Research Report

Leading Partnerships for 14–19 Education Provision

Professor Ann R J Briggs, Ian Hall, Dr David Mercer, Dr Fay Smith, Trevor Swann and Chris Falzon
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The project team comprised: Professor Ann Briggs, Chris Falzon, Ian Hall, Dr David Mercer, Dr Fay Smith, Trevor Swann and Kate Theakston.
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Executive Summary

This research project investigates the collaborative leadership of learning partnerships for 14-19 educational provision. Educational leadership research and theory largely focus upon the leadership of individual institutions; partnerships are a key element of current UK Government policy for education, and the leadership of such partnerships is little understood. The research team itself is a partnership: of academic, research and Leadership Centre staff at Newcastle University, and their Project Reference Group which is drawn from Local Authorities (LAs) Local Learning and Skills Councils (LLSCs), schools and colleges, and the Connexions service.

The investigation analyses who leads the partnerships, for whom, and the nature of the leadership within the partnerships. It explores the tensions between leading within the partnership and leading `one's own' organisation and discusses the outcomes for learners. The final stages of the analysis model firstly the interaction of policy, partnership and leadership, and secondly collaborative leadership.

An initial desk study of academic literature and evaluation and inspection reports which discuss partnership leadership was undertaken. The empirical research comprises four area case studies into the collaborative leadership of 14-19 partnerships, carried out in the North East of England, together with a national survey of the co-ordinators of 102 14-19 learning partnerships.

The data analysis and modelling of key factors offer insight into the collaborative leadership of partnerships. At partnership level, the following factors enable collaborative leadership:

- Alignment of organisational goals
- Strength of common purpose
- Partnership energy
- Mutual trust of partners
- Acceptance of others' leadership
- Pooling of knowledge and expertise
- Benefit to individual partner organisations
- Mutual understanding of partner organisations

Collaborative leadership across multiple organisations at both strategic and operational level may be constrained by personal ambivalence, by power issues between organisations, by issues of resource, and by the differing agendas and cultures of each organisation in the partnership. The mutual trust and tolerance of difference established `around the table' by partnership members cannot easily be translated into mutual trust among the multiple senior and middle leaders involved in the partnership. Partnerships are led by the needs of young people, yet they are not included in the framework for collaboration.
The report concludes that 14-19 learning partnerships can succeed if the following factors are addressed. Constraints to effective partnership working can be reduced, and a climate for more strongly collaborative working established.

**At policy level**

- Resource from central Government, with mainstream funding for collaborative activity across different types of organisation.
- Stability of remit for key partnership players such as the LSC and Connexions.
- Modification of the ways in which educational providers are evaluated, to accommodate and encourage partnership activity.
- High-level support and publicity for the Specialised Diplomas: the Diplomas themselves need to be a quality product which addresses the range of need among 14-19 year old learners.

**At partnership level**

- Realistic 21st century solutions for partnership provision across wide geographical areas and across busy cities.
- Coherent systems and personalised support for learners to evaluate, take up and succeed in the opportunities open to them.
- Alignment of purpose of partner organisations, and mutual understanding between partners.
- Mutual benefit to partner organisations.

**At leadership level**

- Increased understanding of how collaborative leadership works.
- Acceptance that collaborative leadership works differently from and in tension with leadership of single organisations.
- Involvement in collaborative leadership of leaders at all levels of the organisation, not just senior leaders.
- Involvement of young people in designing the learning pathways open to them.

Professor Ann Briggs
Newcastle University
Introduction

This research was undertaken at a time of intense UK Government pressure for collaborative activity for policy implementation in a range of areas, including education. The White Paper *Learning to Compete* (DfEE, 1997), the Learning and Skills Act of 2000 and the Education Act of 2002, the 14-19 *Education and Skills* White Paper (DfES, 2005) propose collaborative provision of flexible academic and vocational pathways for learners aged 14-19 and the introduction of Specialised Diplomas from September 2008. The expectation of this policy is that non-statutory, voluntary groupings of local learning providers ranging from voluntary sector to schools, FE/HEIs, and others such as local government, Connexions/Careers Service, trade unions, training providers, employers and faith groups will collaborate to provide appropriate learning routes for young people from the age of 14 (Lifelong Learning, 2006). Agencies and institutions which previously worked in parallel, each with their own organisational cultures and structures, are now mandated to converge and work in tandem to address issues of national concern, and to implement new policy. In order to achieve this, institutions need to move from ‘weakly collaborative arrangements’ (Hodgson and Spours 2006) to stronger inter-organisational structures both at strategic and operational level.

Within the context of the provision of education and training for young people aged 14-19, leadership of such partnerships would be difficult, even in a stable policy context. Schools, colleges, work-based learning providers, voluntary agencies and employers each have their own culture, operational systems and professional focus, and within each provider group there are notable differences in organisational purpose and leadership style. There are historic areas of ignorance, rivalry and suspicion between the groups, generated partly by their hitherto parallel existence, by Government policy based upon competition, and a policy-induced focus upon institutional outcomes rather than on longer term progression and achievement for young people. Linked in partnership with the education and training providers and employers are three key national networks: the Local Authorities (LA), the local Learning and Skills Councils (LSC/LSC) and the Connexions service, each of which is currently experiencing fundamental change. Educational provision within LAs has recently undergone substantial reform and reorganisation under the Children Act of 2004, the role of the LSC is currently under review, and the Connexions service is being disaggregated as of 31st March 2007. Thus the two commissioners of 14-19 partnership provision - LA and LSC - and the key agency for supporting young people of this age group through transition are all in a state of flux.

As intimated above, the policy context itself is not stable. Having set in train the partnership working which should lead to the collaborative regional provision of Specialised Diplomas in 2008, a subsequent Government policy statement placed a new imperative upon the provision of an International Baccalaureate (IB) programme of study in each educational authority. Meanwhile, the recently launched Young
Apprenticeship scheme (YA) is experiencing a pleasing level of success. Neither the IB nor the YA has readily apparent links with the Specialised Diploma framework, yet it might be assumed that both will play a strong part in future 14-19 provision. In spite of the imminence of the 2008 launch of the Diplomas, little is known of their content and funding structure, and the outcome of the tendering for the first tranche of provision has only recently been announced, at the end of March 2007. Furthermore, as many respondents to this research comment, a change of national Government could produce a complete change of policy focus.

Within this complex organisational and political context, it is timely to consider the collaborative leadership of the Learning Partnerships for educational provision for 14-19 learners, as set out in the Education and Skills White Paper (DfES, 2005). Collaboration over educational provision is a high-stakes activity. Each young person brings funding to the educational provider who recruits them and successful (and unsuccessful) learning outcomes affect the ‘score’ of the provider on the national league tables. Educational leaders are accountable for the success of their own individual organisation: there are currently no league table scores or funding prizes for collaboration. Under what conditions, therefore, would organisational leaders subside the interest of their own organisation to the interests of the learner and the partnership? Leadership of educational partnerships is under-researched and under-theorised, and the partnerships investigated through this research carry responsibility for the educational achievement, employability and life-skills of the emergent adult population. Understanding leadership within these partnerships is thus a vital national issue.

The research addresses the following CEL Key Research Questions:

1. What are the conditions, processes and consequences of leadership practice in the sector?
2. How are organisational strategies conducted, and what impact do they have?

It focuses principally upon the following CEL Research Themes:

1. The 14-19 agenda
2. Collaborative leadership

It addresses the outcomes of leadership by considering the following CEL Research Theme:

3. The learner’s voice
The project comprises a desk study, a national survey of 14-19 learning partnerships and four area case studies into the collaborative leadership of these partnerships. The intention is to draw upon the experience of as many types of participant as possible, including young people aged 14-19, in order to analyse the nature of partnership leadership, to what extent collaborative leadership between organisations is possible, and what the outcomes are for young people.

The project team within Newcastle University comprises a professor, two lecturers, a research associate, a teaching fellow and the director of the regional Leadership Centre. They are supported by a local Reference Group of Local Authority and Local Learning and Skills Council representatives, school head teachers, a FE college 14-19 co-ordinator and a Connexions representative. The combined strengths and expertise from inside and outside the University enables a range of experience and perspectives to be offered within this investigation.

The project addresses the following questions, within the context of partnerships for 14-19 provision. Within these partnerships:

1. Who leads?
2. For whom?
3. Is a particular type of leadership needed for partnership between organisations to be successful? If so, what does this leadership comprise?
4. What are the tensions between leading the organisation and operating within the partnership?
5. Under what conditions may partnership activity be successfully led?
6. What positive client outcomes are observed in successful partnerships?
Theoretical Context

Policy

The notion of partnerships for education runs through all the major initiatives introduced by the government in recent years, whatever their primary aim (Arnold, 2006). Key examples are the Children Act (2004) which set the Local Authority organisation of education within a partnership of education, social service and health providers, and the establishment of extended schools which follow the pattern of multi-agency provision, offering a range of services based upon the school site. The issues associated with young people and their effective transition to a productive and fulfilling adult life are a current concern of education policy for the 14-19 age group. Underpinning this is a focus upon the principles of inter-agency working and of coherency in meeting the needs of the group as a whole whilst tailoring services around individual young people’s specific needs (Dickinson, 2001).

The educational policy framework for 14-19 year olds relates to provision for learners both before and after the statutory minimum school leaving age, involving multiple webs of partnership for the provision of education, employment and training. From 1997 onwards, with the White Paper *Learning to Compete* (DfEE, 1997), through the Learning and Skills Act of 2000 and the Education Act of 2002, to the 14-19 *Education and Skills* White Paper (DfES, 2005), there is an emphasis upon the collaborative provision of flexible pathways for academic and vocational provision for learners aged 14-19. Examples of collaborative initiatives to date have been the Increased Flexibility and Pathfinder Programmes, both designed to enable collaboratively provided learning routes for young people.

Regional Learning Partnerships, which support education strategy and collaboration between providers at a regional level, were established from 1999. In mid-2006 there were 104 such partnerships, which aimed to ‘promote a new culture of provider collaboration across sectors (schools, FE, work-based learning and adult and community learning) and to rationalise the plethora of existing local partnership arrangements covering post-16 learning’ (Lifelong Learning, 2006). They have carried out their work within an almost constantly changing policy environment which has had an impact on their development, particularly in relation to clarity of purpose, credibility and capacity (Rodger et al, 2003). Ramsden et al (2004) comment that Learning Partnerships have been one further element in the ever shifting landscape of post-16 education and training and its institutional structures, and that they represent a tendency for central government to exert more control in an attempt to improve coherence. Nested within these partnerships are local voluntary groupings for collaboration over 14-19 education and training provision, referred to in this document as 14-19 learning partnerships.
Partnership

The 2005-6 Annual Report of the Nuffield Review into 14-19 Education (Hayward et al, 2006) highlights the tensions produced by the climate of competition between educational providers, and by funding mechanisms which reward recruitment and attainment. In spite of the rhetoric of collaboration, current government policies ‘incentivise individual institutional self-interest and do not sufficiently stress collective thinking and area planning’ (Hayward et al, 2006: 39). The authors of the Review comment further that the measures in the government’s 14-19 Implementation Plan (DfES, 2003) which are intended to address collaboration ‘remain weak in comparison with the measures…that encourage competition’ (Hayward et al, 2006: 40). They consider that a move from weakly collaborative systems to more strongly collaborative systems is needed to address the deep seated practical and cultural problems which are currently in evidence in 14-19 provision. In particular, strongly collaborative systems of partnership are needed in order to:

a. address disaffection among learners through reforming secondary education as a whole;

b. pool local area resources efficiently, and

c. reduce social segregation which is currently exacerbated by funding differences.

If partnership is to be successful, there must be strong incentives for the partners to collaborate. As Arnold (2006) notes, wherever partnership is discussed, and in whatever forum, there is general agreement on its principal benefits. In the 14-19 education context, partnership makes individual learning pathways possible, through which a student’s needs and aspirations can be met by drawing upon a wide range of expertise and specialisms. They also potentially offer local economies for a cost-effective and coherent curriculum. However, there are both cultural and practical barriers to partnership. Rudd et al (2004), investigating a range of types of partnership between education providers, report a fear of the unknown, where partnership working requires staff to work in new ways, and be open to perceived ‘scrutiny’ by others. They report that competition between providers, fostered by previous government policy, has hindered collaboration, and that personalities and previous cultures may not have been conducive to partnership working. Similar issues were earlier noted by Doherty and Harland (2001), who report problems for partners in sustaining membership and commitment, and in effecting changes in the professional practice of different partners.

The literature offers some evidence of successful partnership working. Rodger et al reported in 2003 that over the previous three and a half years the national network of Learning Partnerships had generally added value across a significant number of localities, and had helped to lay the ground for key local interventions such as Area Inspections and Area Reviews. They observed clear evidence of outcomes and impact...
through better information, understanding and awareness amongst partner organisations. Significantly, collaboration over joint educational provision was the area of least progress. Rodger et al conclude that there is no ‘single’ or ‘right’ model of Learning Partnership delivery, and that the most effective Learning Partnerships are not simply ‘delivery machines.’ They observe that some of the key characteristics associated with effective partnership delivery are:

- a strong management and coordination team;
- clear vision and strong will to get things done;
- effective structures for internal communication, and
- an ethos of inclusiveness

A report prepared for the DfES in 2003 identified good collaborative practice, for example, in the Tyne and Wear Learning Partnership, where 14-19 provision was identified as ‘a key area where we’ve all worked together.’ Success was attributed to the partners’ conscious efforts to achieve equity and commonality, which ‘contrasts with the hierarchical and positional power-based roles and relationships so often in evidence’ (DfES, 2003: 45).

Success for partnerships appears therefore to be balanced upon a policy-sharpened knife-edge, where incentives for collaboration may be more theoretical than real. This raises questions as to how educational leaders within partnerships are to lead and be led for the common good, and how they may balance the interests of their own organisation with the interests of the region, the learner and the partnership.

**Leadership**

Leadership within this context is clearly a complex activity. Senior, middle and first-line leaders in each organisation may be expected to lead educational provision to the benefit of their own learners and their own organisation. Where there is collaborative provision for individual learners, or where a network of choice is offered collaboratively to learners, the focus of the leadership activity shifts. Within a partnership, in order to avoid hierarchical and positional power-based roles, leadership may fall to a trusted impartial co-ordinator, as indicated by Rodger et al (2003). Current research (Rodger et al, 2003; Rudd et al, 2004) suggests that the motivating force may be provided by a strong chair or co-ordinator, but that partners take a shared leadership role and have joint responsibility for outcomes.

This enquiry therefore explores new conceptual areas in educational leadership research. Theories of leadership developed for single organisations (e.g., Leithwood et al, 1999), especially distributed leadership (e.g., Gronn, 2003) have relevance for partnerships; distributed leadership offers a model of shared authority and shared
responsibility for outcomes. There is evidence of distributed leadership in the 14-19 context, where Arnold (2006) notes that some partnerships have gone beyond the notion of common curricula and shared resources, and have argued for common accountability in terms both of inspection and performance data.

There is an argument that leadership may be systemic (Ogawa and Bossert, 1997), flowing through - and in this case across - organisations in order to carry out the activities. In a partnership, the leadership system encompasses many organisational cultures: could leadership ‘flow across’ such boundaries? Rudd et al (2004) observe that in effective partnerships, stakeholders have a strong sense of ownership of the partnership; this involves a ‘bottom-up’ approach to decision-making, with everyone’s views taken into account, and trust, honesty and openness between the partners, with a realistic acknowledgement of their individual strengths and weaknesses. This kind of partnership resembles a ‘radix’ organisation (Schneider, 2002), which operates through strategic alliances between organisations, has fluid and permeable boundaries, and an emphasis on lateral relationships across functions. For the ‘weakly collaborative’ arrangements to become more strongly collaborative, collective leadership has to encompass institutional difference and take account of inter-partner tensions and rivalries.

At the heart of this research lie the concepts of partnership collaboration and leadership. Typologies for collaboration have been offered, for example by Kent and Medway Local Learning and Skills Council (2004); and Hodgson and Spours, (2006). What this project seeks to identify is the relationship between policy, collaborative partnership activity and leadership, and to identify the nature and purpose, and to some extent the effect, of collaborative leadership (if indeed such leadership exists).
Research Methods

The approach to these research issues is interpretivist: it acknowledges the complexity of partnership activity, the fact that each partnership has unique contextual properties, and that there is no pre-conceived model of partnership to test out. A sequential approach was taken to data collection, in which both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were applied to the issues. Initial regional investigation, together with a desk study, served to inform four regional case studies in the North East of England. Findings from both the desk study and the case study were tested out in a national questionnaire survey of partnership co-ordinators and chairs. The three main methods (desk study, case study and survey) are described below:

**Desk Study**

A search was undertaken of Government legislation, policy documents and guidance on the collaborative provision of education and training for young people aged 14-19, to identify themes for data collection and analysis. Academic studies of collaborative educational provision for this age group were identified, and the key issues noted. Commissioned evaluation studies of partnerships and inspection reports by Government agencies were likewise consulted. The publications focused largely upon partnership provision for 16-19 year olds, and to a smaller extent upon 14-19 provision. These papers to some extent discuss leadership problems within partnerships, and offer various typologies for partnership, but none is of itself a study of partnership leadership. This work, which underpinned the data collection and analysis, is reported in the *Theoretical context* above.

A second aim of the desk study was to locate respondents for the questionnaire and identify suitable case study partnerships. This was a particularly difficult task. The overarching framework of 104 regional Learning Partnerships, set up in 1999, appears to be disintegrating, and the local 14-19 partnerships were originally ‘nested’ within them. A significant number of regional co-ordinators who were contacted initially in August and October 2006 were no longer in post in December, making it difficult to identify local 14-19 partnerships and their co-ordinators, either at a national level for the questionnaire or at a local level for the case study. The achieved sample is described in the *Questionnaire* and *Case Study* sub-sections below.

The third aim of the desk study - which included informal interviews, both face-to-face and by telephone - was to obtain further information at a personal level about the operation of 14-19 learning partnerships before data collection began. Key people involved in 14-19 provision, who had assisted in the search for respondents and case areas, provided background information which enabled the question proformas to be developed. Several of the local informants to the desk study were then more formally involved in the research as the project Reference Group.
Case Study

Case studies were chosen as the principal research tool, as they allowed leadership issues within the partnerships to be investigated in some depth from a number of perspectives. As no two partnerships are alike, contextually or operationally, multiple case studies (Yin, 1989) enabled the research team to identify leadership issues which were common across the partnerships and issues which might be specific to certain operational contexts or partnership composition.

The North East of England with its sub-regions of Northumberland, Durham, Tyne and Wear and Tees Valley was adopted as the case study region. This offered convenience of access and a mix of urban and rural sub-regions, a feature which is significant to partnership working. Rural case study partnerships for 14-19 provision were sought in Northumberland and Durham, and urban partnerships in Tyne and Wear and Tees Valley. The urban partnership identified in Tees Valley was not able to accommodate the research, so a mixed urban / rural partnership was investigated instead. Partnerships were sought which met at least three of the four following criteria:

- Recommended locally as being successful
- Has a recent inspection or review which indicates good practice
- Has a prospectus for 14-19 provision
- Has documentation which indicates collaborative partnership activity

The partnership also had to be accessible, and willing to participate. Access to the partnerships was impeded by a number of other demands upon them during the study period, notably the operation of Local Area Reviews. Each partnership is unique, and data collection therefore differed slightly between case studies. Broadly, key individuals within 14-19 Learning Partnerships were interviewed in order to obtain information related to:

- the leadership at work within the partnership committees
- the senior/strategic leadership of member organisations in relation to the partnership
- the middle/operational leadership of member organisations in relation to the partnership
- the effectiveness of the process of choice offered to young people at age 14 and 16

The case study instruments are presented in Appendix 1.
Interviews were sought with:

- partnership members (ie those who attend partnership meetings)
- senior leaders of partner organisations
- middle leaders of partner organisations (individually or in groups)
- young people aged 15/16 and 17/18 following both academic and vocational pathways (individually or in groups)

In practice, the senior leaders interviewed were largely the partnership members who attended the meetings. Access to middle leaders was more restricted than had been hoped. A full list of respondents is presented as Appendix 2.

**Questionnaire Survey**

The national survey of 14-19 co-ordinators and chairs was carried out by web-based questionnaire. Web surveys have many benefits over postal surveys and interviews (Elliott, Fricker, and Schonlau, 2002), but perhaps the two most important benefits to this project were:

1. A list of email addresses was accessible for the target population; and
2. An interactive survey could be written which contained many validation checks (thus reducing missing and erroneous values).

The aim was to sample one 14-19 partnership within each of the 104 regional learning partnerships, but this regional framework was becoming unstable during the research period. Response was restricted to a convenience sample of 102 local 14-19 co-ordinators identifiable across the regions within a patchy national framework. Every effort was made to sample across the English regions, maintaining a geographical spread of respondents. All respondents were contacted beforehand to seek their involvement in the project. 102 questionnaires were sent out and 51 were returned completed (a 50% completion rate). The questionnaire was piloted with the project Reference Group.
Issues addressed through the questionnaire survey include:

- Type of partnership, and length of existence
- Composition of partnership and level of involvement of participants
- Purpose of partnership and level of agreement on objectives
- Topics discussed at partnership meetings
- Monitoring of partnership activity
- Level of collaboration between partners
- Enablers and barriers to collaboration
- Leadership issues within the partnership
- Tension between organisational leadership and partnership activity
- Decision-making within the partnership
- Accountability within the partnership
- Power relationships and status issues
- Funding issues
- Progress towards identifiable targets
- Effectiveness of response to local 14-19 learning needs

The questionnaire is enclosed as Appendix 3.

**Data Analysis**

Through the case studies, perceptions of leadership activity in the case study partnerships, and the outcomes in the form of provision for young people, were collected as qualitative data. Concept analysis was used to identify the key issues of concern to respondents. The initial qualitative data analysis, together with the outcomes of the desk study, served to inform the national survey, where data about partnerships and perceptions of partnership activity were collected in quantifiable form. Univariate analysis was carried out on each survey item: producing frequency tables and descriptive data as appropriate. Bivariate analysis was carried out using key independent variables to make comparisons among the data:

- Type of partnership area: Rural, Urban or Mixed
- Length of time the partnership has been in existence: two main groups were created for comparison purposes

A one way ANOVA was performed when looking for differences among the partnerships according to area, and an independent t-test was performed when looking for difference between those partnerships aged under 4 years and those aged 4-6 years. Concept analysis across the qualitative data identified issues relevant to the six research questions. Examination of these issues across the data, has enabled discussion and conceptual modelling of the interaction of policy, partnership and leadership and of collaborative leadership.
Research Findings

The findings from the four case studies and the national survey are collated and discussed under the six research questions. The outcomes of the analysis are then modelled to explore the mutual influences of policy, partnership and leadership.

The survey achieved a 50% response rate (n=51). 50% of respondents were female; 50% were male. 75% of respondents were partnership co-ordinators or chairs; the majority of the others had a 14-19 responsibility. Their partnerships were 49.0% urban, 29.4% mixed urban and rural, and 21.6% rural.

Across the four case studies, a total of 45 senior and middle leaders were interviewed, together with 73 learners. A full list is presented in Appendix 2, and responses are generically labelled in the text as: CS1, CS2, CS3, CS4.

The project Reference Group gave comments on interim findings. Their responses are generically labelled: RG.

Who leads?

There are multiple answers to this question. In a very real sense, the Government leads, through their policy for 14-19 provision, and the introduction of the Specialised Diplomas. 90% of survey respondents reported partnerships set up in the last 6 years: 47% of partnerships were 4-6 years old. This indicates that the prevailing policy agenda for partnership and multi-agency working has both stimulated and authorised local collaborative work for young people. Data from all four case studies indicate that carrying out collaborative work towards the Specialised Diplomas has provided a purposeful focus for partnership work. However, case study respondents also indicated that:

‘We would have met anyway’ and ‘it’s not just about Diplomas’. (CS4)

‘Having a mandate for partnership has enabled collaborative work to be carried out to local agendas – notably raising achievement for economic regeneration - led by ‘whoever is most responsible; whoever has the biggest vested interest’. (RG)

The majority of partnerships represented in the survey had been initiated and convened by the Local Authority and/or the Local Learning and Skills Council. However, 43% had been initiated and convened by staff in schools and/or colleges, and this balance of power across the partnerships indicates that leadership responsibility and vested interest may be widely distributed. In the survey, the main employer of the respondent - the partnership co-ordinator or chair - was most likely to be the Local Authority (58.8%), with the LSC providing only 2% of respondents.
The Local Authority representative has a strong role in each of the case study partnerships, and in two cases is the chair. There is evidence from all four case studies that a strong, but neutral chair or co-ordinator for the partnership is needed, to maintain the pace of partnership work, and to do the necessary ‘doing and glueing’ (CS1) between partners, to ensure that decisions are carried through.

Evidence of collaborative leadership is apparent in all four case studies, with one partnership having moved from highly directive leadership to a more collaborative model, and two partnerships having rotating, elected chairs. Individual case study partners lead on matters where they have particular expertise. Collaborative leadership can produce a lack of clarity over who is driving the agenda, and to what intent. For example, the LSC and LA have different sets of accountabilities, and have varying degrees of responsibility for the work of partnership members. One partnership chaired by the Local Authority contained two colleges, for whom the LA has no remit. However, common sense and mutual tolerance can prevail. (CS3)

‘Different representative partners take the lead on aspects of discussion... We are all experts in different spheres and we're all learning from each other’. (CS4)

‘If we are all equal, then someone has to call the meetings. We are autonomous institutions, collaborating operationally’. (CS4)

‘I think it's a worthwhile partnership. I feel we’ve come a long way in the last couple of years. It’s about us knowing about each other’. (CS3)

At times the pattern of leading-by-expertise is amicable and mutually informative, but there is case study evidence of leadership tensions, often between schools and colleges, sometimes over the level of authority held by the LA or LSC over individual partners or partnership work, and in at least one case area between a sub-group of schools and the other partners. Work-based learning appeared to be ‘the Cinderella’ of the partners: the survey indicates poor representation of work-based learning, employers and training providers in partnerships, and the case studies indicate that it can be difficult for employers to represent each other, and to engage with curriculum issues. Employers and trainers are therefore least likely to be drawn into the network of collaborative leadership.
For whom?

Both the survey and the case studies indicate a strong focus upon the needs of young people. In the survey, the main purpose of the partnership was indicated as:

- Increase participation in learning 26.5%
- Increase range of provision 19.7%
- Raise achievement 18.4%
- Increase collaboration 17%
- Reduce NEET (i.e. the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training) 8.8%

The main topics discussed were:

- Learning needs of 14-16 year olds 98%
- Learning needs of 16-19 year olds 93%
- Adequacy of local provision for 14-19 learners 98%

Case study respondents, operating for the most part in areas of economic regeneration, where learner under-achievement and high levels of NEET are evident, add their perspective to this focus:

‘The partnership has a major practical role to play in providing the widest range of opportunities to young people.’ (CS1)

‘This partnership aims to help young people make the absolute most of their potential, establish curricular coherence across the city and reduce NEET (there is significant success in this last aim).’ (CS2)

‘We should make the best use of e-learning, telephone, whatever, to ensure that we are delivering consistent programmes for Joe Bloggs that lives in the outer wilds of wherever as well as someone who is in a more central position.’ (CS1)

‘Young people are why we are all here, and they need the best possible experience. It’s not going to help them if the organisations along the way are at war with each other.’ (CS4)
This type of response is to be expected: the partnerships were set up with specific aims for the inclusion, achievement and progression of young people, reducing the proportion of young people outside education, employment and training. Partnership members are unlikely to offer strongly different opinions. However, there is indication from the case studies that this strong focus upon young people may enable leadership difficulties to be resolved: it provides an agreed, worthwhile target for partnership work. In the survey, three of the five items which drew very strong agreement were:

- Commitment to young people helps the partnership to succeed
- On the whole, the partnership works for the benefit of 14-19 students
- By working as a partnership we are more effective than if we were all working separately.

Respondents in CS4 indicate that being ‘a very young-people-focused partnership’ helps them to reconcile or skirt around institutional differences. Conversely, respondents from CS3 indicate other young-people-focused drivers which militate against partnership work: schools putting effort into maintaining a sixth form and institutions being measured separately, not collaboratively, in league tables. Where communal effort is needed - in CS3, for bids for Building Schools for the Future, in CS1 for establishing a ‘virtual college’ across a wide rural area, in CS2 and CS4 providing skills for economic regeneration - the focus upon young people enables partnership working.
Is a particular type of leadership needed for partnership between organisations to be successful? If so, what does this leadership comprise?

The type of leadership needed for partnership working was summed up by one Reference Group member: Machiavellian. Reference Group members referred to successful Pathfinder partnerships which have relatively strong-willed directive leaders who are trusted and respected, a type of leadership combined with a perception of ownership by the partners. In CS4, the chair was described as a ‘storm trooper’, but the partners consider that they ‘work as an equal partnership. I’ve never really seen [partnership work] in terms of status.’ In the survey, two of the five items which drew very strong agreement were:

- A proactive partnership co-ordinator helps the partnership to succeed
- Frequent efforts are made to involve all partnership members

There is a need to keep power balances, for example in CS2 between a successful college and strong secondary schools. In CS4 the head teachers and principals acknowledge that they are ‘all leaders of their own organisation - leaders of their own destiny - so chairing is difficult.’ In CS3, the recent appointment of a well-respected former head teacher from outside the area to champion the partnership has given ‘visionary leadership and quality assurance.’ There is evidence from several interviews, however, that it is not simply the chair who controls the power balances; some partners who know that they could be perceived as powerful refrain from taking too strong a lead, out of a concern to preserve equity in leading partnership work.

In summary, what appears to be needed is a combination of a trusted leader who offers purposeful direction, and a perception among members that all partners are equal and have ownership of partnership activity. An observation from CS3 is particularly relevant:

‘Partners may need skilling up a bit regarding working together. I think we know about how to do it but I’m not sure we do. We’re one-institution focused, and I’m not sure people have had experience of leading across schools or in federations.’

Partners are developing their own understandings of collaborative leadership, rather than following a particular known path.
What are the tensions between leading the organisation and operating within the partnership?

‘If you could ask what you would rather have, working in collaboration or your school being best in the area, I don’t think they would say: “I would love to be in collaboration.” They would say: “I would like both, but one in front of the other - best school in the area’. (CS1)

‘Leadership tensions in the partnerships at senior level arise out of conflicting goals and levels of risk, with ‘the roles of the different partners subject to different contextual factors’. (CS2)

It is vital that schools achieve well in terms of inspection, examination results and league tables. In two of the case study partnerships, some partner schools had ‘voted with their feet’ and left the partnership to concentrate on GCSE results.

‘For partnership working to be encouraged, these national measures of judgment may have to change. ‘Losing students’ – or losing their achievements to another partner carries financial risk: ‘The White Paper and the funding for schools are absolutely at cross purposes’. (CS2)

Where the level of NEET (i.e. the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training), falls though partnership activity, there may be overall gain, but this cannot be guaranteed, especially in the context of demographically induced falling rolls.

The survey indicated that partners found it easy to collaborate on the Specialised Diploma processes, but hardest to agree on timetabling harmonisation and transport issues. In CS1, Diplomas were described as ‘the catalyst for developing the collaborative learning partnership.’ The first tranche of Diploma providers was announced after the data collection and analysis was complete: only one case study partnership has secured permission to offer the Specialised Diplomas in 2008. Failure to secure Diploma lines in other case study areas will significantly affect some partnerships, particularly as the operational issues of timetabling, transport, staffing and funding across institutions are largely unresolved. Without Diploma provision as an aim, the pace of partnership activity for collaborative provision may diminish.
The senior leaders interviewed operate in a number of partnerships, and on the whole are experienced in handling these tensions. The maturity of the partnership, and the degree of mutual understanding achieved may enable collaborative working in spite of the tensions (CS2). However, governance of partnership activity remains an unknown factor, with the legal position of governors unclear and some current governors not fully grasping the implications of partnership activity (CS4, CS3). The Reference Group underlined that tight governance agreements would be needed for partnerships.

Tensions also re-surface in the operational leadership of partnership activity, where middle leaders may not be so experienced in working across organisations, and where both practical difficulty and difference of organisational culture may impede effective working (CS4). In the words of one CS3 respondent: ‘partnerships are fine, so long as they are win-win.’

**Under what conditions may partnership activity be successfully led?**

All case studies indicated that high levels of trust are needed between partners, that this takes time to achieve, and that it is nurtured by face-to-face activity:

‘**Have all involved at the table**’. (RG member)

‘Leadership cannot be located within a single person, but must be diffused, shared across partners in order that a sense of inclusion and ownership is developed. Partners need to be able to discuss, argue, disagree and coordinate their activities’. (CS1)

‘There is an acceptance that partners have to draw closer together to create coherence. This partnership is used to ‘brokering’ deals collectively’. (CS2)

‘Trust is a result of personal relationships. We don’t have a set of protocols for the partnership – it’s a soft partnership rather than a hard one’. (CS3)

‘In this group there is an emphasis on ‘working with people - if you can get that right, the partnership will work.’ There are ‘huge benefits in getting to know people face-to-face and working through problems together’. (CS4)
Having a common goal enables partnership working. For LA, LSC and Connexions representatives, working in the partnership enables their organisational goals to be achieved, and respect to be earned from other members. Achieving goals may entail a need for partners to be blunt with each other, and to discuss each other’s ‘dirty laundry’ in the partnership forum in order to make progress on issues. The purposeful nature of preparing for Diploma work has served to enhance mutual trust:

“I was delighted with our collaboration: LA, LSC, 2 colleges, 3-4 schools. We worked with give and take.” (CS4)

Achieving partnership goals can be difficult, however: CS3 respondents hold the view that the government model of partnership is an urban one, and that there are rural areas where the potential of partnership cannot be realised.

“Mismatched assumptions have to be reconciled: ‘schools and colleges are very different types of institution. This can cause problems over assumptions about how our staff may work’.” (CS4)

“Having multiple partnerships helps to heal rifts and oil the wheels”; insights gained in one forum can be applied in another, and collaborative partnership work has enhanced understanding of other institutions and their ways of working”. (CS4)

“Absent partners miss out on these insights, and ‘if they don’t come, they are bound by the decisions’.” (RG)

“The same applies to the middle leaders who need to be more involved and informed, with more collaboration at operational level”. (CS1, CS4)
What positive client outcomes are observed in successful partnerships?

The Reference Group pointed out that the 14-19 agenda cannot be isolated, and that partnership at 14+ means 11-19 reform and includes the KS3 agenda. Positive outcomes for young people will arise from ‘seamless’ working from an early stage in their educational lives – one CS4 respondent wanted to involve primary school heads in 14-19 partnership working. Part of that seamlessness is the maintenance of pastoral links for young people: their learning is dependent upon their links with tutors and advisors. In practical terms, smooth progression depends upon the provision of an area-wide prospectus, joint application and reference forms, a guidance process and transition co-ordinators, a centrally managed learner database, harmonised timetables, and for the roles to achieve this to have mainstream funding (CS1, 2, 3, 4).

The young people interviewed had largely been well treated by those who advised them, and were generally happy with their choice of course, though some had not found the ‘right’ course first time. They felt that they had been enabled to achieve their future goals. Most were not aware of different pre-16 pathways, as transfer of 14-16 year old students between institutions is currently limited, and they felt that their school advisors had little knowledge of college courses and employment, focusing mainly upon examination achievements. One Increased Flexibility Partnership in CS4 was offering a broad range of vocational programmes pre-16, for learners following both vocational and academic pathways, but this was an exception within the case studies. Learners following vocational routes are more likely than those following academic routes to be aware of the range of options open to them, and to be beneficiaries of partnership collaboration. The full range of provision for learners is not available in all areas.

The best advice and guidance on routes post-16 had come from Connexions in all the case study areas. Young people in two case studies (CS2, CS4) wanted ways of experiencing of what jobs and courses actually entailed. One case study area (CS2) had made great progress in reducing NEET, and other case study respondents (CS2, CS4) saw that an alternative curriculum pre-16 was essential to engage potential drop-outs and to eliminate NEET. A CS3 respondent summed up the situation: positive client outcomes will be achieved by:

- clear strategic planning
- clear guidance for 14-19 students, and
- processes and procedures by which guidance can be translated into programmes which meet their needs
Modelling Collaborative Leadership

An important purpose of this project is to identify the intersection of the leadership issues within the partnerships with those of collaboration and response to government policy. The project also seeks to identify the nature and purpose, and to some extent the effect, of collaborative leadership. The two models presented here depict, and allow further examination of these issues.

Firstly, key factors presented by this study which link policy, partnership and leadership have been identified and modelled as Figure 1. This model indicates that Government policy is both a key driving force for partnership and - through the mutual incompatibility of different policies - a key constraint. Policy offers the strategic purpose and a legal driving force to the partnership; however, the longer-established partnerships may have constructed strategy independent of government policy based upon goals which they have in common. A strong message from this study is that partnerships need time to build collaborative leadership, to establish mutual trust and to develop partnership activity.

Senior leaders who are partnership members each bring partnership activity into their own organisations. Collaborative leadership in multiple organisations at strategic and operational level may be constrained by personal ambivalence, by power issues between organisations, by issues of resource, and by the differing agendas and cultures of each organisation in the partnership. The mutual trust and tolerance of difference established ‘around the table’ by partnership members cannot easily be translated into mutual trust among the multiple senior and middle leaders involved in the partnership. Effective links need to be built, within and between organisations, at strategic and operational level, if the considerable practical constraints of partnership activity are to be overcome.

What this model powerfully demonstrates is that the learners should drive the partnership: they are the *raison d’être* both of the partnership and the policy, and they offer purpose for collaborative leadership. Individual organisations cannot provide for the multiple needs of 14-19 year olds alone - though some may think that they can. If learners simply ‘receive the client outcome’ as this model suggests, then they are powerless and disfranchised. Partnership leaders make decisions on their behalf. The data indicate that learners are treated respectfully by those who guide them, and are on the whole happy with their programmes, but that the process of choice and the choices offered to them depend upon local circumstance. In none of the case study areas were the systems designed to give learners a voice, and no area had yet achieved the sophistication of systems to make their learning pathway smooth and coherent.
Figure 1: Modelling policy, partnership and leadership

LEADERSHIP DEPENDS UPON:

- Government policy
  - Legal / political driving force

LEADERSHIP CONSTRUCTED BY:

- Legal / political driving force
  - Multiple and mutually contradictory policies

- Partnership
  - Strategic leadership
  - Length and strength of partnership activity
  - Mutual trust
  - Common goals

- Senior Leaders
  - Bring the partnership into the leadership of the organisation
    - Effective links between senior leaders
    - Effective links between senior and middle leaders
    - Effective links between middle leaders

- Middle leaders
  - Operationalise the partnership
    - Effective understanding of partnership purpose
    - Effective understanding of partnership activity

- Learners
  - Receive the client outcome
    - Practical means to carry our partnership activity
    - Level of workforce development

- The learners drive the partnership
  - Individual organisations cannot provide alone
Figure 2 focuses upon collaborative leadership as a key element of partnership activity. There is evidence from both the survey and the case studies that the elements in the top part of the model are present to some degree in 14-19 partnerships. There will never be ‘absolute’ alignment of organisational goals; individual and collective energy in the partnership may rise and wane; key players may find it difficult to accept each other’s leadership: an invisible balancing point of ‘good enough’ seems to be indicated for collaborative leadership to take place.

Once again, however, the current difficulty lies in the ability to translate collective strategic leadership into collaborative operational leadership. Key drivers are the compatibility of organisational cultures and the flexibility of organisational structures and systems, although even these will not produce ‘easy answers’ to provision across a distance in rural areas, or to finding staffing resource where none exists. The forces supporting the base of the model – the strength of policy support from Government, the strength of focus on outcomes for young people by leaders at all levels, and the targeted resource for partnership activity – are all essential for strongly collaborative leadership to be achieved.
The findings from this study concur with Hayward et al. (2006: 39) that current government policies ‘incentivise individual institutional self-interest and do not sufficiently stress collective thinking and area planning.’

Partners are expending energy in establishing collaborative leadership against a backdrop of conflicting Government policy and (in some cases) dissonant organisational cultures produced by those policies.

Regional learning partnerships, and their constituent 14-19 learning partnerships, have not rationalised ‘the plethora of existing local partnership arrangements covering post-16 learning’ (Lifelong Learning, 2006): they have added to it. The disintegration of the framework of 104 regional learning partnerships, and the varied composition and provenance of the 14-19 learning partnerships means that the whole network lacks coherence, and tracking the location of partnerships even within a single region is difficult. In 2003, Rodger et al. considered that the regional partnerships lacked clarity of purpose, credibility and capacity. On an individual basis, this does not seem to be true of the 14-19 learning partnerships, although capacity is an issue. The Specialised Diplomas have provided a strong incentive for partnership, and have offered credibility to partnership working. However, there are partners who doubt whether the Diplomas can be effectively implemented, and many partnerships may have their applications to provide them turned down.

In ideal terms, it is easy to focus upon the needs of the learner, and there are strong indications that this focus enables collaborative working even where there are cultural and practical constraints. Mutual trust, focused upon worthwhile outcomes, especially in areas of social disadvantage, can enable partnership activity to happen. Success in offering the Specialised Diplomas, together with resource to support partnership activity, may enable partners to achieve more strongly collaborative provision, and to move from ideals to practical outcomes. Modification of organisational culture and changes in professional practice, as indicated by Rudd et al. (2004) and Doherty and Harland (2001), are still an issue, and building the learner voice into the equation is not even on the horizon.

This study has shed some light upon the type of leadership needed for partnership activity. The need for strong partnership management and the will to get things done, features noted by Rudd et al. (2004) and Rodger et al. (2003), are evident across the data collected. There are indications that strategic alliances between organisations, as described by Schneider (2002), may form the basis of partnership working. Those who do not wish to join the alliance largely do not attend. Between the committed partners, there are strong levels of trust, based upon face-to-face activity over time, and this trust allows for accommodation of difference, and an acceptance that some solutions to
partnership are as yet unknown. A certain ‘sleight of hand’ is needed by those who are driving partnership activity: strong direction is needed, but directive leadership is not appreciated by those who are themselves senior leaders. Ownership of decisions by all partners is essential, together with a mutual respect for each other’s areas of knowledge and expertise. This can require conscious effort by partners to achieve equity and commonality, as noted in DfES (2003).

These conditions for collaborative leadership are evident in the case study partnerships at the strategic level of senior leaders. Replicating them at middle leadership level across partnerships to effect operational activity is much less secure. There are examples of successful small-scale local partnerships, but there is no widespread experience in the case study areas of sustained positive collaborative provision across a range of providers in a Local Authority area. This is the leadership challenge if 14-19 partnerships are to become the vehicle for educational engagement, achievement, progression and employment among young people who might not otherwise have achieved their potential.

The 14-19 learning partnerships can succeed if the following factors are addressed. Constraints to effective partnership working can be reduced, and a climate for more strongly collaborative working established.

At policy level

- Resource from central Government, with mainstream funding for collaborative activity across different types of organisation.
- Stability of remit for key partnership players such as the LSC and Connexions.
- Modification of the ways in which educational providers are evaluated, to accommodate and encourage partnership activity.
- High-level support and publicity for the Specialised Diplomas: the Diplomas themselves need to be a quality product which addresses the range of need among 14-19 year old learners.

At partnership level

- Realistic 21st century solutions for partnership provision across wide geographical areas and across busy cities.
- Coherent systems and personalised support for learners to evaluate, take up and succeed in the opportunities open to them.
- Alignment of purpose of partner organisations, and mutual understanding between partners.
- Mutual benefit to partner organisations.
At leadership level

- Increased understanding of how collaborative leadership works.
- Acceptance that collaborative leadership works differently from - and in tension with - leadership of single organisations.
- Involvement in collaborative leadership of leaders at all levels of the organisation, not just senior leaders.
- Involvement of young people in designing the learning pathways open to them.

Areas for Further Investigation

The following areas need further research and investigation:

- Incorporating the learner voice into policy and strategy decisions at 14-19.
- Involving middle leaders in 14-19 partnership strategy, policy and culture.
- Investigating effective partnership practice in reducing NEET, (i.e. the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training).
- Investigating Local Authority and Learning & Skills Council roles in future partnerships for joint provision.
- Addressing the ‘league table’ issue: assessing student outcomes across partnerships.
- Addressing the funding issue: accessing core funding for 14-19 partnership provision.
- Developing vocational provision at KS1, 2 and 3.
- Partnerships in primary education and in work based learning.
References


Appendix 1: Interview Schedules

Information to be collected about the partnership (from minutes or other documents, or from the partnership co-ordinator)

1. Type of partnership: rural/urban; convened by LA/LSC/other.
2. Who are the current partnership members? Who normally attends?
3. What are the stated aims of this partnership? What partnership documentation exists – and who wrote it?
4. What are the typical topics for discussion?
5. How long has this partnership (or one quite like it) been established? On what previous partnership(s) does it build?
6. How was the constituency of the partnership decided? Is it consistent with other local structures? Are there other, conflicting, local structures and partnerships?
7. How was the local 14-19 strategy plan written? Who led the process/who wrote it? How wide was the representation of current partnership members?
8. How were the partnership chair/co-ordinator appointed/chosen?
9. What funding supports the partnership – when does it run out? What happens then?
10. What staffing structure underpins the partnership? How secure is the funding for it?
11. Progress towards Prospectus. Who is co-ordinating this? Has the partnership planned 14-19 delivery collaboratively rather than simply mapping what is there?
12. Progress towards the Gateway process. Who is leading this? Who are the key partners? In what ways is it collaborative?
13. Area planning towards Diplomas – who decides who offers what? What happens when needs of 14-19 year olds do not match the capacity of partner organisations?
14. How is the work of the partnership monitored and evaluated?

Questions to ask of partnership members

1. What are the partnership’s ambitions – aside from the stated Government aims? What do you really want to achieve here?
2. What do you consider is the mid-long-term future for this partnership? Why?
3. What do you perceive as the role of your organisation in this partnership?
4. What do you perceive as your own role in this partnership?
5. Who would you say leads this partnership? How do you feel that it is led? Are there ways in which you feel it could be better led?
6. In what ways is the work of this partnership coherent? In what ways is it strategic? What impedes coherence and collective strategy?
7. Over what types of issue is it relatively easy to collaborate within the partnership?
8. In what types of issue is competitiveness a factor within the partnership?
9. What ways of working enable the partnership to succeed?
10. How is inequity between partners dealt with – eg pay/conditions of service/ student funding/esteem in the locality? How does the partnership itself address these issues?
11. How do partners co-operate to ensure student progression, both within the partnership and beyond it?
12. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about leading within partnerships such as this one?

Questions for senior leaders of partner organisations

1. Why is your organisation in this partnership? What do you want to achieve within the partnership?
2. How long do you think your organisation will be in this (or similar) partnership? Why?
3. Who would you say leads this partnership? How do you feel that it is led? Are there ways in which you feel it could be better led?
4. Do you feel that some partners are more powerful than others? Do some have higher status than others? Why?
5. What benefits/threats does partnership membership bring?
6. How does partnership strategy coincide or conflict with the strategy of your own organisation?
7. How are organisational loyalties and partnership loyalties resolved?
8. Over what types of issue is it relatively easy to collaborate within the partnership?
9. Over what types of issue is it difficult to collaborate within the partnership?
10. Over what types of issue is competitiveness a factor within the partnership?
11. Strategic decisions re Diplomas: what areas are to be covered by this institution? How was this decided – individually or collaboratively?
12. What plans have been made for workforce development to meet 14-19 agenda in this organisation? How are these decisions made?
13. What plans have been made for organisational development/capital investment to meet 14-19 agenda? How are these decisions made?
14. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about being a senior leader within this partnership?

Questions for middle leaders of partner organisations

1. In what ways does having partners help your provision for young people?
2. What is it that gets in the way of good partnership operation?
3. How is 14-19 local provision currently led and managed across the partnership? Could it be better managed?
4. What influence do you have over partnership prospectus content (and therefore provision)?
5. How do you as a middle leader resolve organisational loyalties and partnership loyalties?

Additional questions

6. How are learner needs assessed and addressed: e.g. transport/timetabling? Who do you work with to implement this?
7. How is this organisation ensuring that learners receive impartial information, advice and guidance?
8. How is transition mentoring carried out in this partnership?
9. What systems does the partnership have for sharing student data, and for learner tracking?
10. How is the partnership trying to reach 16-19 year olds who are NEET?
11. How is the partnership meeting the needs of young people in care and leaving care?
12. How is the partnership meeting the needs of young people with SLDD?

Group interviews with young people

1. Where do you currently attend education/training?
2. Why?
3. What choices of education or training provision were you offered at 14/16 years old?
4. Who advised you on what path to take?
5. Who influenced you most in your decision?
6. Did you consider more than one option at 14/16?
7. How did you get your information about the options open to you?
8. How were you treated by the providers that you considered?
9. What role did Connexions play in your choice?
10. Do you feel that, on the whole, you made a good choice?
11. How could the process of choice be improved?
## Appendix 2: Case Study Respondents

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Appendix 3: Survey Instrument

Learning Partnership Research
To be completed by a representative of each learning partnership in January 2007.

*Email:* If known, also enter your ID Number:

Save Details

1. Background Information about your 14-19 partnership
2. Membership and meetings
3. Topics of discussion during meetings
4. Your personal perspective on the 14-19 partnership
5. Send the completed questionnaire

The above *Email* address is invalid.

1. The questionnaire
Consisting of five sections it is envisaged that this questionnaire will take about 12 minutes to complete. This online form is divided into 8 pages and is ideally designed to be completed sequentially 1 through 5, although the navigation line (see above) allows users to enter information in any order and even allows users to save the form (with the ‘Save Details’ link) and to return later to complete the form. To make all this possible the user must enter an email address (in the above text box) so that they can be sent a unique security id number. The email address will only be used to send a SINGLE email message containing both the questionnaire web address and the security id number and will not be used for any other purpose. This is in accordance with the research ethical guidelines that prohibit the misuse of such information and protects the confidentiality of research subjects. To elicit honest responses to the questionnaire and protect your confidentiality please do not disclose your unique security id number to anyone.

If you have any concerns over the use or administration of this questionnaire and associated data then please contact the online data manager at: 5gSgMgqYzU@5qCpyj5XyK.ac.uk

2. Where to start
To begin using the questionnaire you just need to enter a valid email address in the text box at the top of the web page and click the ‘go’ button. If you have used this questionnaire before you will also need to enter your unique security ID number before clicking ‘go.’ If this is the first time you have used this questionnaire you will be allocated an ID number that you will then see at the top of subsequent pages. You should make a note of this number as it will allow you to return to the questionnaire if you wish to complete it at a later date. The security ID number will also be sent to the email address specified as an added security precaution.

You can then proceed through the pages of the questionnaire using the next button (or navigation link) to complete as many of the questions as possible. On page 5 you will then be allowed to send the completed questionnaire to us for analysis.

3. Why do we need you to do the questionnaire
Inter-agency partnerships are increasingly required under current Government policy, and there is little comparative understanding about how such partnerships are led. The purpose of the study, commissioned by the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL), is to understand how leadership works within partnerships, and to identify and disseminate factors which support effective inter-agency leadership.

This investigation includes a national survey of 14-19 partnerships, and how they are led. Dissemination of findings from the study will be in the form of research reports to CEL, web-based reports (which you will be able to access), academic papers and conference presentations. Individual respondents (such as you) and partnerships will not be named in any report.

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### 1. Background information about your 14-19 partnership

1.1 **Your gender:**
   - Female
   - Male

1.2 **Type of partnership area:**
   - Rural
   - Urban
   - Mixed rural and urban

1.3 **The partnership was initiated by:**
   - Local Authority
   - Learning and Skills Council
   - Other:

1.4 **The partnership is convened by:**
   - Local Authority
   - Learning and Skills Council
   - Other:

1.5 **I would describe myself as a:**
   - 14-19 Learning Partnership co-ordinator
   - 14-19 Learning Partnership Chair
   - Other:

1.6 **How long has this partnership (or one quite like it) been in existence?**

   - ?? Year(s)

1.7 **For how long have you held your current role in this Partnership?**

   - ?? Year(s) and ?? Month(s)

1.8 **Please list the 3 most important measurable goals your Partnership has:**

1.9 **What is the preferred word, if any, that your ‘partnership’ is more commonly known by?**

   - (E.g. the ‘consortium’.) This term will be used in future questions. Leave it as the ‘partnership’ if unsure.

1.10 **Does the * have a centralised tracking system for student outcomes?**

   - Yes
   - No

1.11 **Who is your main employer?**

   - Please choose ONE

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# Learning Partnership Questionnaire

To be completed by a representative of the learning partnership in January 2007.

Email: [ID Number]

## Instructions

1. Background information about your 14-19 partnership
2. Membership and meetings
3. Topics of discussion during meetings
4. Your personal perspective on the 14-19 partnership

Next

## 2. Membership and Meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many of the following members are in the &quot;?&quot;</th>
<th>Are they frequent attendees of meetings?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'11-16 schools': no-one</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'13-16 schools': no-one</td>
<td>Varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'11-18 schools': no-one</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'13-18 schools': no-one</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Sixth Form Colleges': no-one</td>
<td>Varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'FE/Tertiary Colleges': no-one</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Learning &amp; Skills Council': no-one</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Local Authority': no-one</td>
<td>Varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Connexions': no-one</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Training Providers': no-one</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Work-Based Learning Providers': no-one</td>
<td>Varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Other Employers': no-one</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Other': no-one</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## When the "?" meets, do you discuss the following topics?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics of discussion</th>
<th>Is this discussed?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning needs of 14-16 year olds</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning needs of 16-19 year olds</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequacy of local provision for 14-19 learners</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logistics of provision for 14-19 learners</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for the Gateway process</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding for partnership activity</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with policy decisions from regional level</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with policy decisions from national level</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative working arrangements</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility for specific initiatives</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum issues</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic needs of the region or area</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timetabling harmonisation</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress towards diplomas</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport issues</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Learning Partnership Questionnaire

To be completed by a representative of the learning partnership in January 2007.

Email: chris@falone.net  ID Number: 23553103

#### Instructions

1. **Background information about your 14-19 partnership**
2. **Membership and meetings**
3. **Topics of discussion during meetings**
4. **Your personal perspective on the 14-19 partnership**
5. **Send the completed questionnaire**

#### Questionnaire

**3. Topics of discussion during meetings**

*For each of the topics you have said you discuss, how easy is it to agree on collaborative action?*

Select one response from this 5-point scale for each topic:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Very easy</th>
<th>Easy</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Difficult</th>
<th>Very difficult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning needs of 14-16 year olds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning needs of 16-19 year olds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logistics of provision for 14-19 learners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for the Gateway process</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with policy decisions from regional level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with policy decisions from national level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative working arrangements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility for specific initiatives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic needs of the region or area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timetabling harmonisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress towards diplomas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Learning Partnership Questionnaire

To be completed by a representative of the learning partnership in January 2007.

Email: ID Number

#### Instructions

**Save Details**  
1. Background information about your 14-19 partnership  
2. Membership and meetings  
3. Topics of discussion during meetings  
4. Your personal perspective on the 14-19 partnership  
5. Send the completed questionnaire  

**Questionnaire**

#### 4. Personal Perspective on the 14-19 Learning Partnership

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Select one response from this 5-point scale for each statement or select 'N/A' if the statement is not applicable for your partnership.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1.1 On the whole, the &quot; works for the benefit of 14-19 students.</td>
<td>-strongly agree</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2 Our &quot; shares clear common objectives.</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td>agree</td>
<td></td>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.3 We have agreed who is responsible for achieving our common objectives.</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td>agree</td>
<td></td>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.4 Agreement on the purpose of the &quot; helps the &quot; to succeed.</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td>agree</td>
<td></td>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.5 Lack of shared purpose is a barrier to collaborative working.</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td>agree</td>
<td></td>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.6 The funding for our &quot; is secure for the next 5 years.</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td>agree</td>
<td></td>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.7 The funding for our &quot; is adequate.</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td>agree</td>
<td></td>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.8 Lack of supportive funding is a barrier to collaborative working.</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td>agree</td>
<td></td>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.9 Funding inequalities between our organisations are a barrier to collaborative working.</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td>agree</td>
<td></td>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.10 The monitoring of our &quot; operation is satisfactory.</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td>agree</td>
<td></td>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Select one response from this 5-point scale for each statement or select 'N/A' if the statement is not applicable for your partnership.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1 There is a broad involvement of key representatives from each organisation within the &quot;..</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td>agree</td>
<td></td>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2 Frequent efforts are made to involve all &quot; members.</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td>agree</td>
<td></td>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.3 Power within the &quot; is not shared as it should be.</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td>agree</td>
<td></td>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.4 By working as a &quot;, we are more effective than if we were all working separately.</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td>agree</td>
<td></td>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.5 Dominant &quot; members are a barrier to collaborative working.</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td>agree</td>
<td></td>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.6 No-one dominates our meetings.</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td>agree</td>
<td></td>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.7 Differences in status prevent collaborative working.</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td>agree</td>
<td></td>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.8 I am satisfied with the level of collaboration within the &quot;</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td>agree</td>
<td></td>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.9 There is a lack of commitment from some partners.</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td>agree</td>
<td></td>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.10 There is a clear ownership of the &quot; process by the members.</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td>agree</td>
<td></td>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Select one response from this 5-point scale for each statement or select ‘N/A’ if that statement is not applicable for your partnership.

| 4.3.1 | This " could be led much more effectively. | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |
| 4.3.2 | Leadership of our " rotates between partners. | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |
| 4.3.3 | We have a strong Chair. | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |
| 4.3.4 | Leadership of our " is mainly carried out by one person. | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |
| 4.3.5 | A proactive " coordinator helps the " to succeed. | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |
| 4.3.6 | A clear leadership structure helps the " to succeed. | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |
| 4.3.7 | Leadership of our " is distributed among a number of people. | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |
| 4.3.8 | Decision making in this " is slow. | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |
| 4.3.9 | The quality of decision making is poor in this ". | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |
| 4.3.10 | The work of this " is strategic. | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |

Select one response from this 5-point scale for each statement or select ‘N/A’ if that statement is not applicable for your partnership.

| 4.4.1 | Accountability is not clear within the ". | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |
| 4.4.2 | Bureaucracy within the " gets in the way of achieving the " goals. | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |
| 4.4.3 | External regional policy decisions impede the work of the ". | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |
| 4.4.4 | Competitiveness between organisations creates real problems for the ". | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |
| 4.4.5 | Some partners have higher status than others. | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |
| 4.4.6 | My loyalties lie with my organisation not the ". | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |
| 4.4.7 | There is too much conflict between organisational loyalties and " loyalties. | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |
| 4.4.8 | Formal links and arrangements between partners help the " to succeed. | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |
| 4.4.9 | Informal links between partners help the " to succeed. | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |
| 4.4.10 | Government policy prevents collaborative working. | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |

Select one response from this 5-point scale for each statement or select ‘N/A’ if that statement is not applicable for your partnership.

| 4.5.1 | On the whole, the " works for the benefit of 14-19 students. | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |
| 4.5.2 | Involvement in " meetings is constrained by the location of " members. | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |
| 4.5.3 | The rewards for " collaboration are real and tangible. | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |
| 4.5.4 | I am satisfied with the local 14-19 strategy plan. | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |
| 4.5.5 | I am satisfied with our response to the 14-19 issues raised by most recent Area Review or inspection. | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |
| 4.5.6 | I am satisfied with our progress towards Prospectus. | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |
| 4.5.7 | I am satisfied with our progress towards the Gateway process. | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |
| 4.5.8 | Our " frequently focuses on specific local area needs. (e.g. employment, regeneration.) | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |
| 4.5.9 | Our " effectively addresses specific local area needs. (e.g. employment, regeneration.) | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |
| 4.5.10 | Commitment to local young people helps the " to succeed. | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | N/A |
5. You may confirm completion of the questionnaire from this page.

You have completed ALL of the questions - THANK YOU.

Before clicking on the send button, please let us know what you thought of this questionnaire.

5.1 Please use this space to comment on anything else about the "you wish to add."

This send button will complete the questionnaire and send us confirmation that you have finished.

Once clicked, you will no longer be able to amend the questionnaire.
Further information and contact details

This is one of a series of research reports carried out for the Centre for Excellence in Leadership. If you have any enquiries regarding this report, please contact:

Professor Ann RJ Briggs
Professor of Educational Leadership
School of Education, Communication & Language Science
Newcastle University
Joseph Cowen House
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 7RU
Email: ann briggs@newcastle.ac.uk
Tel: + 44 (0) 191 222 6560

We recognise that there are many innovative and effective leaders and leadership practices in the Sector that warrant investigation, analysis and wider dissemination of best practice. We would like to engage with existing networks within the Sector and develop a wider practice-led research community contributing to current debates on leadership and other related issues.

If you would like to receive further information on the Research Programme, please contact:

Maureen Morrison
National Research Manager
Centre for Excellence in Leadership
Lancaster University Management School
CEL Research Office, Room B59
Gillow Avenue
Lancaster
LA1 4YX
Tel: + 44 (0) 1524 594364
Email: m.morrison@lancaster.ac.uk

Further information is also available at:

www.centreforexcellence.org.uk
www.lums.lancs.ac.uk/leadership/cel
Further information

Maureen Morrison
National Research Manager
Centre for Excellence in Leadership
Lancaster University Management School
CEL Research Office, Room B59
Gillow Avenue
Lancaster
LA1 4YX
Tel: +44 (0) 1524 594364
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