

Leeds City Council
Review of Partnership Working

09 October 2005



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1 Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

Partnership working is continuing to evolve and making them work effectively is one of the biggest challenges facing all local authorities. The Council has many partnership arrangements with different bodies in different sectors. This review focuses on the newly formed District Partnerships and Community and Equipment Services (CES) Pooled Budget. The review considers the extent to which the partnership arrangements reflect the strategic direction of the Council and the degree to which effective governance and performance management arrangements have been established.

1.2 Key Findings

The Council has a corporate strategy in order to achieve its aims. Accordingly, all actions it undertakes should contribute to achieving its aims. Therefore, the purpose of making partnership arrangements is to aide the Council to achieve its aims. The District Partnerships' aims are interlinked with the Leeds Vision, however the CES Pooled Budget's aims are not interlinked with the Council's aims and objectives. Whilst it is clear the activities of the CES are beneficial to service users, it is not clear how the CES actually feeds into the Council's or Social Service's strategy.

Ultimately the District Partnerships are designed to help the communities which they serve, however since their creation there has been little community engagement. Whilst the District Partnerships' forward Action Plans do contain a section on community engagement, an increased emphasis on community engagement should be designed to improve user focus, which is increasingly being seen as important.

In accordance with good practice all five District Partnerships and the CES Pooled Budget have established and documented governance arrangements, including membership, meeting arrangements and terms of reference. However, these arrangements need to be regularly reviewed to ensure they remain relevant and the partnerships are organised and operating in a manner that is conducive to them achieving their aims and objectives.

Performance measurement is the key tool the partnerships have to be able to evidence improvements in services and outcomes for service users. Whilst each of the District Partnerships have developed a series of Action Plans with a number of actions, these are not SMART. In a number of cases the actions are not measurable. Further to this, there is no link to how the action will improve the service outcomes of users. The CES Pooled Budget is in the process of developing a performance framework, and it is important that this development includes output based performance information which is able to demonstrate improvements in service outcomes for users.

There are no formal reporting arrangements between the five District Partnerships or CES Pooled Budget and the Council. Whilst there are Council Officers and Members involved in these partnership arrangements there needs to be a formal link between the Council and the different partnership arrangements. This will help improve ownership of the partnership arrangement within the Council.

1.3 Key Learning Points

- The Council should ensure all partnership arrangements they are involved in have documented how they will aide the Council in achieving their aims and objectives.
- The District Partnerships need to deliver their commitment to community engagement as expressed in their Action Plans.
- The Council needs to establish arrangements to regularly review partnerships to ensure they comply with good practice and are achieving the purpose they were set up for.
- All planned outcomes and outputs should be measurable and the performance management arrangements should try to measure improvements in service outcomes.

- The Council should ensure partnerships have a reporting mechanism to the Council, this should improve the accountability of partnership arrangements the Council has.

1.4 Way forward

We will discuss the findings of the review with officers to agree an action plan to address the key issues going forward. In addition, we shall continue to work with officers to constructively challenge the delivery of action plans

2 Introduction

2.1 Background

Leeds City Council (the Council) has a history of partnership working and the 2003 Corporate Assessment report commented that *“the Council has continued to build on its good partnership working as the Leeds Initiative has developed and has made good use of partnerships at an operational level to improve services to local communities”*. Partnership working is continuing to evolve and making them work effectively is one of the biggest challenges facing all local authorities.

The Leeds Initiative, the local strategic partnership, is the strategic forum that maps out all of the Council’s partnership objectives. The Council has many partnership arrangements with different bodies in different sectors. This review considers the newly formed District Partnerships and Community and Equipment Services (CES) Pooled Budget.

2.2 Objectives and scope of the review

The scope of our audit is to:

- review the extent to which partnership aims reflect the Council’s strategic direction/vision and the arrangements to develop partnerships (Section 3);
- review the governance arrangements around partnerships, specifically, the agreement and documentation of appropriate aims, the agreement of working arrangements, and the agreement of appropriate exit procedures. (Section 4);
- review the degree to which District Partnerships and the CES Pooled Budget have made reporting arrangements with the Council and also to review the degree to which they have arrangements to demonstrate in the future they are delivering improved services (Section 5);

- review the good practice partnership working arrangements already established at the Council and most appropriate methods for promoting these further within the Council (Throughout); and
- highlight links between use of resources and partnership to support preparations for CPA 2005 (Throughout).

2.3 Audit approach

Our approach has been to:

- review key documents such as the District Partnership Action Plans, Partnership Agreements, Vision of Leeds and the Council's Corporate Plan;
- interview key officers, including all District Partnership Area Managers and the CES Service Manager; and
- apply various audit tools assessing specific issues.

2.4 Acknowledgements

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those staff at the Council who have supported this review.

3 Strategic overview and development of partnerships

3.1 Introduction

This section reviews the extent to which the District Partnership and CES Pooled Budget aims reflect the Council's strategic direction/vision and the arrangements to develop partnerships.

3.2 Background to the District Partnerships

The five District Partnerships have been formed under the umbrella of Leeds Initiative, the Local Strategic Partnership with the ultimate aim of translating the Vision for Leeds into actions on the ground. The District Partnerships represent five geographic wedges of the City and match the Council's Area Management Committee wedges.

The Vision for Leeds has three key aims, these are:

- Going up in a league as a city - making Leeds an internationally competitive city, the best place in the country to live, work and learn, with a high quality of life for everyone.
- Narrowing the gap between the most disadvantaged people and communities and the rest of the city.
- Developing Leeds' role as a regional capital, contributing to the national economy as a competitive European city, supported by a region that is becoming increasingly prosperous.

Each District Partnership has an action plan which is their contribution to Leeds Vision. These action plans have also been approved by the Leeds Initiative Board.

3.3 Background to the CES Partnership

The CES partnership has been in operation in Leeds over three years however, in 2004/2005 due to central government requirements the arrangement became a Pooled Budget. The Pooled Budget has a Section 31 Partnership Agreement which is the legal agreement that establishes and constitutes the arrangement. In 2004/2005 the Pooled Budget received

funding of £853,000 which it used to hold, deliver, collect and refurbish a range of equipment, to enable individuals to live at home independently.

3.4 Strategic fit

The Vision for Leeds has eight themes; these are shown in the table below. Our review of the five District Partnership Action Plans identified that the Plans had been structured to follow the eight themes of the Vision. For each theme in the Action Plan there is:

- an overall vision statement for Leeds (taken from the Leeds Vision);
- the specific local priorities identified and agreed by the District Partnership; and
- the actions identified and agreed by the District Partnership.

A review of the priorities and actions identified they were organised in the correct vision theme. This, as required by good practice, demonstrates there is a strategic fit between the Leeds Vision and District Partnerships' Action Plans.

Table 1: Leeds Vision Themes

Leeds Vision Themes	
Harmonious and Safer Communities	Learning
Thriving Places	Enterprise and Economy
Environment	Culture
Transport	Health and Wellbeing

Our review of the pooled budget documentation for the CES identified that the aims and objectives were based on Department of Health guidance and there were no links to the Council's strategic direction or Social Services' Business Plan. As discussed above good practice requires partnership arrangements to be aligned to the organisation's strategic direction.

Recommendation 1

The Council should ensure all partnership arrangements are aligned to the Council's strategic direction. Further to this, the Council should document how the CES Pooled Budget contributes to the Council's strategic direction.

3.5 Development of Partnership Members

The District Partnerships have all now developed as partnerships. However, it is important to ensure that the District Partnerships used appropriate methods to develop, in particular in identifying others members who are to be a part of the Partnership. Development of partnership arrangements in terms of governance and structure are also important and are dealt with in Section 4.

All District Partnership Area Managers commented that Leeds Initiative had given them a "free hand" in developing the partnerships within each District. Each partnership includes representatives from the following organisations/groups:

- Primary Care Trusts;
- Arms Length Management Organisations (for Housing Stock);

- Education Leeds;
- Leeds Initiative;
- Inner and Outer Area Committees;
- West Yorkshire Police; and
- Social Services.

A number of other organisations/sectors/groups are also represented on a number of District Partnerships but not on all partnerships, these include, Jobcentre Plus, Leeds Voice, local employers/business representatives and further/higher education facilities. Whilst the omission of these groups may be reasonable when considering the Districts' demographics and issues, the Partnerships should keep under review the possible organisations/sectors/groups that could be included as representatives.

Recommendation 2

The District Partnerships should keep under review the membership of their group and regularly consider whether the right members are involved for the Partnerships to deliver their aims and objectives.

The CES partnership between the Council and the City's Health Sector has developed over a number of years. However, due to central government requirements, this arrangement had to become a pooled budget.

The requirement to form a pooled budget in 2004/2005 only required the Council and City's Health Sector bodies to be involved. Therefore, those partners that were legally required to be involved are involved. In addition to this the Partnership Board also contains voluntary members from various groups, such as William Merrit Disabled Living Centre, Voluntary Action and Interagency Group and also service users. This inclusion of these groups and service users complies with good practice, which states that the inclusion of service users will help all partners to understand the complete service from service design to delivery and also obtain the experiences of service users to better understand needs of service users.

3.6 Community engagement

Ultimately it is the community that the District Partnerships are working for; however in the first 12 months of existence there has been little community engagement by any of the District Partnerships. Although in a number of District Partnerships the intention was to focus on service providers and not the communities, and the inclusion of groups such as Leeds Voice and elected Members has resulted in some community engagement, this is not as significant as expected in a process where the ultimate aims are for the benefit of the Districts' communities. One of the important focuses for CPA 2005 is user focus; increased community engagement should help improve community focus provided it is followed through correctly.

However, the District Partnerships' have recognised this and Action Plans contain a section on community engagement going forward into 2005/06 and 2006/07.

Recommendation 3

The District Partnerships need to ensure their commitment to community engagement in their Action Plans is delivered.

4 Partnership governance arrangements

4.1 Introduction

This section considers the governance arrangements around partnerships, specifically, the agreement and documentation of appropriate aims, the agreement of working arrangements, and the agreement of appropriate exit procedures.

4.2 Background

For the District Partnerships each partnership was able to determine its own working arrangements and structure, whilst undertaking the process of developing an Action Plan and then ensuring it is delivered.

For the CES Pooled Budget, the partnership has produced a document on service management and development arrangements. These arrangements include aims and outcomes, responsibilities, membership, decision making, meeting arrangements and quality assurance.

4.3 Working arrangements and structure – District Partnerships

The five District Partnerships have all developed different arrangements to manage the partnerships; the different structures are described in the table below.

Table 2: District Partnership working arrangements

West Leeds District Partnership	Executive group with all partners, supported by a Core Group with key officers. The structure includes sub groups on key themes that report to the Executive/Core Group
South Leeds District Partnership	Partnership Board with all partners, supported by a Core Group with key officers. The structure includes sub groups on key themes that report to the Partnership Board/Core Group.
East Leeds District Partnership	Partnership Board with all partners, supported by an Executive Group with key officers. The structure also includes Partnership Groups (sub groups) on key themes that report to the Partnership Board/Executive Group.
North West Leeds District Partnership	Executive group with all partners, supported by a Chief Officers Support Group with key officers. The structure also includes sub groups on key themes that report back to the Executive/Chief Officers Support Group.
North East Leeds District Partnership	Executive where all partners are represented, with satellite partnerships on key themes.

In addition to the structure the following arrangements have been made for the different partnerships:

- Frequency of meetings;
- Selecting Chairs; and

- Composition of various groups/sub groups and boards.

As specified by good practice the arrangements above have been documented and agreed by the different District Partnerships' various Partnership Board/Executive Board/Core Groups.

4.4 Working arrangements and structure – CES Pooled Budget

The Pooled Budget highest membership level is the Partnership Board. The Partnerships Board has an Executive and Finance Group. Both the Board and Group have their governance arrangements in terms of aims and outcomes, responsibilities, membership, reporting and meeting arrangements documented in the Service Management and Development Arrangements document.

The Audit Commission's key lines of enquiry for use of resources specify that all partnership agreements should be subject to review and updating. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's (ODPM) Partnership Assessment Tool also stresses the importance of reviewing partnership arrangements and provides a useful tool to review partnership working. Finally, good practice arrangements at other Council's include regular review of existing partnership arrangements. The Council should ensure such reviews are undertaken to ensure the partnership agreements/arrangements and their subsequent operation are effective for the purposes the partnerships were established.

Recommendation 4

The Council should make arrangements to ensure all partnership arrangements are reviewed to ensure they comply with good practice and partnerships are achieving the outcomes for which they were set up. The review should include, governance arrangements (such as meeting arrangements and membership), performance against aims and objectives and financial health.

4.5 Good practice

Section 4.4 identified that the Council should review their partnership arrangements. In addition to this the Council should actively promote good practice which is already taking place in the Council's current partnerships. This should help increase the awareness of good practice in partnership working.

Recommendation 5

The Council should promote good practice that is already taking place in partnerships which the Council is involved with to other partnerships which involve the Council.

4.6 Aims and objectives

The five District Partnerships have all developed action plans which as well as identifying the actions to deliver the Leeds Vision have also identified a series of district priorities. In developing these actions and priorities the District Partnerships developed terms of reference/aims and objectives of how they were to operate. Commonly found aims and objectives are:

- Agree joint action and resourcing of shared priorities;
- Co-ordinate action to secure additional/external funding for investment in the area;
- Share research or carry out joint research on relevant issues; and
- Develop joint plans to contribute to the Leeds Vision.

These aims and objectives appear to have been developed by each group through advice and support of Leeds Initiative. Review of the different District Partnerships' aims and objectives (terms of reference) found these to be relevant and complete for the purposes of bringing different organisations together. The aims have also been agreed by the District Partnerships' various different Partnership Boards/Executive Board/Core Groups.

4.7 Exit Arrangements

Good practice states that partnership arrangements should identify and specify exit arrangements, for when the partners want to leave the partnership arrangements or for when the partnership has achieved its purpose. At this stage we recognise there is not a significant financial risk with the District Partnerships in their current form. Although, as the importance of these partnerships and financial commitments to the partnerships increase the arrangements should also start to consider appropriate exit procedure to mitigate non delivery, reputational and financial risk if the partnerships begin to fail.

The CES Pooled Budget has an annual agreement that is made between the Council and the City's Health Sector, this is called the Section 31 Partnership Agreement. This agreement includes extensive provisions for termination of the agreement.

Recommendation 6

The District Partnerships' arrangements should include appropriate exit procedures. Appropriate exit procedures usually include: under what circumstances the partnership will cease to exist (e.g. when the objectives have been achieved); how to terminate membership of the partnership and under what grounds; arrangements to deal with existing service delivery; and financial arrangements (e.g. how unspent contributions to the partnership are to be used and how accumulated resources are to be divided).

5 Performance management

5.1 Introduction

This section considers the degree to which District Partnerships and the CES Pooled Budget have made arrangements to demonstrate in the future they are delivering improved services. This section also reviews the reporting arrangements that the partnerships have with the Council.

5.2 Background

The District Partnerships have developed Action Plans structured under the themes in the Leeds Initiative's Vision for Leeds. The Action Plans include:

- Actions to deliver local priorities;
- Relevant priority;
- Planned outputs/outcomes;
- Timescales; and
- Lead organisation and key partner.

5.3 Performance measurement arrangements for the District Partnerships

The Action Plans, as described above, contain some of the relevant information for SMART review of the actions. However, the Action Plans' planned outputs/outcomes do not have the relevant measurement information in a significant number of cases. Also there is a lack of a link to how the action will improve the outcomes for service users/citizens. For example, the following are planned outputs/outcomes selected from the different District Partnerships' Action Plans:

- Towns centres of Morley and Rothwell (to become) more economically viable;
- Increased hits on East Leeds website;
- Improved pride in the district; and
- Raise awareness of employment opportunities within the community and address employment barriers.

Good practice states that outcomes and outputs need measurable targets, otherwise it is difficult to judge whether the actions have been a success. Further to this, actions should be measured against outcomes that demonstrate how they have improved service outcomes for users or life outcomes for citizens.

To demonstrate the District Partnerships have been a success it will be important for the partnerships to identify improvements in service outcomes for users and life outcomes for citizens. Also if the District Partnerships are looking for greater financial commitments from key partners, being able to demonstrate improvements in service outcomes and life outcomes will improve their chances as partners will see that District Partnerships do have an impact. Good practice at other Councils and good practice guides have identified successful performance measurement as being a key to recognising the importance of partnerships.

Recommendation 7

All planned outputs and outcomes should be measurable and should be focused on improving service/life outcomes.

5.4 Performance management arrangements for the CES Pooled Budget

The CES Pooled Budget created a working group to consider quality assurance which also includes performance management issues. The group is still in the process of developing and implementing these arrangements. The CES Pooled Budget needs to ensure the performance management arrangements are able to demonstrate how the Pooled Budget is improving service outcomes for users.

Recommendation 8

The CES Pooled Budget needs to ensure the performance management arrangements are able to measure service outcomes for users.

5.5 Reporting arrangements

Progress reporting on the Action Plans occurs at all levels of the District Partnerships through the relevant Executive/Partnership Board/Core Group meetings for all five partnerships. Progress reports are also made to the Leeds Initiative Narrowing the Gap Board on a quarterly basis. However, there is no separate reporting to the Council. Whilst the District Partnerships are not “owned” by the Council, since one of the key partners is the Council, there should be a mechanism for partnerships or Council Officers on the partnership to report progress to the Council. It is also relevant that the work of partnerships contributes to achieving some of the Council’s objectives. Further to this, all the District Partnerships use some Council resources (staff, accommodation and other small financial allocations), and therefore the Council should identify the output which it receives from the partnerships.

The Partnership Board for the CES Pooled Budget has representation from the Council's Officers and Members, however there is no formal reporting mechanism for the CES Pooled Budget to report to Council.

Recommendation 9

There should be a mechanism for the District Partnerships and the CES Pooled Budget to report to the Council on a regular specified basis.

Appendix 1

Recommendations and Action Plan



	*** Significant residual risk	** Some residual risk	* Little residual risk		
	Recommendation		Priority	Management response	Responsibility and timescale
1	The Council should ensure all partnership arrangements are aligned to the Council's strategic direction. Further to this, the Council should document how the CES Pooled Budget contributes to the Council's strategic direction.		**	A review of the Leeds Community Equipment Service (LCES) partnership agreement and associated service and development arrangements has been instigated. This review is being led by the Council's Legal Services Department. LCES are contributing to the review.	Legal Services – end of January 2006.
2	The District Partnerships should keep under review the membership of their group and regularly consider whether the right members are involved for the Partnerships to deliver their aims and objectives.		**	This is covered in the District Partnership Terms of Reference, but needs to be raised at District Partnership Annual General Meetings to ensure it takes place.	Area Managers by June 2006.
3	The District Partnerships need to ensure their commitment to community engagement in their Action Plans is delivered.		**	This is re-enforced through links with Area Committees and the Narrowing the Gap Executive.	District Partnership performance to be monitored through Narrowing the Gaps reports to have begun by September 2005.
4	The Council should make arrangements to ensure all partnership arrangements are reviewed to ensure they comply with good practice and partnerships are achieving the outcomes for which they were set up. The review should include, governance arrangements (such as		**	In respect of the District Partnerships. Area Managers are to hold bi-monthly meetings with District Partnership Chairs, the Chief Regeneration Officer and the	Chief Regeneration Officer by January 2006.

	meeting arrangements and membership), performance against aims and objectives and financial health.		Director of the Leeds Initiative. In respect of LCES. A review is underway as stated in the response to recommendation one. In addition, it is intended to produce an annual report at the end of the financial year which will include an action plan for the service for the following year.	Legal Service and LCES Service Manager by end of March 2006.
5	The Council should promote good practice that is already taking place in partnerships which the Council is involved with to other partnerships which involve the Council.	* *	This should be linked to the Core Cities programme run by the Chief Executive's Department.	Director of Leeds Initiative by April 2006.
6	The District Partnerships' arrangements should include appropriate exit procedures. Appropriate exit procedures usually include: under what circumstances the partnership will cease to exist (e.g. when the objectives have been achieved); how to terminate membership of the partnership and under what grounds; arrangements to deal with existing service delivery; and financial arrangements (e.g. how unspent contributions to the partnership are to be used and how accumulated resources are to be divided).	* *	The Performance Management Framework for District Partnerships allows for this. Area Managers to review and monitor at Districts Partnership meetings and report at District Partnership Annual General Meetings.	Chief Regeneration Officer to set up by June 2006.
7	All planned outputs and outcomes should be measurable and should be focused on improving service/life outcomes.	* * *	The Performance Management Framework is in place and District Partnership reports go to Narrowing the Gap Executive. The Chief Regeneration Officer will monitor this.	Chief Regeneration Officer to monitor from September 2005.
8	The CES Pooled Budget needs to ensure the performance management arrangements are able to measure service outcomes for users.	* * *	LCES to collate all existing performance information and link with new measures being drawn up by the Performance Management Group to produce	LCES Performance Management Group – ongoing (existing information), from April 2006 (existing and

			performance/quality framework for the service.	additional measures).
9	There should be a mechanism for the District Partnerships and the CES Pooled Budget to report to the Council on a regular specified basis.	* *	<p>In respect of District Partnerships, the process is being done through Neighbourhoods & Housing Departmental Management Team, Leeds City Council Corporate Management Team and also Area Committees and Scrutiny Committee and will be monitored by the Chief Regeneration Officer to see if it is working correctly.</p> <p>In respect of LCES this process is to be drawn up as part of the review mentioned in the response to recommendation one.</p>	<p>Chief Regeneration Officer – ongoing.</p> <p>Legal Services – end of January 2006.</p>