Skills Programme and an initiative by Merseyside TEC and partners to review partnership strengths and weaknesses, map competences against relevant occupational standards and provide partnership training, accredited by the Open College Network.. The project focused on community economic development, and drew out critical issues for public agencies working in partnership with voluntary and community organisations.

We comment further on the use of national standards by both the Kent and Merseyside projects in the next chapter.

c) Learning Sets: Health and Social Services

The NHS Executive report, “Working in Partnership: Joint Working between Health and Social Services in Primary Care Groups” features an example of one health authority which has formed a public health “learning set” bringing people together from different backgrounds to learn together and develop ‘best knowledge’ and ‘best practice’, by thinking about common experiences and common knowledge in a new way.

Such learning sets are not new, but there does appear to increasing interest, especially cross-sector. The DoH fund a top managers programme (steered by CCETSW, NHSE, ADSS, SSI and LGA), currently involving 200 managers in 18 action learning sets. SOLACE are currently promoting the TRANSSECT programme, on a related basis, with the support of the Association of Chief Executives of National Voluntary Organisations (ACENVO) and the Cabinet Office. This is aimed at people who work with or in the voluntary sector and wish to develop cross-agency understanding, unblock intractable problems, and build alliances.

d) The Competent Workplace (National Institute of Social Work)

This initiative has been developed over the last eighteen months with several authorities to enable personal social services best respond to the increasing number of government initiatives relating to social exclusion and joined-up government. It promotes team self-audit and organisational learning, in ways intended to help front line managers and workers respond and develop best practice (Evans 1999).

e) Working Together to Safeguard Children

“Working Together to Safeguard Children” is a joint initiative of the Department of Health, Home Office and DfEE, which has included the production of a “Framework for Training to Promote Working Together”. This illustrates one approach which combines training related directly to work in safeguarding children and more generic content in relation into partnership working.

Framework for Training to Promote Working Together
<p>a) Introduction to working together to safeguard children <i>Those in contact with children or parents</i></p> <p>Key Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ contribute and take whatever actions are needed to safeguard children. ▪ recognise and respond to concerns about a child in need. ▪ appreciate own role and that of others. ▪ communicate and act appropriately within national and local guidance to safeguard children. ▪ familiar with local arrangements, services and sources of advice for supporting families and safeguarding children
<p>b) Working Together: Foundation <i>Those who work directly with children, or adults who are parents</i></p> <p>Key Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ accomplish core tasks together to safeguard and promote children’s welfare e.g. assessments, planning, core groups, conferences, decision making. ▪ sound understanding of principles and processes for effective collaboration. ▪ communicate and develop working relationships in the interests of children. ▪ understand contribution made by others to safeguarding children and impact of own decisions and actions on others.
<p>c) Working together on particular practice <i>Those involved in assessment and intervention to safeguard children</i></p> <p>Key Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ co-work on complex tasks or particular areas of practice that have specific knowledge or skill requirements, eg. joint enquiries and investigations, investigative interviews, complex assessments. ▪ establish and maintain partnerships of mutual trust and respect. ▪ understand legal and organisational frameworks, including levels of accountability of decision making, in other agencies

Source: DoH/ Home Office/ DfEE (1999) Working Together to Safeguard Children

based on Charles, M & Hendry, E (eds) *Training Together to Safeguard Children* London: NSPCC

f) Crime Concern

Crime Concern are funded by the Home Office to provide training, technical assistance and coaching for Community Safety Partnerships. This initiative has followed research which found that many partnerships needed strengthening. Another resource for these partnerships is an innovative website managed by the Audit Commission.

g) Priority Estates Project

The national training programme of the Priority Estates Project (PEP) is aimed at residents involved in managing social housing. Events include practical skills courses (eg, managing contracts, negotiating skills) as well as events treating wider regeneration issues, including partnership working. PEP has developed joint training, bringing together residents and staff who work together.

Guides & Toolkits

We note that, over the past two or three years, a substantial number of guides to partnership working have been published. These include:

Civic Trust Regeneration Unit (1999) *Winning Partnerships for Voluntary and Community Groups: a guide to working with cross-sectoral regeneration partnerships*

McCabe, Lowndes & Skelcher (1997) *Partnerships and Networks* (Joseph Rowntree Foundation)

Wilson & Charlton (1997) *Making Partnerships Work* (Joseph Rowntree Foundation)

Audit Commission (1998) *A Fruitful Partnership: Effective Partnership Working*

DETR (1998b) *Building Partnerships in the English Regions: A Good Practice Guide*

Surrey County Council (1999), *Getting Together, Staying Together*

DfEE/ Learning City Network (1999) *Practice, Progress and Value: learning communities - assessing the value they add*

Proposals and Developments

Current proposals and developments include:

Urban Task Force

DETR have been consulting about how to take forward the recommendations in “Towards an Urban Renaissance” (the report of Lord Roger’s Urban Task Force) in preparation for the publication of the Urban White Paper later in the year³.

The report expresses great concern about the balance of professional training and wants to see greater attention, by educational establishments and professional bodies, to bringing specialised skills “to bear on team working in complex everyday situations”.

There are specific recommendations for:

- DETR and DfEE to work with FE and HE to improve the urban development content of undergraduate courses and to increase the number of specialist post-graduate urban development courses
- the main professional institutions to establish a joint plan for how, over the next ten years, they can contribute towards increasing the urban development skills base

The Task Force commissioned PriceWaterhouseCoopers to undertake a feasibility study for the creation of Regional Resource Centres for Urban Development. The consultants found a clear acceptance of the need for more multi-disciplinary and cross-professional skills and expertise and support for a network of dedicated centres concerned with cross-disciplinary professional development, training, mentoring and best practice advice. Consultees wanted these centres to “take a holistic approach to urban design and development, covering technical construction and development issues, non-technical partnership development and management issues and wider strategic and practical issues such as facilitating community participation” (p165). The Task Force recommended that DETR invite bids from universities and specialist institutions to create the first four regional centres.

National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal

Work on the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (SEU 1998) has been conducted through Policy Action Teams, two of which are especially relevant to the theme of partnership competence: PAT 16, “Learning Lessons” and PAT 17 “Joining It Up Locally”. The brief for PAT 16 included:

- ◆ training requirements for future professionals and other involved in regeneration and local area initiatives and the scope for mutual training each other
- ◆ whether there is a need for a “University of Regeneration”, making use of IT and distance learning

and that of PAT 17:

³ There is also to be a Rural White Paper, which will be informed by the research undertaken by the PIU (2000c). This highlights the scope for joined-up delivery of services in rural areas and for community action. Research for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (1999) raises issues similar to urban-focused studies and which advocates more training to allow partners to contribute more effectively, especially voluntary and community sector partners.

- ◆ identifying best practice in local strategic planning on social exclusion and the most effective ways of linking agencies, from neighbourhood through to national and regional levels.

These PAT reports are scheduled for publication in April 2000.

Training and Education for Urban Regeneration

The SEU report may provide an opportunity to implement some of the recommendations contained in the report, "Training for Urban Regeneration" by Henderson and Mayo (1998) for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. This calls for a national training and education framework which would be enabling rather than prescriptive, agreeing standards for effective provision and resourcing. The framework would address the needs of the full range of relevant stakeholders (where appropriately, together), and cover the aspects such as "administrative processes and the legal framework for area regeneration programmes, including confidence building and understanding group and community development processes, through to analysing and reflecting upon issues, needs, policies and practices". The authors are concerned to see accreditation and progression routes, as well as information, advice and networking.

"There is an urgent need to develop a strategic framework for providing training and learning opportunities for managers and decision makers, many of whom have limited knowledge and experience of community development. this will involve examining professional education and training for a range of professions working with communities..." Henderson and Mayo (1998)

Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2000) continue to advocate action in this area: *"a major programme of capacity-building in voluntary and community agencies, including joint training with community participants; the restructuring of public sector careers and professions in ways which reward joint working; opportunities for joint discussion, sharing knowledge, secondments, shadowing and learning across boundaries."*

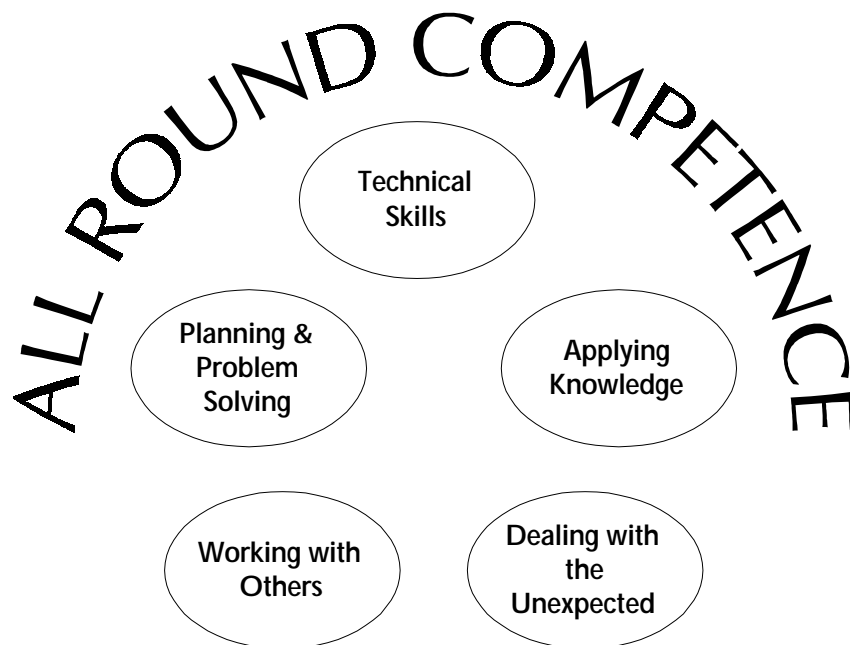
KEY POINTS	
➤	professional education and training is open to criticism of insufficient treatment of partnership working and cross-cutting issues
➤	the focus of CPD has tended to focus on professional knowledge (attendance at seminars, reading, etc) <i>not</i> on improving competence on the job (not least where having to engage with local communities)
➤	there are various national developments which LGNTO/ IDeA needs to influence
➤	need for greater understanding of how best to promote learning amongst partners <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ what kind of activity? when?
➤	can you build it in with the bricks, recognising work pressures and the limited time people often have...

6 How National Standards Can Contribute

The Thinking Behind National Standards

National standards are occupational standards researched and presented in a format which meets the "kitemark" for describing **what's required of teams and individuals for all-round competence.**

At the heart of these standards is a **way of thinking** about managing performance and developing professional capabilities. They focus on what people are expected to achieve within essential parts of their job. They are concerned not just with what you know but also with what you do with it and how well you work with others to get things done.



For example, an individual acting as project manager for a sub-regional economic partnership is likely to need, for effective performance, a blend, which might include:

- relationship and consensus building skills
- strategy and project development expertise
- understanding of the interests and motivations of key players
- an eye for opportunities

as well as a professional subject knowledge in economic development (eg, key factors affecting business competitiveness and the labour market and the scope to influence these at a local level).

Occupational standards provide a sound, work-based method of **identifying team and individual development needs** and **designing training** and other forms of learning⁴. They provide a consistent means for assessing performance and the basis for flexible routes to attaining qualifications, recognising capabilities developed through previous experience and training. They can also be tailored to meet the distinct needs of different types and sizes of organisation, be they in the public or voluntary/ community sectors or partnerships.

Strategic Use of Standards

Occupational standards are derived by analysing all the roles and functions that organisations and partnerships need to undertake if they are to achieve their goals and objectives.

As a result, the standards can provide a **rigorous basis for reviewing roles and responsibilities** within any team, organisation or partnership. As DfEE (1998) notes, each standard embodies **good practice** and provides a yardstick or benchmark, not only for reviewing current practices but also for reflecting on the implications of changing circumstances and the emergence of new, more effective techniques.

Occupational standards can act as a **building block for managing change and continuous improvement**. They help integrate and strengthen approaches to recruitment, training and appraisal, and contribute to achievement of organisational quality standards such as Investors in People and the Business Excellence Model (which in its latest form now features a criterion on the "development and management of all value-adding partnerships"). They offer advantages over other competency models, by defining standards and the underpinning skills, knowledge and behaviours that flow from them - rather than presenting a set of traits, behaviours and skills which (a) may be difficult to assess, and (b) do not offer a means of relating job requirements to organisational or partnership strategy.

Occupational Standards and Policy Outcomes

The methodology behind occupational standards is directly in keeping with thrust to outcomes in public policy, as it focuses on what people and organisations are trying to achieve (in terms of mission and objectives), breaking the requirements down into job roles and functions and what's critical in carrying these out effectively.

Occupational standards are potentially very valuable in the context of Best Value, where in relation to the 4Cs:

- ◆ Compare: in benchmarking exercises, to keep a focus on outcomes and inform process mapping
- ◆ Challenge/ Compete: in mapping partner roles and responsibilities, identifying the scope for performance improvement - and commissioning providers/ negotiating with partners

⁴ See, eg, DTI (2000) for an example of the applying standards in Business Links to job profiling, analysing training and development needs, 360° performance appraisal and developing Business Link management teams. The standards apply where services are provided under the Business Link brand, which can include services provided by local authorities directly.

They are also potentially very helpful in internal organisational review and job design - not least where there is a need to increase delegation, based on clear understanding of roles, responsibilities and authority.

Making the Most of Occupational Standards

Research and development projects in local economic development (DfEE 1998) and the Health Service (NHS Executive 1998) has demonstrated the potential that occupational standards have in multi-agency/ partnership context. They can be particularly useful in addressing the questions:

- ◆ what do we need to be able to do - and do well - to achieve our goals...
- ◆ who currently does what?
- ◆ what do we need to improve?
- ◆ do we need to clarify roles and responsibilities?

(They are also relevant to commissioning providers and assessing their capabilities.)

Some conditions, however, have to be met if occupational standards are to achieve their full potential:

- ◆ enough users understanding how and when to use standards, and how they fit with other quality and organisational development initiatives
- ◆ avoiding their use to police performance rather than to promote learning and improvement
- ◆ presentation in ways which make it easy to use the standards (and the associated specifications of skills and knowledge) in practical ways

Winterton & Winterton (1996) provides further evidence of the benefits of using standards for management development in a mixture of public and private organisations.

Standards for Economic Development

Work funded by DfEE (1996) to produce standards for local economic development provides an illustration of standards developed to meet needs across a range of professional and organisational interests engaged in economic aspects of the regeneration "cross-cutting" theme⁵. The motivation was primarily to develop standards as tools for individual and organisational development, rather than NVQs per se⁶.

These standards cover:

- ◆ strategy development and strategic management
- ◆ project and service development, research, evaluation, etc

⁵ The "key purpose" of the standards framework, from which the analysis of job roles flows, was defined as "Plan, implement and improve economic strategies and interventions to optimise and sustain business growth, quality of life, jobs and career opportunities".

⁶ Wherever suitable, existing national standards, eg, management standards produced by MCI, were incorporated in the framework, with new standards added to fill specific gaps. In all cases, the specification of skills and knowledge was developed further to fit the economic development requirements.

- ◆ operational management
- ◆ delivery of economic development services such as business support, inward investment and jobs brokerage

Within the framework there is an emphasis on requirements which relate to partnership working. Standards include:

STANDARDS RELATING TO PARTNERSHIP AND CONSULTATION
<p><i>Partnership building</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify the current and likely future interests of stakeholders ▪ Evaluate and influence stakeholders' capabilities to help or hinder ▪ Identify and set up collaborative and consultative working arrangements ▪ Create a shared vision and mission ▪ Gain internal and external support for the partnership's vision, objectives and strategies <p><i>Partnership review</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify problems and opportunities in strategies, programmes, projects and services ▪ Identify and evaluate partnership strengths and weaknesses ▪ Plan how to develop the effectiveness of the partnership

Each is broken down further in terms of criteria for effective performance and underpinning skills and knowledge. (Partnership dimensions feature in other standards as well (eg, in relation to stakeholder consultations when conducting evaluations.)

The standards framework was subject to consultation when it was devised and subsequently, through research to substantiate the demand for work to develop NVQs for people working in local economic development and European affairs (The Management Standards Consultancy 1997; Segal Quince Wicksteed 1998).

These two exercises confirmed practitioner interest in the further development of standards, though found some ambivalence towards the development of NVQs. SQW (1998) found amongst respondents that,

"many liked the logical structure and comprehensive coverage and the opportunity to 'pick and mix' without necessary going for a qualification. They were least keen on the 'bureaucracy' which they believed goes with N/SVQs." (para 3.12)

Local authority respondents rated the following application of standards in terms of their potential value:

Local Authority Interest in Use of Standards

Use of Standards	%
▪ promote career development	80
▪ identify training needs	77
▪ develop relevant training	69
▪ assess staff competence	68
▪ academic qualifications in economic development	59
▪ developing job descriptions	55
▪ NVQs in economic development	54

source: SQW (1998)

(There was no question about the use of the standards to assist partnership or team development.)

Feedback to these consultations further emphasised:

- ◆ some reworking of the content to strengthen coverage of developing strategic partnerships, competitive bidding, project management and managing political influences
- ◆ the value of having support from individuals already familiar with the content of the standards and their uses
- ◆ the development of standards and qualifications at NVQ Level 3, to cater for needs expressed by community and voluntary organisations and related to standards in Community Work
- ◆ improvements in the layout and language of the standards to facilitate use and understanding

Some respondents argued for a broader coverage of topics within the framework, while others recognised that there is an essential set of standards (as in the Partnerships and Consultation box on the previous page) which are essentially similar across most or all aspects of regeneration - varying primarily according to the subject knowledge needed in different partnership contexts (eg, community safety compared to inward investment).

SQW expressed concern that the use of standards is hampered by ignorance amongst many practitioners of the many potential uses of standards and of their relationship to NVQs. This has been borne out by all the development projects described below.

further development of the ED standards

Further development of the standards, including (importantly) their updating to incorporate new and revised standards which meet national guidelines for ease of use, has been hampered by a lack of common vision and commitment amongst key national players. A partnership approach is needed, in a way that has not been necessary in other areas of standards development where there is a clearer cut vocational domain.

There is an opportunity to address needs across related areas, by concentrating on generic partnership competences - in ways which can help develop joined-up working across a series of professional and organisational domains. Such work would best draw on relevant standards (eg, MCI standards for Project Management; Community Work standards), and clarify areas where new standards need to be developed. The analyses of job roles, skills and knowledge featured in Chapter 3 would be a useful input to this.

The IED have recently begun a project funded by the DfEE, to evaluate the first year of Economic Development Distance Learning Consortium provision, promote the results and inform future product development. A proposed outcome is the "refinement of occupational mapping and skills definitions" developed previously. Interviews are intended to establish how organisations define their skill needs, assess the use of the existing standards, and identify what future needs EDDDL modules should cover.

Standards Development Projects

DfEE (1998) describes four projects funded by the Department to test applications of the Economic Development Standards. These projects involved:

PROJECT	FEATURES
Kent Partners Skills Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ top-down approach, linked to common priorities identified from Kent Prospects & Learning strategies ▪ bottom-up training needs identification ▪ standards used in training design, partnership development
Merseyside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ mapping of competencies and learning needs ▪ organisational & partnership reviews
Somerset Economic Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ strategic partnership review ▪ analysis of strengths, weaknesses and development needs of core partnership team
Yorkshire TECs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ standards reviewed against TEC roles ▪ use in training needs analysis, job descriptions, partnership requirements

The standards were applied in a variety of ways, to a range of ends benefiting organisations and individuals - and their clients. The projects made use of the structure of the standards framework and the detail of individual standards, from checklists of partnership or team roles through to in-depth review of performance requirements in critical areas. A broad range of individuals and job roles have been involved including, in the Merseyside case, activists and professionals in community ED roles. In others, there have been, eg.: economic development and regeneration managers, sector co-ordinators, inward investment promoters and research managers.

The development projects were not just about testing the standards - they were also rich in their content, for example, in developing new approaches to partnership review and skills training.

Key findings included:

partnerships & processes

"The project got people thinking about what's really needed; what people have to be able to do, what they need to know, and how any training has to lead to results."

"It brought home the need for partnership skills: how you build commitment and get people to share problems, solutions and responsibilities. And it encouraged us to think laterally."

Several applications involved using tools based on the standards in reviewing partnership roles and responsibilities: Is this something we need to do? Who is responsible? What do we need to do better? What do we need to do that's new or different? Typically users remarked on the value of a structured approach, helping people in partnerships to focus on needs and issues, not on personalities and prejudices - and also on the benefits that standards can offer in developing more of a common language to describe what's important and what works.

learning focused on job outcomes

The standards were generally used in the context of a broader approach which promoted learning by doing, getting people focusing on real work issues and priorities and encouraging networking. Project outcomes included new partner agreements (eg, in handling inward

investment promotion and enquiries; formulating roles and standards for a joint economic intelligence unit; and a joint approach to monitoring and evaluation). Partner relationships and communications were improved, and new forms of collaboration established. The projects quite often brought people together who, while sharing common interests, had not worked much together, and had not learned together.

implementation

The main lesson for implementation was that, given the widespread unfamiliarity with the use of occupational standards in practice, there is a need to approach their introduction very carefully, to ensure that:

- ◆ guidance on their content and use is available, along with tools which help users get ready return in meeting their needs quickly
- ◆ people get to know how the standards work and the benefits they offer
- ◆ the use of the standards - as something new - is introduced in manageable chunks
- ◆ work priorities are tackled and there are early, tangible rewards for the individuals concerned

The greatest value tends to come where partners have agreed their vision and objectives; the standards then fall more readily into place. Even where this is not the case the standards can help clarify decisions needed within the partnership (about goals, roles, etc).

"We need now to take the standards and work through them with our partners. Having a nationally accredited set of standards would be the trigger for this."

The box below sets out developments since the pilot projects:

PROJECT	FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS
Kent Partners Skills Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ applications extended to uses in regeneration partnerships, public/ private partnerships (eg. on skills and employability issues) and business-to business partnering
Merseyside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ new DfEE-funded project to help develop competences in the TEC and partner bodies (LA and voluntary) in the context of the transition from the TEC to successor bodies and partnership arrangements ▪ an output will include the 'ingredients of a competency based framework for effective partnership working ▪ involves for individual participants: mapping (current roles, skills, knowledge and understanding) and personal development planning ▪ project is linked to work towards the latest version of the Business Excellence Model, featuring a greater emphasis on partnership, stakeholders and the "customer"
Somerset Economic Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ required competences to be revisited by the SEP team, in the light of new demands which are broadening
Yorkshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ learning needs audit recently conducted for Doncaster Regeneration Partnership, pointing to use of standards in priority areas such as multi-agency project development and management ▪ use by TECs and some partners in devising job descriptions ▪ the potential of the standards is felt to be constrained by the lack of up-to-date nationally accredited standards to act as a stimulus to joint action on competence development

Potential benefits of the use of standards, as identified by this project, are listed in Appendix A. Comments from the evaluation (DfEE 1998) included:

"The standards framework is like a job description for our economic development partnership. It has helped us clarify our strategic objectives and agree what we need to do."

"Working through the standards has been a great help in clarifying roles across the organisation. It helps to see how we fit into the whole and where we need to work better together."

"The approach has brought objectivity to the process of reviewing what we need to do in the partnership and who should be doing what. It has taken the sting out of some of the issues."

Developments in Other Areas

Other areas where the use of standards have been promoted to meet organisational and partnership development ends include Business Links, the National Health Service and Further Education.

Business Links/ Small Business Service

Occupational standards have been developed as a part of the strategy for raising quality and effectiveness in Business Links. The guide, "Managing the Step Change in Performance" featured amongst guidance on the use of the standards (in recruitment, training, etc) templates for use by partner organisations in determining and negotiating contributions and responsibilities, and clarifying staff roles.

Since January 2000, the use of the Business Link standards has been obligatory in relation to all Business Link services, including those provided by local authorities under the Business Link brand. With the advent of the Small Business Service, the national standards are to play a significant part in promoting staff development and assuring service quality.

Further Education

In addition, the Further Education Development Agency/ Further Education NTO identified in the LED standards a relevant set of standards for college staff engaged in regeneration and partnership activity. Essentially, their outward facing nature, oriented to working in partners at strategic and project levels, complement the inward focus of FENTO standards development, which covers teaching and assessment requirements.

FEDA (forthcoming) are shortly to publish a learning needs analysis tool, "Competence and Competitiveness". This draws directly on the Economic Development standards, in providing templates for reviewing job roles and performance issues and identifying learning needs.

National Health Service

The National Health Service has promoted the strategic use of occupational standards through the "Clearly Competent" project. This has applied standards in a range of settings, several of which are explicitly multi-agency (eg, community mental health, young children with multiple handicaps).

The project has found occupational standards to be a useful tool in managing change, through applications to performance management, management of risk and quality, flexible working arrangements and "common language". On the last point, it concluded that "occupational standards have the potential to act as a common language, allowing current roles, skill mix and inter-organisational boundaries to be explored".

Social Care

The TOPSS draft strategy identifies skills gaps relating to *"partnerships working underpin joint or joined-up services"*, and recommends that all work they undertake on occupational standards *"includes consideration of the skills and gaps in relation to collaborative working and the management, planning and delivery of joint services"*. They set out four goals in this context:

- *"that agencies (managers, staff teams and the policy and practice they follow) and employees (individuals and groups) should be committed to work in partnership with one another and with users and carers"*
- *that employees should have the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to work collaboratively and take joint decisions"*
- *that the organisational and service funding frameworks support and facilitate partnership working and collaborative attitudes"*
- *that partnership working and the training and development related to it should be monitored and evaluated and examples of good and effective practice disseminated"*

TOPSS note the opportunity to build on standards development work by Prime R & D Ltd in relation to inter-agency working and health promotion.

The strategy also recognises *"poor understanding"* of the scope for applications of occupational standards by employers who tend to see them only in the NVQ setting. TOPSS identify a need to collaborate with IDeA/ LGNTO and with METO in taking forward work on management development, including mapping the links between management standards and the Business Excellence Model (Robertson 1999).

KEY POINTS	
➤	national occupational standards provide a sound methodology for: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ reviewing performance requirements, roles and responsibilities◆ identifying learning needs◆ designing training
➤	they focus on job outcomes, to which underpinning skills, knowledge and behaviours relate
➤	their use in partnership settings shows promise, but there needs to be more widespread awareness of their applications and benefits
➤	links are needed with related developments in other employment areas, notably, personal and social services

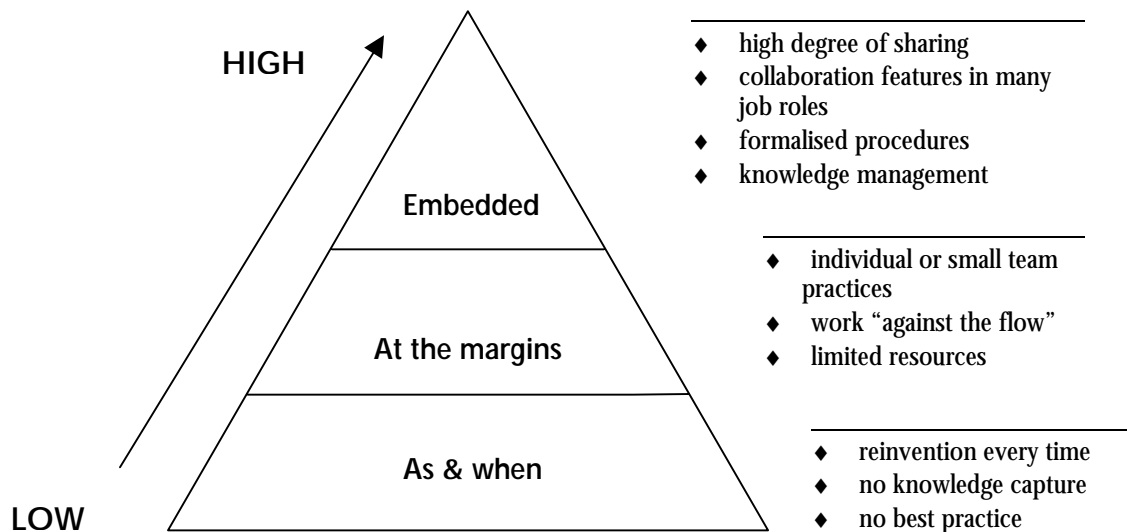
7 Conclusions and Way Forward

Major changes, with the new power of economic, social and environmental well-being, community planning, Best Value and Beacon status all require the development of effective partnerships at different levels and with different interests. Partnership working is a keystone of the Modernising Government agenda, across the public sector - and is, indeed, increasingly prevalent in the private sector (strategic alliances, supply chain partnership, business networks, etc).

While partnership working is not new, what is new is the greater scale of partnership working across a widening range of local authority activities. We can think of second-, or even third-generation partnerships, where collaboration is moving onto a higher plane, where the concern is about ensuring that partnerships really deliver. It is no longer a case of simply sitting in the same room as others, or signing letters of support to endorse their plans. Rather it is about building teams, working together, learning together - and making much more of a difference on the ground.

It is about raising and embedding partnership capabilities:

Pyramid of partnership capability



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LGNTO needs to play a role in supporting the progression of “collaborative competence” within local authorities, and with partner agencies - alongside action to raise skills and competence in other areas critical to the Modernising Local Government agenda (such as performance measurement and management, change management and community consultation).

There is evidence from various national studies that there are weaknesses in partnership skills, and recognition that partnership and joined-up working could achieve much more than is currently the case.

Action by LGNTO

We recommend action by LGNTO/ IDeA in the following areas:

1) *consultation on needs and priorities*

Our report draws heavily on research findings and our own experience in working with partnerships to develop capabilities over the past seven or eight years.

It is essential to consult more widely with local authorities to gather their current views on needs and priorities and how they feel the LGNTO/ IDeA can best assist.

The accompany summary report contains questions on which feedback is sought. These include:

- ◆ actions being taken by individual authorities to develop “collaborative competence”
- ◆ perceptions of the main obstacles to effective learning in partnership
- ◆ priorities for support from LGNTO/ IDeA

There is a need too, to draw together evidence from the work of IDeA, to inform further developments. This has not been possible in the very short timescale within which this report has been prepared.

Clarifying the links between different parts of IDeA/ LGNTO will be necessary, eg, in relation to the Knowledge Network (where there are priorities for Best Practice Toolkits on improving performance, community planning and joining up service delivery).

2) *working with others*

We have identified a number of concurrent developments, important to local authorities as employers of staff working in cross-cutting areas, where LGNTO/ IDeA is only marginally involved, or where there is a need for leadership and partnership at a national level.

We note for example that the LGA (because of other work pressures) has been unable to follow up the Urban Commission (1999) report, “Take Your Partners” with dissemination activities, and would welcome working with LGNTO on this. The report itself states that there is “*probably a need for national work on training and development*” on partnership, “*building into it training for both officers and members*”.

TOPSS, as the NTO for Personal and Social Services, also states desire to work with LGNTO/ IDeA (Robertson 1999)

Competence-based projects for partnership and inter-agency working have tended to point to the existence of generic standards, underpinned by subject-specific knowledge. Putting in place standards for collaboration needs a partnership approach at the national level. It is important in this respect that funders of developments in education, training, standards and qualifications (notably, DfEE, QCA and DETR) recognise this, as they have the potential through their decision-making to fragment what could be very

valuable developments. There is a timely need to be following up recommendations of the Social Exclusion Unit on Neighbourhood Renewal, and make links with the DETR Local Government research agenda.

There is a major opportunity for local government to take a lead - in partnership - in the light of the new power for community well-being and Best Value. The consequences of *not* doing so could be grave, with many overlapping initiatives spreading in numerous directions. There is a need to stimulate innovation - but within a national framework (eg, as argued by Henderson and Mayo, 1998).

The approach will need to be taken up with the Civil Service, which while identifying the need for joined-up working, has not yet articulated the conclusion that there needs to be collaboration between employer interests (and education and training providers) to set standards and work together to promote joint learning and drive up performance. The PIU (2000b) report, "Wiring It Up", for example, highlights the need for boundary crossing, behavioural changes, employing civil servants in cross-cutting roles and seeing them as "culture breakers" - but does not put forward cross-sector solutions.

3) *developing standards*

Action to develop standards relating to partnership and joined up working would include:

- ◆ mapping existing and emerging job roles
- ◆ analysing existing research findings (examples are illustrated in this report)
- ◆ undertaking a functional analysis to provide a clear picture of job roles and requirements

Our experience with projects to apply standards (see, eg, Kent TEC 1997) strongly encourages us to advocate:

- ◆ piloting standards in ways where people can see immediate and longer-term benefits from their use
- ◆ developing tools and providing coaching and support in early projects
- ◆ making standards available in electronic formats, to facilitate their use

There is a general need promote more widespread awareness of the applications and benefits of standards - where used in ways other than for NVQs.

While there are now many good practice guides to partnership working, we argue that linking materials to standards can strengthen the value of this research and offer significant, wider benefits. Occupational standards can provide the "glue" to draw together human resource and organisational strategies. They offer a response, eg, to the call in "Wiring It Up" for appraisal systems which are capable recognising and rewarding team/ partnership effort. There can be strong similarities between needs and issues in inter-department team working *within* local authorities (and within central government) to those experienced in partnerships.

A collaborative project on partnership standards - though likely open to the difficulties faced by any partnership - offers a means of bringing together different interests and

helping to ensure that there is more of the “common language” frequently called for by people working in partnership. There will always be differences in value, perspectives and language amongst different interests, but there is some scope to bridge gaps and facilitate partnership working on the ground. (An example where national interests have come together to facilitate partnership working exists in the case of the National Protocol on Lifelong Learning Partnerships.)

4) *promoting learning partnerships & capacity building*

We have found growing interest in how partners can learn to work better together, either in specific partnership settings or across sectors. However, there are still relatively few examples (especially in relation to the ubiquity of partnership working) of structured, joint initiatives to raise skills, knowledge and understanding and improve processes of working together. There are opportunities, too, for cross-fertilisation with experience in the private sector with strategic alliances and the like - where there are many similarities in the current state of the art in partnership working.

There is a need to promote good practice in how you help partnerships develop as “learning partnerships” and in promoting learning across sectors. This fits with the growing attention to “community capacity building” and the need, stressed repeatedly, for public agencies and representatives to learn *with* members of local communities, rather than viewing this concept as something that other people need. Again it is vital that LGNTO plays a full part in national developments in this field, in conjunction with other interests.

Annex A Benefits of Occupational Standards

POTENTIAL BENEFITS FOR INDIVIDUALS

- a more rewarding job
- increased capabilities
- career development

by offering

- framework for developing skills and knowledge
- defined professional standards and good practice
- clarification of what's expected of you by others
- more objective basis for staff appraisal
- flexible routes to learning and qualifications
- increased awareness of how you fit into your organisation (and its partnerships) as a whole

POTENTIAL BENEFITS FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- improved organisational results and staff effectiveness
- more success in attracting resources

by offering

- means to work through organisational objectives to job requirements
- competence framework for the whole organisation
- training designed to meet “real work” requirements
- means to bring together good practice in people management: recruitment, performance management and learning

POTENTIAL BENEFITS FOR PARTNERSHIPS

- improved partnership effectiveness
- greater cohesiveness and partner commitment

by offering

- a common language
- means to
 - ◆ clarify partner roles and responsibilities
 - ◆ review partnership strengths and weaknesses
 - ◆ create opportunities for partners learning together
- tool to help
 - ◆ new partnerships determine what they need to do
 - ◆ existing partnerships agree what needs to be improved

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PARTNERS

- codified good practice
- basis for continuous improvement

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