



Collaborative working

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What is 'collaborative working?'

A mutually beneficial working relationship, where two (or more) parties are able to deliver more as a result of that relationship.

The 'more' can be in terms of money, or other resources e.g. staff or venues, or better working practice through skills and experience sharing.

Strategic partnership

NHS Westminster as AMF's accountable body.

Delivery partnership

Churchill Gardens Primary School as partners in
AMF's after-school group

AMF

- Reaching - out BME community
- Improve the health and well-being of BME families
- Creating jobs opportunities for AMF users (crèche workers)
- Reduce cost of delivery
- Share information

Churchill Gardens School

- Provide services for hard-to-reach community
- Build relation with local community
- Diversify services users
- Share expertise
- Share information

Delivery partnership

Carers Network Westminster as partner in AMF's
BME carers support group

AMF

- Outreach to BME carers to engage them in diverse activities (average 15 carers/year)
- BME carers supported, empowered, entitlement aware
- Share expertise with other organisations
- Reduce cost of delivery

CNW

- Reaching out and meet up with BME carers and provide support to them
- Update BME carers with any new services including the emergency card, 'Carers Week' etc..
- Communication with BME carers facilitated via AMF bilingual workers

The good, the bad and the ugly

- **Positives**

Can get so much more -
'two heads better than
one'

Examples of the 'more' -
skills, users, funding,
added value e.g.
venues, databases...

Even the bad experiences
are useful learning

- **Negatives**

Different agendas

Hard work

Time consuming

Finally, our recommendations based on our experiences

Do

- Communicate with your partners
- Plan, stick to your aims but be flexible
- Be proactive
- Share success and failure
- Be honest
- Build relationships with your partners
- Commit; do what you say you're going to do
- Acknowledge
- Reflect

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My experience of working in partnership

In the 14 years I have been working in Westminster, there are some organisations I have got to know well and done some partnership work with: we have

1. similar values and services but for different client groups
2. the same client groups but different and/or complementary services
3. similar client groups but with different expressed needs and similar but different services
4. similar client groups but different service
5. had a fundamental belief that working in partnership was the right way to go

What about different or shared organisational culture?

Developing work together based on

1. a longstanding relationship
2. common interest
3. your motivation for working in partnership
4. common client group
5. similar service
6. overlap of work
7. working in the same locality
8. overlap of geographic location
9. economy of scale
10. directive from funders or from government

11.the will to make working in partnership successful

Developing work together based on

1. a longstanding relationship

current development of partnership with other advocacy schemes – I had worked individually with three of them previously: one of those partners had worked with two of the others as well as myself previously

2. common interest

both are providing advocacy; both or all working in same geographic location: both have similar objective

3. your motivation for working in partnership

by combining your resources you will be strong enough to compete with outsiders and maintain a local service for local people

4. common client group

both are working with older people

5. similar service

both providing advocacy:

6. overlap of work

providing information advice and advocacy: both providing welfare benefits or housing advice

7. working in the same locality

We were suddenly called to a meeting with 5 other organisations working within a specific geographic area with the brief: there is money available for this area: in order to get it you have to come up with a plan that demonstrates partnership working

8. overlap of geographic location

Age concern Camden and Advocacy plus both provide service in Covent Garden and in Fitzrovia

9. economy of scale

to combine office space and administration may reduce the rent and support costs by a third

10. The will to make working in partnership successful

11. directive from funders or from government

We submitted an expression of interest –and discovered that another Westminster organisation had too. The commissioner contacted us both and instructed us to put together a tender in partnership

With so much work going out to public tender and large organisations with their economy of scale coming in and undercutting local organisations, voluntary sector organisations are being pressurised into partnership working

What makes a good partnership? It's a bit like a marriage

It sometimes feels like the pros and cons of an arranged marriage versus a love match or a shotgun wedding

Never think you are going to be able to change someone once you are married

The question is often what happens after the honeymoon

How do you get on with the in-laws: all those mother in law jokes: I did some work with an organisation and we two directors agreed but the staff did not work well together

What about second marriages – how do your children respond to the sudden arrival of unannounced siblings: it's not just the chief officers who need to work together – it's the staff

What do you do if your partners do not come up to expectation

What happens when you have your first major disagreement or quarrel – so what are your sanctions if one partner doesn't perform

What happens to the children if you divorce – what happens to the money or the house

What are the pros and cons between working with one organisation and a group of organisations – how does this relate to having a number of wives or communal living

In this world it's OK to be a bigamist and have a number of partners from different projects: you just need to ensure that you make each one feel that you care for them and that they are vital to your well being

In a good marriage

- both partners contribute something the other is willing to give or share and
- both partners want something the other is willing to give or share
- partners trust and respect each other
- you have cultures that want to merge

The bottom line is the need for agreed rules for working together – the jargon is protocols

It is important to have a lead organisation – some rare co-operatives are successful but for us lesser mortals it is important that

- a named person takes the lead or the partners employ someone to co-ordinate the group and gives that person authority
- that organisation's trustees are aware of their responsibility, that so that responsibility does not fall into a big whole

What are the options for partnership?

Formal partnership

Informal partnership - Come together as and when the need arises

A separate organisation – a special purpose vehicle known as SPV

Throw open to the group for discussions

What are you looking for in a partner?

What do you think are the pitfalls?

How do you police and how do you please your partners?

What do you want out of a partnership – is this potential partner likely to give it to you