

# **Partnerships in Northern Ireland**

**POLICY INNOVATION UNIT**

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*“Long gone are rigid demarcations between public, private and voluntary sectors,... Government has to become an instrument of empowerment...working in partnership with others, to deliver clear outcomes”*

Tony Blair, 2004

*To be successful we recognise that we must operate in partnership with the other key stakeholders in society – the private, the voluntary and the community sectors. The delivery of our Programme for Government must harness the energy, dedication and resource of these stakeholders in genuine partnership to build a more tolerant, participative and inclusive society.*

Northern Ireland Executive’s First Programme for Government, 2001

*“Too much of a good thing, any good thing, can turn sour. Partnership today is almost everybody’s ‘good thing’. It certainly has great benefits, and more and more as we gain experience. But it is neither consistently good nor pervasively beneficial. We must judge partnership, like everything else for itself, for better and for worse”*

Mintzberg et al, 1996

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## 1. INTRODUCTION & EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Context of the review

- 1.1 In July 2004, the then Minister, Ian Pearson, commissioned the Economic Policy Unit (EPU) to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the position in relation to partnerships in Northern Ireland and to submit a draft paper to Ministers to serve as a think piece and assist further detailed considerations. A full terms of reference is attached at Appendix One.
- 1.2 The Government of Northern Ireland is committed to pursuing a partnership approach<sup>1</sup> in the development of policies and the delivery of services. That commitment has been reflected in both the devolved and direct rule administrations and will underpin the modernisation of the public sector in Northern Ireland as outlined in both the *Review of Public Administration* and *Fit for Purpose*.
- 1.3 Government's commitment to multi-sectoral collaboration recognises that there is an accelerating trend in both the public and private sector towards partnership working. Both trends are related and are reflective of a rapidly changing and increasingly complex, interconnected operational environment.
- 1.4 As such, the growth of partnership working in the private sector may be seen in part as a response to the challenges and opportunities presented by globalisation and specialisation. Similarly, the proliferation of the partnership approach in the public sector is essentially an acknowledgment that

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<sup>1</sup> Partnership approach covers a wide range of relations from informal networking to formal established partnerships. Adopting a partnership approach therefore does not require the establishment of a formal partnership. This issue is considered in section 2 of this paper.

“in a world of increasing change and growing interdependencies, some of the most difficult social challenges cannot be addressed by a single strand of government”<sup>2</sup>

- 1.5 Partnership working is a potentially powerful tool and may often be the only way to address some of the most challenging social and economic issues facing government. However, it is equally important to acknowledge that the partnership approach is not without risks. Building and sustaining effective partnerships is difficult, time consuming and often expensive.
- 1.6 Pursuit of the partnership approach, therefore, presents the public sector with a series of challenges as well as opportunities. Those who wish to take forward the partnership approach must understand and address the risks and challenges involved if they are to take advantage of the real opportunities presented.

## **Methodology**

- 1.7 As a first step in the analysis, EPU undertook a mapping exercise, designed to provide a comprehensive overview of the position in relation to partnerships in Northern Ireland, and in particular to identify the range of partnerships within the public sector, their key attributes, accountability, funding arrangements and composition. Information was collected through two questionnaire templates (attached at Appendix Two) which were forwarded to all NICS Departments.

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<sup>2</sup> Frye and Webb, *Effective Partnership Working*, HM Treasury, April 2002

- 1.8 A total of 584 partnerships were identified, 354 in the returns to template 1 and 230 in the returns to template 2. However, initial analysis of the returns confirmed that a number of the bodies identified could not be appropriately referred to as partnerships. In light of this, departments were asked to reconsider their initial returns, as a result of which 31 bodies were excluded from further analysis. The outcome of the analysis is summarised in Section 3 of this paper.
- 1.9 To inform the development of recommendations and consult on some of the key findings emerging from the analysis of departmental returns, officials from EPU also met with a number of partnerships and key regional organisations to discuss their experience of partnership working. The key issues identified during discussions are summarised in section 3 of this paper.
- 1.10 To place the issue in its wider context and illustrate the rationale behind the conclusions reached, EPU also undertook a review of evidence based research and best practice guidance from elsewhere, particularly GB. This is summarised in Section 2 of this paper.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

- 1.11 In light of evidence from elsewhere and the outcome of the EPU mapping exercise, this paper identifies a number of issues and makes a series of recommendations as outlined below. In addition to the recommendations, the report recognises that any partnership is in essence a team and the potential success of a partnership is to a significant degree dependant upon the relationships and skills of the individual partners. In particular, the ability of all partners to agree and contribute to the realisation of a shared vision and goals.

## **Number of Partnerships**

1.12 The report concludes that there are currently too many partnerships. This has increasingly stretched the capacity of all sectors, in particular social partners, to engage effectively. This undermines both the performance of individual partnerships and also confidence in the partnership approach. To enable partnerships to work effectively and achieve maximum benefit, it is essential that action is taken to reduce the number of partnerships in the longer-term. However, any such action must take account of the outcome of the Review of Public Administration (RPA) to ensure that measures are consistent with any new administrative arrangements. In the interim and beyond there is a strong need for greater co-ordination from the centre.

**Recommendation:** A central unit should have the opportunity to review proposals for new partnerships emerging from departments. The Unit should:

- provide best practice advice to departments, establishing a clear set of principles for effective partnership working that could be utilised by departments;
- advise departments in light of best practice as to whether proposals give partnerships the best chance of success; and
- where appropriate, identify opportunities to utilise existing arrangements.

The unit's role should be advisory, final decisions would be taken by the instigating department(s).

**Recommendation:** To provide a means of disseminating information, a detailed list of current partnerships in NI should be made available on-line and updated regularly.

### **Effectiveness of Partnerships**

- 1.13 Partnerships are diverse, while this has the potential to be a weakness in the partnership approach, it is also a particular strength, allowing partnerships to be tailored to specific issues and needs. Therefore, dissemination of potentially over-rigid or restrictive best practice models should be avoided. However, there are key factors, which evidence suggests contribute to the effective working of all partnerships.
- 1.14 A significant proportion of public monies are utilised in progressing partnership working. However, the responses to the mapping exercise do not indicate that sufficient monitoring or evaluation procedures are in place to determine the impact and effectiveness of partnerships, nor to measure the cost effectiveness and added value of the approach.

**Recommendation:** All existing partnerships involving public sector partners should be reviewed by their parent department and necessary action taken to ensure that:

- they are appropriate;
- they have a clear role and vision;

- opportunities for rationalisation are identified;
- all relevant bodies/partners are engaged;
- they have the necessary resources, structures, processes, personnel and skills to maximise their potential effectiveness; and
- appropriate performance criteria, and monitoring and evaluation procedures are in place to enable a longer-term evaluation of their effectiveness.

Where appropriate departments may wish to consider the review of existing partnerships as part of the outworking of the decisions emerging from the RPA.

### **Future of LSPs**

1.15 The ending of PEACE II<sup>3</sup> and the outcome of the Review of Public Administration in Northern Ireland (RPA) are likely to have significant consequences for LSPs, particularly with regard to proposals for local government in Northern Ireland.

**Recommendation:** The future role of LSPs should be revisited following the outcome of the RPA.

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<sup>3</sup> The PEACE Programme has been extended for a further two years, 2004-2006. LSPs are expected to continue their role in administering measures under the extension until 2008.

## 2. A ROUGH GUIDE TO PARTNERSHIP WORKING

### What is a partnership?

2.1 Partnership is not a new concept and has to some degree been an aspect of government and business throughout history. However, it is a practice which has become increasingly popular, complex and diverse in nature in both the private and public sector. For example, responses to the templates issued by EPU, indicated that the 11 Departments in the NICS and their agencies were engaged directly in some 564 partnerships (see paragraph 3.7).

2.2 As a result of this rapid growth, evidence of partnership / partnership working, or multi-sectoral collaboration, is everywhere. Yet, it is this very success and proliferation which creates difficulties in seeking to clearly define partnership.

2.3 The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defined partnerships as:

*“Systems of formalised co-operation, grounded in legally binding arrangements or informal understandings, co-operative working relationships, and mutually adopted plans among a number of institutions”.*

2.4 Wilson and Charlton produced a more specific definition in their publication *“Making Partnerships Work”* which in many ways reflects the ‘ideal’ and to some extent the rationale of partnership working in the public sector:

*“Three or more organisations – representing the public, private and voluntary sectors – acting together by contributing their diverse resources in the furtherance of a common vision that has clearly defined roles and objectives”.*

- 2.5 In contrast and perhaps echoing a cynicism which can often greet public sector initiatives, one commentator also refers to partnerships in the Northern Ireland context as *“far more than two bodies coming together to avoid doing work.”*<sup>4</sup>
- 2.6 A range of relationships have been defined in the “Levels of partnership – choices and decisions” matrix (Table 1)<sup>5</sup>. Adapted from Hogue<sup>6</sup>, the matrix defines five levels of partnership relationship, and the purposes, structures and processes for each level.
- 2.7 Given the flexibility and adaptability of the partnership approach, the profusion of possible definitions is to be expected and ultimately how we seek to define any partnership will be dependent upon a host of factors. However, at the simplest level all partnerships share a common function in that they are essentially “an agreement to work collectively between two or more independent bodies to achieve a common purpose”<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Civil Servantese – a beginners guide to the language of the NI Civil Service:  
[www.ianjamesparsley.net/cs\\_par.html](http://www.ianjamesparsley.net/cs_par.html)

<sup>5</sup> Boydell, Leslie, *Partnership*, Institute of Public Health in Ireland, 1999

<sup>6</sup> Teresa Hogue, *Community Based Collaborations – Wellness Multiplied*, Oregon Centre for Community Leadership, 1994

<sup>7</sup> [www.improvementnetwork.gov.uk/imp/core/page.do?pageId=10310](http://www.improvementnetwork.gov.uk/imp/core/page.do?pageId=10310)

**Table 1: Levels of partnership – choices and decisions**

<b>Levels</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>Process</b>
<b>Networking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dialogue and common understanding</li> <li>• Clearing house for information</li> <li>• Base of support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loose/flexible link</li> <li>• Roles/loosely defined</li> <li>• An area of common interest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low-key leadership</li> <li>• Minimal decision-making</li> <li>• Little conflict</li> <li>• Informal communication</li> </ul>
<b>Co-operation or Alliance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Match needs and provide co-ordination</li> <li>• Limit duplication of services</li> <li>• Ensure tasks are done</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central body of people as communication hub</li> <li>• Semi-formal links</li> <li>• Roles somewhat defined</li> <li>• Links are advisory</li> <li>• Group leverages/raises money</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitative leaders</li> <li>• Complex decision making</li> <li>• Some conflict</li> <li>• Formal communications within the central group</li> </ul>
<b>Co-ordination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share resources to address common issues</li> <li>• Merge resources base to create something new</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central body of people consisting of decision makers</li> <li>• Roles defined</li> <li>• Links formalised</li> <li>• Group develops new resources and joint budget</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autonomous leadership but focus on issues</li> <li>• Group decision making in main group and subgroups</li> <li>• Communication is frequent and clear</li> </ul>

Figure 1 cont.

Levels	Purpose	Structure	Process
<b>Coalition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared ideas and willingness to pull resources from existing systems</li> <li>• Develop commitment for a minimum of three years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All members involved in decision-making</li> <li>• Roles and timescales defined</li> <li>• Links formal with written agreement</li> <li>• Group develops new resources and joint budget</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared leadership</li> <li>• Decision-making formal with all members</li> <li>• Communication is common and prioritised</li> </ul>
<b>Collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accomplish shared vision and impact benchmarks</li> <li>• Build inter-dependent system to address issues and opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consensus used in shared decision-making</li> <li>• Roles, timescale and evaluation formalised</li> <li>• Links are formal and written into work assignments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership high, trust level high, productivity high</li> <li>• Ideas and decisions equally shared</li> <li>• Highly developed communication</li> </ul>

## **The growth in partnership working**

- 2.8 The election of the Labour Government in 1997 on a pledge to put partnership at the heart of its strategy for modernising public services is often viewed as pivotal point in accelerating the trend towards partnership working in the public sector. While this may be the case, the partnership approach in the public sector is in many ways as old as government itself and clearly predates the late 1990s. However, what has changed is the fact that it is now at the very heart of the public sector policy framework as a key tool in the modernisation agenda.
- 2.9 Since the 1970s there has been a significant growth in the nature and number of partnerships in the public sector. This growth is often attributed to the “*the interconnectedness of complex social issues*”<sup>8</sup> and the recognition that increasingly governments are dealing with interconnected problems, *cross-cutting* or *wicked issues* which cannot be addressed by a single strand of government, the assertion that ‘joined up problems require joined up solutions’.
- 2.10 The ability of government to respond to such interconnected problems has in many ways been made more difficult by the historical evolution of the public sector since the Haldane reforms (1918) established public administration on the basis of functional organisation. From that time there has been a marked trend towards fragmentation and specialisation within the public sector. In the Northern Ireland context, this process was further accentuated in the 1970s following the implementation of direct rule and the reform of local government, and across the United Kingdom in the 1980s and 1990s as a result of government policy.

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<sup>8</sup> Know, Colin. *Review of Public Administration, Briefing Paper, Partnerships*, UUI, September 2002

- 2.11 The emergence of specialisation has greatly increased the skills available within government to deal with specific problems. The difficulty is that the fragmentation of organisations and services has also increased the obstacles to effectively addressing the more complex problems facing government.
- 2.12 The ambition to overcome these obstacles provided the impetus for the modernisation programme introduced by Government post 1997. A key aspect of the modernisation agenda is a commitment to improve public services, making them more responsive to their users. The fragmented nature of services across the public sector was seen as a major obstacle in the realisation of this objective. To overcome this, the Government's modernisation agenda proposes major reform of the civil service and stresses the importance of multi-sectoral working across the public, private and voluntary sectors.
- 2.13 The development of partnership approaches may, therefore, be seen in part as a necessary response to both the changed environment and structures within which the public sector operates. As government increasingly deals with complex problems that cannot be addressed by a single strand of government, joined up working, of which partnership is one approach, becomes an imperative in the development and delivery of effective policies and services across a fragmented public sector.
- 2.14 Institutional factors have also accounted for the rapid expansion of the partnership approach in recent years. The European Commission, for example, favours partnership approaches for the delivery of regional / area specific development. In addition government initiatives, including community safety and early years education, are increasingly giving agencies statutory duties to work together. Public bodies, therefore, often

have little choice and are effectively obliged to pursue a partnership approach.

### **The Benefits and Risks of Partnership Working**

2.15 In light of the factors outlined above, partnership working has become an imperative in the development and delivery of effective policies and services across a fragmented public sector.

2.16 However, partnership working is not easy. Where partnership working is not effective nor appropriate, the potential benefits are lost and the risks or disadvantages of the partnership approach become clear. The challenge for the public sector is to manage those risks in order to realise the advantages. A significant volume of work has been undertaken with regard to the value of partnership working and a number of particular advantages and disadvantages have been identified. These are summarised in Table 2 below.

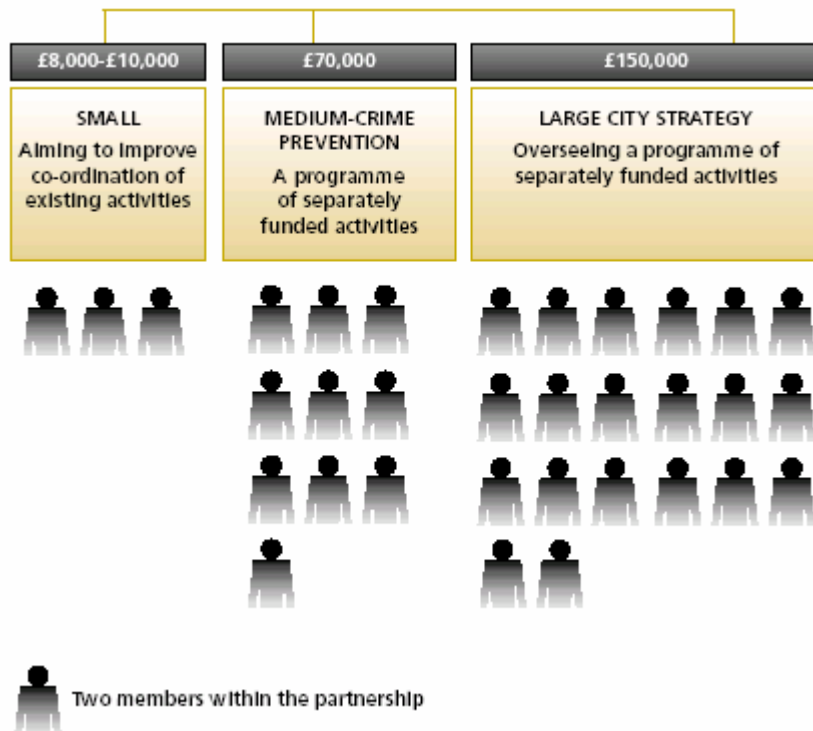
**Table 2: Benefits and Risks of Partnership Working**

Benefits	Risks
Partnerships provide a means of addressing cross cutting issues that single agencies cannot address on their own.	Partnerships often find it difficult to develop a common approach and can contribute to increased fragmentation.
Partnerships help organisations to come together to better align the services provided by the partners with the needs of users.	The growing number of partnerships can create confusion as to roles and responsibilities, making it more difficult for users to access services.
Partnerships offer a means by which the partners can make better use of resources and achieve more acting together than individually (synergy).	Partnerships are expensive, resource consuming and are more likely to fail than succeed
Partnerships help to build relations and coalitions between partners.	Powerful interests can dominate partnerships, creating conflict between partners.
Partnerships, through engaging a wide range of stakeholders, can stimulate more creative approaches to problems, and access to a wider range of skills.	Through the inclusion of a wide variety of interests, partnerships are prone to conflict and often find it difficult to agree a common approach to problems.
Through empowerment at the local level, partnerships improve local democracy and offer a means of engaging traditionally excluded groups.	Partnerships are un-elected bodies and increase the power of appointed members at the expense of locally elected politicians, thereby undermining local democracy and accountability.

## Costs of Partnership

2.17 It is widely recognised that partnership working is a relatively expensive and highly resource consuming exercise. A very limited number of responses to the EPU mapping exercise provided information with regard to the time commitment of NICS staff to supporting partnership. However, these totalled almost 62,000 working days per year, and while the actual time spent by NICS staff supporting partnerships is likely to be significantly higher, this is still a considerable figure. In addition, the Audit Commission estimated the direct and opportunity costs of operating some typical partnerships in 1998 as outlined below in Figure 1.<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 1: Type, Scale and cost of Partnerships**



<sup>9</sup> Audit Commission, 1998, p 35

2.18 If partnership working is to be good value for money, the benefits achieved must outweigh the costs involved in making it work. Evaluation of partnerships in this regard requires the development of measurable performance indicators and evaluation procedures at the outset.

### **Alternatives to Partnership**

2.19 As outlined above, partnerships can be both difficult and expensive. It is, therefore, imperative that organisations consider whether partnership in general and what level of partnership in particular is appropriate, or whether alternative approaches may in fact be more effective or efficient.

2.20 Partnership is but one means by which public sector bodies can engage or co-operate with bodies or individuals representing other sectors. Possible alternatives to partnership in this regard include:

- **Consultative arrangements** – a single agency retains responsibility for decisions and actions
- **Networks** – personal or professional networks/relationships which do not have to involve organisational commitment
- **Contractual relationships** – such as those established under PPI.

### **Building and sustaining successful partnerships**

2.21 There is no one model of partnership which is universally appropriate. After all, what works in one location or policy issue, doesn't necessarily translate automatically to another. However, there is a growing body of evidence which has sought to identify best practice in relation to effective partnership. For example, drawing on work emerging from

regeneration projects in Bradford, CIPFA<sup>10</sup>, outline 11 principles of effective partnership which can be clustered into four broad categories:

- **Behavioural Traits**
  - respecting and trusting other partners
  - desiring to influence and to be influenced
  - desiring to learn from the process
  
- **Attitudinal Qualities**
  - the recognition that all partners have different and valuable contributions to offer
  - a willingness to share risks and take joint responsibility for the strategy
  - a willingness to participate in a way that recognises the whole is more than the sum of the individual parts
  
- **Style**
  - the capacity to think and plan in the long-term and to allow this to influence decision-making
  - an ability to identify the collective interests and engage all stakeholders in solving problems
  - an ability to adopt open-ended processes and be publicly accountable
  
- **Objectives**
  - integrated and co-ordinated efforts and jointly targeted resources
  - common recognition of the issues

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<sup>10</sup> CIPFA, 1997. p.73-74

2.22 In addition, the Improvement Network have also identified ‘the Top Ten Partnership Killers’. This list, attached at Appendix Six, outlines the most common problems/factors impacting upon the effectiveness of partnerships and also highlights solutions to those problems. Table 3 below outlines a range of key factors which have been identified as underpinning effective partnerships.

**Table 3: Building and sustaining an effective partnership**

<b>Step One - Establishing the partnership</b>	
<b>i. Identify and engage relevant partners</b>	Where partnership is appropriate, it is essential to identify and engage key groups that the partnership will impact upon. While there is no blueprint with regard to the number of partners, this should reflect the scope and role of the partnership and the need to ensure that all relevant parties have been engaged.
<b>ii. Recruit the right individuals</b>	<p>In the early days of the partnership the most important factor to consider in identifying the right individuals to involve is whether they have the necessary leadership qualities to convince other potential partners to participate and to secure the necessary resources to enable the partnership to function effectively. These people are often not the right people to lead the partnership throughout its life, but they have a vital galvanising role to play in the early days.</p> <p>As the partnership moves forward, it is essential that the individuals involved have sufficient authority to take decisions and to influence the practices of their parent organisations. Recognising the proliferation of partnerships in recent years, consideration also needs to be given to the ability of individuals to attend meetings and actively participate in the partnership.</p>
<b>iii. Agree the vision and mission</b>	The vision and mission define the partnership. It should clearly describe what the partnership hopes to achieve and how it fits into the wider context. If the partnership is to function effectively and the potential for conflict minimised, the vision and mission must be consistent with the aims and activities of the individual partners.

<b>Step Two - Managing for Performance</b>	
<b>i. Team Building</b>	<p>A partnership is in essence a team. Successful teams take time and work to establish. A key aim of the team building process is to increase mutual understanding and trust between partners. This is more likely to happen where all partners feel valued, are able to contribute towards the realisation of objectives and where the role and objectives of the partnership are consistent with those of the individual partners. This may also require facilitation and training to ensure that all partners have the necessary skills to contribute.</p>
<b>ii. Agree clear, measurable, achievable and relevant objectives and targets</b>	<p>As with any organisation, for partnerships to fulfil their purpose they need a clear set of objectives. Those objectives must be relevant to the environment and problems/issues the partnership seeks to address, they should be consistent with the objectives and activities of the parent organisations and to facilitate evaluation they should, where possible, be specific and measurable.</p> <p>All partners must be agreed as to the objectives and actions and their role and responsibilities in taking these forward. Partners must also deliver on their agreed contribution and combine together effectively, integrating and co-ordinating efforts and jointly targeting resources.</p>
<b>iii. Establish an effective means of making decisions and taking actions</b>	<p>A partnership cannot be effective if it cannot make decisions. To facilitate the decision making process, all partnerships need at least one body, a board or steering group, which all partners recognise as the decision making mechanism and where representatives have sufficient authority to take decisions on behalf of their parent organisations.</p> <p>On occasion it may be necessary for members to consult their parent organisations. In such cases undue delays in the decision making process can be minimised through careful project planning.</p>
<b>iv. Ensure the partnership is resourced to achieve its objectives</b>	<p>A partnership cannot be effective if sufficient resources have not been made available to ensure success. Therefore, account needs to be taken of the human, financial, technical and organisational resources and support which need to be available to enable the partnership to achieve its objectives.</p>

<b>Step Three - Measuring Success</b>	
<b>i. Evaluate performance against objectives</b>	<p>Evaluation is one of the most fundamental management tools, yet it is often absent from partnership working. Partnerships must have some means by which to evaluate their performance and clearly demonstrate their value. The fundamental requirement of any evaluation is that it must relate clearly to the partnership's objectives.</p> <p>Measuring performance against objectives can be difficult. However, as a first step, partners should identify and agree the objectives they intend to achieve. They should then turn these into specific outcomes and identify which of these outcomes can be measured by numerical performance indicators. Where outcomes cannot be measured numerically, other means of assessing performance should be identified, i.e. focus groups, surveys etc. It is critical that performance indicators are owned by and contributed to by all the partners. If only some partners can influence or contribute towards the realisation of indicators, others are likely to feel marginalized.</p> <p>Evaluation enables a partnership to identify what it is doing well and where improvement is required. However, any evaluation process should be commensurate with both the costs and extent of the partnership relationship.</p>
<b>ii. Evaluate the health of the partnership</b>	<p>In addition to evaluating performance against objectives, the Audit Commission also recommend that partnerships should measure the efficiency of their activities and the health of the partnership itself<sup>11</sup>.</p>

## **The Partnership Experience in RoI, GB and Europe**

2.23 The partnership approach is well established in the **Republic of Ireland** and there are a large number of examples of cross-sectoral collaboration in the Republic. The most prominent is perhaps the national 'social partnership' programmes which have been implemented since the late 1980s. This partnership approach has played an important part in

<sup>11</sup> Audit Commission, 1998, p.31

Ireland's economic and social development, although the extent of the contribution has been questioned.

2.24 Of particular interest, given the recent debate in NI regarding the future role of Local Strategy Partnerships (LSPs), are the County and City Development Boards, the Republic's equivalent of LSPs. In 2000, County and City Development Boards were established in each county and county borough. The boards are representative of local government, local development bodies (area partnerships, LEADER groups, and county and city enterprise boards), the state agencies and social partners operating locally. They have drawn up plans and will oversee the implementation of county/city strategies for economic, social and cultural development which will act as a template guiding all public services and local development activities.

2.25 In January 2002 a comprehensive review of partnerships in the RoI civil service<sup>12</sup> identified a number of impediments to the development of partnership, for example:

- Many see partnership as 'another imposed initiative' that they are required to implement.
- The partners see partnership as a separate system operating in parallel with the management system, the change management process, the trade union structures and the industrial relations system. This lack of integration inhibits its effectiveness and exacerbates perceptions of low identity and low relevance.
- The absence of a central body with specific responsibility for leading and promoting partnership militates against its ongoing

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<sup>12</sup> O'Dwyer et al, *A Formal Review of Partnership in the Civil Service, Report to General Council of the Civil Service*, Department of the Taoiseach, January 2002

development and sends conflicting signals to the broader civil service regarding the intentions of the partners at central level.

- 2.26 In **Great Britain** partnership work is well established in the areas of regeneration, health, education and lifelong learning, tackling crime and disorder, and sustainable development. The obvious comparison with Northern Ireland, would appear to be the Local Strategic Partnerships in England and Wales<sup>13</sup>. However, these are fundamentally different and have a much wider role than LSPs in Northern Ireland. Local Strategic Partnerships in England and Wales bring together at the local level different parts of the public sector along with private, business, community and voluntary sectors so that different initiatives and services support each other and work together. Importantly they are non-statutory and non-executive, and they do not provide services themselves.
- 2.27 The Local Government Act 2000 requires local authorities in England and Wales to prepare a community strategy to improve the economic, social and environmental well being of their areas and their inhabitants. Although the statutory duty for preparing the strategy rests with local authorities, their development and implementation requires successful joint working across the public, private, community and voluntary sectors. This puts Local Strategic Partnerships at the centre of the community planning process.
- 2.28 Another key task for the Local Strategic Partnerships is to explore ways in which the number of separate partnerships are reduced, to improve the links between existing local partnerships, and to integrate new work into the strategic partnership. In short, there is recognition that the same key stakeholders are involved in several partnerships and there is a need to

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<sup>13</sup> This section draws extensively on the following - Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (2001) *Local Strategic Partnerships – Government Guidance*. London: DETR.

rationalize and simplify existing and potentially new partnership arrangements. Local Strategic Partnerships provide a forum to agree both national and local priorities and decide how best to deliver them.

2.29 In 2004, the Scottish Executive published a report into partnership working in Scotland<sup>14</sup>. The main focus of the work was to understand better how the Scottish Executive operated as a partner and to determine how relationships could be enhanced and improved. In total, 65 individuals participated in the study, and a number of suggestions for improved partnership working were put forward as outlined below:

- Earlier engagement and continuous dialogue with partners
- Opportunities for input at strategic level
- Clarity of purpose and roles
- Building in review and evaluation
- Widening access and building capacity
- Embedding and developing a culture of involvement
- A strategic commitment to partnership working
- A shared responsibility

2.30 In January 2002 the Welsh Assembly commissioned a report into *Partnerships between the public, private and voluntary sectors in Wales*.<sup>15</sup> The report drew on 140 interviews with key national figures and individual members of partnerships across ten case studies, as well as detailed partnership mapping at national and local levels. Recommending a comprehensive programme of action, the report identified four main tensions or problems which impacted on the effectiveness of partnership:

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<sup>14</sup> Strategy Unit, *Partnership Working*, Scottish Executive, Edinburgh 2004

<sup>15</sup> Centre for Local Government Research, *Partnerships between the public, private and voluntary sectors in Wales. Final report to the Welsh Assembly Government Steering Group*. Cardiff University, May 2003

- Partners had conflicting expectations;
- There was little agreement about the division of labour between partner organisations;
- The complex map of partnerships makes it difficult for anyone to understand the powers and responsibilities of any one partnership; and
- There is a tendency for partnerships to be short lived and poorly resourced.

2.31 Local partnerships are also important in the **European** context particularly in EU-funded programmes (such as LEADER, URBAN and PEACE already referred to) but also national programmes aimed at tackling unemployment, poverty and social exclusion.

2.32 Despite the variability, research studies on local partnerships in 10 EU Member States reached a number of important conclusions about the value of partnerships and their impact. These can be summarized as follows:

- Local partnerships can contribute positively to both the processes and outcomes of measures to tackle unemployment, poverty and exclusion.
- They can lead to better policy co-ordination and integration at local level.
- This facilitates a multi-dimensional approach to problems, drawing upon the knowledge, skills and resources of different partners.
- Because their focus may be on a specific local area, such as a deprived urban neighbourhood, they may not tackle more dispersed problems of exclusion.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> This is a summary of the key findings from Geddes, M. (1998) *Local Partnership: A Successful Strategy for Social Cohesion?* Dublin: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and

2.33 The evidence would, therefore suggest that the main rationale for partnership working in Ireland, GB and Europe is to ensure better co-ordination and fit and better targeting of need in the delivery of services and the development of policies and programmes.

## **Conclusion**

2.34 Partnership is an approach which has become increasingly popular in all sectors in recent years. In the public sector context, this reflects the fact that increasingly governments are dealing with interconnected problems that cannot be addressed by a single strand of government. True partnership, recognising the multi-faceted nature of public policy, may often be the only way to address some of the most challenging social and economic issues facing government. However, building and sustaining effective partnerships is not without risks, it is difficult, time consuming and often expensive.

2.35 Partnership arrangements need to be appropriate to the context, well thought through and managed if they are to achieve their potential. In particular, the partnership must have clear agreed objectives, it must be adequately resourced, and above all the right people need to be involved and committed to working together to achieve objectives.

### **3. PARTNERSHIPS IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

#### **Context**

3.1 In recent years there has been a significant expansion of partnership working in Northern Ireland. In common with other areas, a number of factors have precipitated this rapid growth, coalescing to create a dynamic for partnership working, as outlined earlier in this paper. In particular, institutional factors and government policy, both at the national and European level, are recognised as among the most important influences underpinning the expansion of partnership working in Northern Ireland.

3.2 A key additional factor in the expansion of partnership working in Northern Ireland is the role that they have played in enhancing local participation and governance during periods of direct rule and more recently as a means of building good relations in an historically divided society. Partnerships have also grown within a context of a weakened local government, following the reforms of 1972, and the substantial reliance on non-departmental public bodies to deliver local services.<sup>17</sup>

3.3 On 22 March, the then Minister, Ian Pearson launched the Second Consultation on The Review of Public Administration. That document proposed a two-tier model of public administration that envisages a

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<sup>17</sup> At the central level, the Northern Ireland (Temporary Provisions) Act 1972 effectively transferred all executive and legislative powers to Westminster. Under direct rule, the Secretary of State has ultimate executive power in Northern Ireland. While the Secretary of State, as a member of the Cabinet, is accountable to Parliament, the holder of the post and his/her team of ministers, are appointed from the ruling party at Westminster. As neither the Secretary of State nor the team of ministers have their constituency bases in Northern Ireland, and recognising that the party political structure in Northern Ireland does not enable local parties to be directly engaged in the United Kingdom government, there is no clear line of accountability.

At local level, The (Local Government) Act 1972 significantly reduced the powers exercised by local government. Much of these powers were effectively transferred to a number of appointed non-elected bodies, such as the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Education and Library Boards.

stronger local government responsible for substantially enhanced roles in direct service delivery and influence with all service delivery organisations in their area. At the core of these proposals is community planning which sees local government delivering services and influencing in partnership with the statutory, voluntary, community and the business sectors. Such an arrangement may well have an impact on the way in which some current partnerships operate and the nature of future partnerships. The detail of this will be dependant on final decisions on the RPA.

- 3.4 Government in Northern Ireland remains strongly committed to the principle of partnership working. Indeed partnership working is a key feature of the institutions under the Agreement. In part this reflects the perceived value of partnerships as a means of engaging communities and building good relations. However, the context within which the partnership approach has evolved is rapidly changing and consideration of the future role of partnerships in Northern Ireland must take account of those changes.

## **PARTNERSHIPS MAPPING EXERCISE**

### **Summary of Methodology**

- 3.5 To establish the current partnerships in which Departments and agencies in NI were involved, EPU undertook a mapping exercise. This involved sending out two questionnaires to each Department for onward transmission to all branches and agencies. Questionnaire template 1 requested information on partnerships in which the Department was in the lead or provided funding, and template 2 focused on those partnerships in which the Department was a member only.

## **Critique of the Methodology**

3.6 The quality of information provided in the returns varied considerably. Not all questions were addressed and there was considerable disparity in how information was provided. In part this may be attributed to the structure and design of the templates which were intended to be sufficiently open in nature to enable Departments to reflect the broad range of partnership work in which they are engaged. While useful in this regard, the approach has led to difficulties in quantifying and comparing the information provided in the responses. In light of this it is necessary to qualify any conclusions reached and acknowledge that the information obtained from the returns is unlikely to reflect the full scale and nature of partnership work in Northern Ireland. However, the returns do provide sufficient information to draw out a number of key issues and provide an indicative overview of cross-sectoral working here.

## **Response Rate**

3.7 A total of 584 partnerships were identified, 354 in the returns to template 1 and 230 in the returns to template 2. However, upon initial consideration of the returns it became clear that a number of the bodies identified by departments could not be appropriately referred to as partnerships. This included New Deal Consortia and a number of PPP projects which are more appropriately considered as contractual arrangements or an alternative to partnership. In light of this departments were asked to reconsider their initial returns with a view to excluding the following:

- bodies established for the purposes of consultation, where a single agency retains responsibility for decisions and actions;

- personal and professional networks which do not involve organisational commitment; and
- contractual arrangements such as those established under PPP, and New Deal consortia

3.8 Subsequent returns resulted in 31 organisations being excluded from further analysis. This included 25 New Deal Consortia and a number of PPP projects, operating primarily at a regional and local level, and accounting for expenditure of some £13m per annum.

3.9 As a result, the total number of partnerships identified was reduced to 553. The breakdown by Department can be seen in table 4 below. Given the information requested, there is a small degree of duplication when the responses to templates 1 and 2 are compared, with a number of Departments engaged in the same partnership, though with only one in the lead. This was particularly the case with regard to Local Strategy Partnerships, Community Safety Partnerships, and to a lesser extent Investing for Health and Surestart Partnerships.

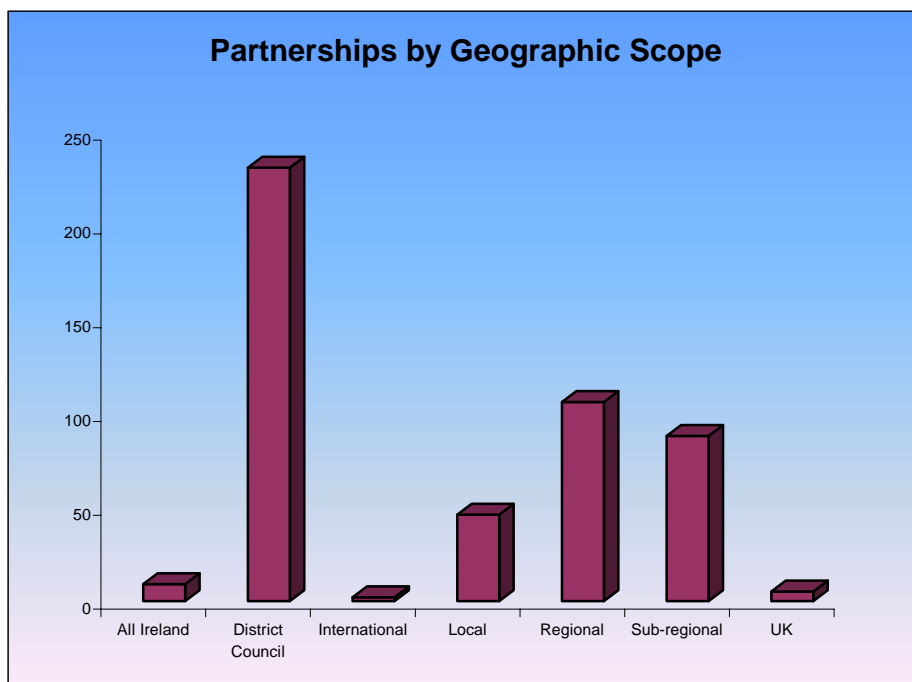
**Table 4: Responses by Department to Templates 1 and 2**

<b>Template 1</b>		<b>Template 2</b>	
<b>Department</b>	<b>Returns</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Returns</b>
DARD	21	DARD	12
DCAL	7	DCAL	5
DE	9	DE	0
DEL	9	DEL	16
DETI	17	DETI	64
DFP	34	DFP	1
DHSSPS	96	DHSSPS	105
DOE	15	DOE	2
DRD	27	DRD	3
DSD	7	DSD	17
NIO	52	NIO	0
OFMDFM	30	OFMDFM	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>229</b>

## Administrative Boundaries of Partnerships

3.10 A range of partnerships were identified in the returns, working from local to regional and international level. However, as illustrated in Figure 2 below, the great majority of partnerships identified (425 or 87.3%)<sup>18</sup> could be categorised as operating at either District Council, sub-regional or regional level.

**Figure 2**



3.11 In the majority of cases, the administrative boundaries of partnerships which operated at the sub-regional level, reflected those of either a number of district councils (i.e. the North West Stakeholder Alliance) or relevant NDPBs such as Health and Social Services Boards/Trusts (i.e. Armagh and Dungannon Health Action Zone). This would suggest that there is a very clear relationship between the administrative boundaries of partnerships and those of government and the relevant executive

<sup>18</sup> Information regarding administrative boundaries was not available for a number of partnerships. The percentage figure quoted here takes account only of the 487 responses which provided information on administrative boundaries.

bodies through which government policy and services are implemented and delivered.

3.12 To a large extent this may be explained by the concept that co-terminosity of boundaries between agencies and local authorities is an important precursor for successful co-ordination at partnership level.<sup>19</sup> In this regard, the Review of Public Administration (RPA) consultation document acknowledged concerns that *the lack of common boundaries for many of the public bodies which have to work together ... makes planning and co-operation between them difficult.*<sup>20</sup> Indeed RPA concludes that the establishment of common boundaries is required to improve services and coordination.

3.13 In light of this, and taking account of the findings outlined above, RPA proposals, particularly for local government in Northern Ireland, both in terms of the number of councils and their role, are likely to have a significant impact on the great majority of partnerships identified in the returns. Implementation of these proposals may significantly change the administrative boundaries of local government and a number of NDPBs. Recognising the perceived benefits of working within a framework of community planning and common administrative boundaries this model provides the opportunity to create more effective and strategic partnerships.

### **Issues addressed by Partnerships**

3.14 The returns to the templates clearly demonstrate the diverse nature of the partnership experience through the broad range of policy and service

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<sup>19</sup> Deloitte MCS Limited, *Mid-Term Evaluation of Local Strategy Partnerships: Stage II Summary*, Jan 2005

<sup>20</sup> DFP, *The Review of Public Administration in Northern Ireland – consultation document*, 2003, p15

delivery areas to which Departments have sought to apply this approach (table 5).

**Table 5**

<b>Issues Addressed by Partnerships</b>	<b>Focus / Type of Partnerships</b>
Area Initiative	Capacity building
Business Skills	
Community Empowerment Programme	Consultation / Engagement
Community Safety	
Culture, Arts and Leisure	Co-ordinating Services and Policies
Economic Development	
Education	
Employment	Implementation Bodies / Delivery Mechanisms
Environment	
Health- IfH	
Health and Safety	Lobby Groups
Health- Miscellaneous	
Health- Children and Young People	
Health- Carers/childcare	Monitoring Mechanism
Health- Domestic violence/sexual abuse	
Health- Drug/alcohol/tobacco	Networking Mechanism
Health- Fitness & nutrition	
Health- Health Action Zones	
Health- Administration & promotion	Project Development
Health- Research and Development	
Health- Section 75 issues/social inclusion	Promotion
Health- Specific conditions	Resource Sharing
Health- Victims	
Miscellaneous	
Neighbourhood Renewal	Service Delivery
Peace and Reconciliation	
Roads and Road Safety	
Research & Development	Strategic Planning
Rural Development	
Statistics	
Tourism	Support and Assistance for specific groups: ranging from business, to vulnerable groups
Training	
Transport	

- 3.15 However, while the types of partnership and the range of issues to which this approach has been applied is extensive, the great majority of partnerships identified in the returns appear to have been established to facilitate networking, co-ordination of services, minimise duplication of resources and share experiences and best practice. The Department of Education's *PPP Co-ordination Service*, which was established to reduce costs and create a pool of expertise in the public sector, is a particularly good example in this regard. This emphasis on networking etc. would be expected, given the rationale for and perceived benefits of the partnership approach to the public sector outlined previously.
- 3.16 As noted in section 2 of this paper, it has been suggested that there are currently too many partnerships in Northern Ireland. Concern in this area relates to the capacity of the various sectors, including the NICS, to continue to contribute effectively to a growing number of partnerships. There is a finite skills base across all sectors, and if that base is spread too thinly there is a risk that it will be used inefficiently. Recognising this, there is a need to avoid the unnecessary proliferation of partnerships. However, while demonstrating Department's commitment to cross-sectoral collaboration, the returns may also indicate some basis for concern in this regard. Many of the partnerships identified, particularly those in template two, appeared to cover the same ground, often in the same area.
- 3.17 While there is evidence of unnecessary duplication, and awareness of such at departmental level, there is a need for some caution with regard to the above conclusion. In a number of areas this apparent duplication is explained by the specialist nature of the various bodies and programmes, and the fact that these groups are often complementary bodies which, while part of the same process, have very distinct and separate roles within that process.

## Basis of Establishment

3.18 In order to identify possible reasons underpinning the proliferation of partnership working in Northern Ireland, template 1 specifically requested information regarding the basis of establishment. In total some 328 responses provided information in this regard. Of these, some 87%, have been established to meet a mandatory or statutory requirement, as outlined in Table 6 below. Government, it would therefore appear, has played a key role in the proliferation of partnerships in Northern Ireland. However, in undertaking this role, responses to the templates provide little evidence or indication of a corporate approach to partnership on the part of NICS. The European dimension has also played an important role in the proliferation of partnerships. The European Commission continues to favour partnership approaches for the delivery of regional/area specific development. In this context, many of the DARD related partnerships emerged largely under the pioneering Rural Development and PEACE Programmes in response to the aim to engage local people in programme and project delivery.

**Table 6**

Type of Establishment	No. of Partnerships	%
Company Ltd by Guarantee	40*	12.2%
Mandatory	183	55.8%
Statutory	103	31.4%
Voluntary	2	0.6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* This figure includes a number of partnerships which may be accurately categorised as mandatory or statutory (i.e. 25 Surestart partnerships), but are included in this category in line with responses to the templates.

3.19 To further investigate this issue, EPU went back to departments and requested additional information as to the reason why those partnerships

identified in both template 1 and template 2 had been established. To facilitate analysis, and encourage departments to consider issues other than the legal status of the partnership, six options were provided as follows:

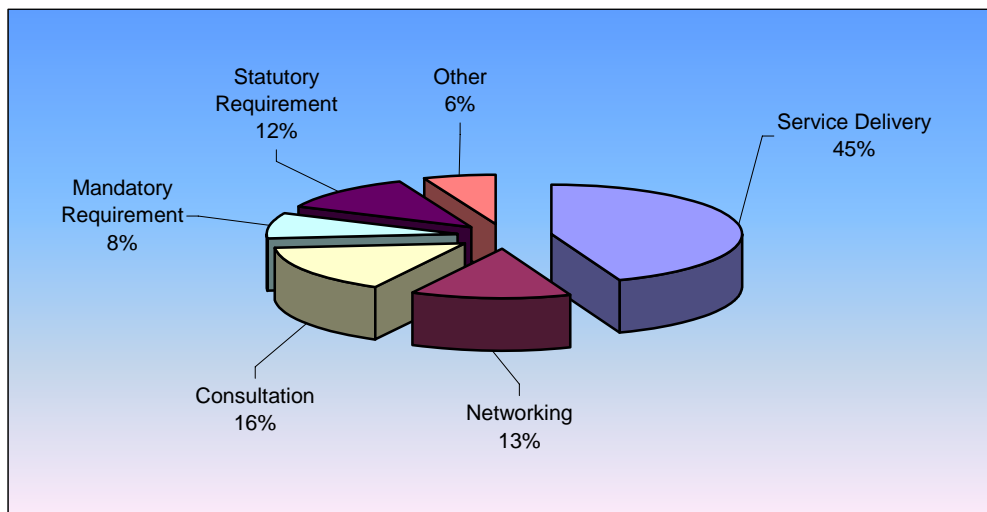
- To meet a mandatory requirement;
- To meet a statutory requirement;
- To improve service delivery;
- Consultation or mechanism to engage key groups;
- Networking mechanism; and
- Other

3.20 In response, departments provided additional information in relation to 447 partnerships. As illustrated in Table 7 and figure 3 below, responses indicated that the majority of partnerships had been established to improve service delivery (45%), or to promote consultation, engagement and networking (29%), particularly at district council level.

**Table 7**

Reason for Establishment	Number	Geographic Scope						
		International	UK	Cross Border	Regional	Sub-Regional	District Council	Local
Service Delivery	198	0	1	5	25	47	99	21
Networking	60	0	0	1	8	11	38	2
Consultation	71	0	1	2	33	11	17	7
Mandatory Requirement	37	0	0	0	3	6	26	2
Statutory Requirement	54	0	0	0	3	6	45	0
Other	27	0	0	1	3	8	12	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>447</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>35</b>

**Figure 3: Reason for Establishment of Partnerships**



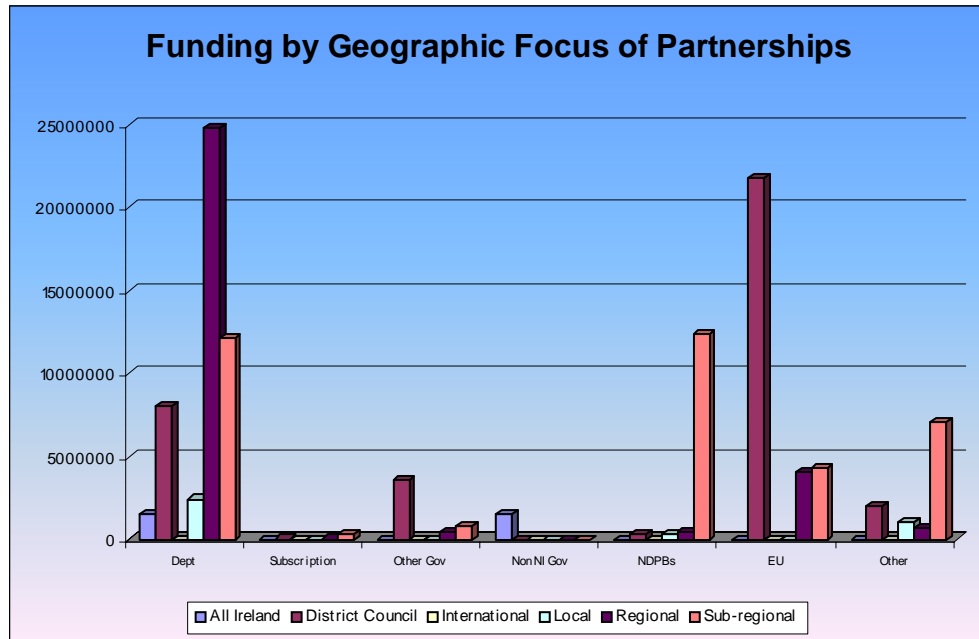
### **Funding and Costs of Partnerships**

3.21 The returns also indicated that overall partnerships in Northern Ireland receive funding of approximately £500m, with almost £250m provided directly by the 11 departments. However, this figure includes a number of large capital projects being taken forward by partnerships, and in a number of cases the funding timescale was unclear. When these figures are excluded, annual expenditure of some £231m is identified (table 8). This is likely to be a conservative estimate, given both the exclusion of the figures outlined above and the fact that a large number of responses did not provide details with regard to the funds provided. As a point of note, the EU contributes some £31million with around £21million of this destined for LSPs.

3.22 If we consider only those partnerships operating within Northern Ireland or on a cross-border basis, it is clear that the NICS Departments are the largest funders of partnership working in Northern Ireland. The greater proportion of funds, some 75%, allocated by Departments to Partnership working are allocated to partnerships working at a regional or sub-

regional level (figure 4)<sup>21</sup>. This reflects the administrative boundaries of both NICS Departments and their executive agencies, but may also be accounted for by the requirement that bodies or programmes must be regional in order to access funding from Departments.

**Figure 4** <sup>22</sup>



3.23 All the figures outlined above are considerable. However, they do not take account of the additional costs incurred by Departments through the utilisation of departmental staff in this area. From the relatively few returns that provided sufficient information to estimate time commitment with regard to departmental staff, a total of some 61,900 working days across all departments were utilised on partnership working. This is equivalent to almost 278 WTE<sup>23</sup> employees across all grades engaged solely in partnership working. However, this figure is based on estimates provided by departments and must be treated with some caution. In

<sup>21</sup> Geographic data was available only for £211, 557, 070, or approximately 91% of expenditure identified in Table 8.

<sup>22</sup> The chart does not include the figure of £97m identified under non NI government funding in Table 8.

<sup>23</sup> This figure was calculated on the basis of 223 days per annum representing the equivalent of one WTE.

addition 477 non-departmental staff were identified as engaged in supporting partnership working.



**Table 8**

	Number of Partnerships			Funding								Staff Days	Other Staff
	Template 1	Template 2	Total	Dept	Subscription	Other Gov	Non NI Gov	NDPB (include local councils)	EU	Other	Total		
DARD	21	12	33	£9,387,660	£8,000	£444,000	£0	£199,500	£3,687,658	£4,064,630	<b>£17,791,448</b>	9459.2	120.5
DCAL	7	5	12	£91,333	£0	£21,000	£0	£55,333	£0	£0	<b>£167,666</b>	1874.2	1
DEL	9	16	25	£6,435,204	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£51,000	<b>£6,486,204</b>	9212.35	10
DE	9	0	9	£9,171,000	£0	£0	£1,571,000	£0	£0	£0	<b>£10,742,000</b>	1583.3	1
DETI	17	64	81	£1,113,500	£284,000	£0	£0	£3,216,788	£150,000	£1,550,474	<b>£6,314,762</b>	10161.5	51
DFP	34	1	35	£0	£0	£3,616,049	£0	£0	£21,817,224 <sup>24</sup>	£827,000	<b>£26,260,274</b>	684.5	86.6
DHSSPS	96	105	201	£35,759,937	£9,520	£798,600	£97,000,000 <sup>25</sup>	£9,962,147	£4,490,180	£3,749,063	<b>£151,769,446</b>	23708.14	80.05
DOE	15	2	17	£2,716,039	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£541,568	<b>£3,257,607</b>	1332.48	32
DRD	27	3	30	£2,905,669	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	<b>£2,905,669</b>	1234.27	35
DSD	7	17	24	£1,387,607	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£75,357	<b>£1,462,964</b>	322.6	2
NIO	52	0	52	£800,000	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	<b>£800,000</b>	1115	0
OFMDFM	30	4	34	£2,105,269	£0	£0	£406,250	£0	£1,218,750	£0	<b>£3,730,269</b>	1212.75	58
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>553</b>	<b>£71,873,218</b>	<b>£301,520</b>	<b>£4,879,649</b>	<b>£98,977,250</b>	<b>£13,433,767</b>	<b>£31,363,812</b>	<b>£10,859,092</b>	<b>£231,688,308</b>	<b>61900.29</b>	<b>477.15</b>

<sup>24</sup> Includes EU funding for LSPs awarded through DFP

<sup>25</sup> This figure is accounted for by the English, Scottish and Welsh Health Departments contribution to the UK Clinical Research Collaboration. DHSSPS contribution is £3m.

3.24 These figures demonstrate not only the commitment of the NICS to partnership working, but also reflect the fact, as outlined earlier, that partnership working is expensive and resource consuming.

### **Effectiveness**

3.25 In light of the above, responses to the templates regarding the effectiveness of partnership working give some cause for concern. Where partnerships involved substantial expenditure or the delivery of key policies, such as Sure Start, robust monitoring and evaluation procedures appeared to be in place, though these did not always consider the cost effectiveness of the partnership approach. As with all PEACE II implementing bodies, LSPs performance are the subject of evaluation as part of the Mid Term Evaluation of the PEACE II programme.

3.26 However, for the larger number of partnerships, the responses provided little evidence that sufficient monitoring or evaluation procedures are in place to determine the impact and effectiveness of the partnership, nor to measure the cost effectiveness and added value of the approach. Evaluation should be a fundamental part of policy development and service delivery. However, despite the considerable sums of public monies and official time involved, it is a tool which has not been consistently and routinely applied to partnership working in Northern Ireland. This reflects both experience elsewhere and is perhaps indicative of a general perception that partnership is always a 'good thing'. Nevertheless, partnership working is acknowledged to be expensive and resource consuming. Given Government's commitment to ensure greater efficiency in the use of public resources, it may be difficult to justify the partnership approach unless effective evaluation is built into the process. Any evaluation process should be commensurate with both the costs and extent of the partnership relationship.

## Accountability

3.27 On a more positive note, the responses did indicate a clear line of financial accountability, either to the relevant Department Accounting Officer, where central government funding was provided, or to a named individual or partner organisation.

## Composition

3.28 Membership of the partnerships identified in the returns varied from 2 Departments working together (for example, the Vocational Enhancement Programme with members from DE and DEL only) to a wide variety of stakeholders (for example the Economic Development Forum has members from the public sector, the trade unions, employers, community and voluntary sector, education sector and the rural/farming community). However, as illustrated in table 9 below, 91% of the partnerships contain cross-sectoral representation from both the public sector and social partners such as business, community/voluntary groups, trade unions.

**Table 8**

	Total	Cross Sectoral	%	Public Sector Only	%	NICS Only	%	Unknown	%	Total
<b>DARD</b>	33	33	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	<b>33</b>
<b>DCAL</b>	12	8	67%	3	25%	1	8%	0	0%	<b>12</b>
<b>DE</b>	9	7	78%	2	22%	0	0%	0	0%	<b>9</b>
<b>DEL</b>	25	20	80%	3	12%	0	0%	2	8%	<b>25</b>
<b>DETI</b>	81	75	93%	1	1%	0	0%	5	6%	<b>81</b>
<b>DFP</b>	35	34	97%	0	0%	1	3%	0	0%	<b>35</b>
<b>DHSSPS</b>	201	180	90%	7	3%	2	1%	12	6%	<b>201</b>
<b>DOE</b>	17	15	88%	1	6%	0	0%	1	6%	<b>17</b>
<b>DRD</b>	30	28	93%	2	7%	0	0%	0	0%	<b>30</b>
<b>DSD</b>	24	18	75%	0	0%	0	0%	6	25%	<b>24</b>
<b>NIO</b>	52	52	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	<b>52</b>
<b>OFMDFM</b>	34	32	94%	1	3%	0	0%	1	3%	<b>34</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>553</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>553</b>

## **Recruitment of partners**

3.29 As outlined previously, a key requirement of a successful partnership is to identify and engage appropriate partners. The most common approach outlined in the responses, involved the lead department identifying and recruiting those organisations that might be interested in joining and would be of benefit to the partnership. Comments in the responses, indicate that this approach has led to particular difficulties for social partners. It is common for such requests to be issued to a relatively small number of well established groups, i.e. NICVA, NIC-ICTU, CBI etc. The capacity of such groups to continue to meet such requests is limited and their long-term ability to contribute effectively to the partnership process may be impaired by the ever-growing number of partnerships in Northern Ireland.

## **General comments**

3.30 Both templates provided space for general or additional comments departments might wish to make. A number of general comments were made, a sample of which are outlined below:

- Too much time and energy spent on bureaucracy attached to Peace funding
- Need for funding on a recurrent basis
- Provision of budget allocation on 3-year basis would be more beneficial to planning processes
- Need for better representation from employers
- Need for better co-operation between strategic and operational tiers
- The North Belfast Partnership Board should be smaller and concentrate on Policy and Executive direction

- Arrangements should be made to consult regularly with sectors not directly represented on the Board.

## **LOCAL EXPERIENCE OF PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

- 3.31 To inform the development of recommendations and consult on some of the key findings emerging from the analysis of departmental returns, officials from EPU also met with a number of partnerships and key regional organisations to discuss their experience of partnership working.
- 3.32 Meetings at a local level concentrated on Local Strategy Partnerships, Leader + and Community Safety Partnerships operating in the Derry City Council and Magherafelt District Council areas.
- 3.33 These areas were chosen to provide a contrast between an urban and rural focus where all three partnerships operate within the Council area and also to take account of two alternative approaches to partnership. While LSP, Leader + (RAPID) and CSP partnerships in the Derry District Council area have separate administrative structures, in Magherafelt all three share administrative structures in the form of the Magherafelt Area Partnership.
- 3.34 Five regional organisations were identified, representing trade unions (NIC/ICTU), the voluntary Sector (NICVA), the local business sector (CBI), and local government (NILGA and SOLACE).
- 3.35 To facilitate discussion a script was distributed to all groups. The script focused on exploring a number of issues identified in the literature review and the mapping exercise. A copy of the script is attached at Appendix Four.

3.36 Although the discussions with the above bodies were wide ranging the key issues identified can be summarised as follows:

- The role and added value of partnership;
- Building effective partnerships;
- The public sector as a partner; and
- Partnership and local government.

### **The role and added value of partnership**

3.37 While there was considerable variation across the groups as to the meaning and role of partnership all highlighted the added value which they suggested partnership or partnership working afforded. This ranged from promoting greater networking and understanding between divergent sectors to synergy and more effective approaches to dealing with joined up problems.

3.38 Almost all partnerships operating at a local level highlighted the longer term impact or value of partnership in building capacity and promoting networking and understanding between the various sectors and partners. The regional bodies interviewed tended to see the value of partnership in terms of providing a more integrated and strategic approach to cross cutting problems and service delivery. Although there was broad agreement among those interviewed that partnership could provide for a more effective and efficient use of resources, most felt that it was too early to confirm whether this had been the case.

3.39 While acknowledging that partnership can play a role in bringing key parties into a process and building relations in a divided society, there were some concerns that as a means of engaging with communities it

offered little added value and alternative approaches should be considered.

### **Building effective partnerships**

- 3.40 There was some concern that too many current partnerships are ineffective. A number of contributing factors were identified in this regard relating primarily to membership and the appropriateness of the approach, but also touching on the absence of co-terminosity and the need for partnerships to have a clear focus and adequate resources. In addition, one group also suggested that the main reason partnerships fail is that too often partnerships are not brought together voluntarily, but are constructed or required in order to access funding. These involuntary partnerships, it was stated, are from experience the most ineffective.
- 3.41 Almost all groups consulted emphasised the importance of attracting and engaging the right individuals and providing them with appropriate training and support. There was general agreement that more training is needed to develop capacity and that those at the local level didn't always get the support or the training they needed. In addition to the individual skills and expertise which they might bring, the key requirement was that they had sufficient authority and expertise to take relevant and appropriate decisions on behalf of their parent organisations. There was some concern that as the number of partnerships grow it becomes more difficult for organisations and sectors to meet this demand and to provide representation at a sufficiently senior level. The growing utilisation of formal partnerships therefore has the potential to undermine the overall effectiveness of this approach.
- 3.42 If partnership is to be effective in the long term, this is a problem which must be addressed. There was a perception among most groups

interviewed, that government has a tendency to create new partnerships for new initiatives and as such is a primary contributor to the proliferation of partnerships. In this context it was suggested that, as a first step, there is a need for a more coordinated and considered approach from government to stop the unnecessary creation of new partnerships where existing arrangements could be utilised.

3.43 Following on, there was also general agreement that there may be a need to consider rationalising existing partnerships. However, this was qualified in that rationalisation should not become an end in itself, and should only be undertaken where a partnership is not effective or rationalisation is likely to result in more effective arrangements. One group suggested that the focus should be on administrative structures rather than the partnership itself, and the Magherafelt Area Partnership was presented as one model in this regard.

3.44 One group cautioned that rationalisation could also have negative consequences by creating large unfocused partnerships with too many objectives or areas of interest. All groups agreed that a key requirement for an effective partnership was a limited number of focused objectives. Recognising such concerns it may be assumed that there is therefore a need to balance any rationalisation with the need to maintain focus and ensure that partners could continue to see value both in their own contribution and the wider role of the partnership.

3.45 Local government representatives, however, offered the contrasting view that it would be possible to have for example only one formal partnership operating at district council level. The focus could be maintained and it could be workable, it was suggested, if the distinction was made between formal partnership and partnership working. The group suggested that many issues taken forward by current formal partnerships could be

addressed as effectively if not more so by an informal partnership approach.

- 3.46 It was also highlighted that while there may be kudos in setting up partnerships, there is often a failure to consider when the partnership should end. As a result, it was suggested, there are a number of partnerships which continue to exist despite the fact that they no longer have a clear role.

### **The public sector as a partner**

- 3.47 Discussions with a number of groups highlighted concerns with regard to Government's commitment to partnership and the role of public sector representatives on formal partnerships.
- 3.48 While acknowledging that key documents such as Priorities and Budget clearly state Government's commitment to partnership in theory, many of the groups interviewed stated that this commitment had not been reflected in practice. There were also some concerns that following the suspension of devolution, it is unclear as to the strategic policy direction which government wishes to pursue in relation to partnerships.
- 3.49 The role of public sector representatives on formal partnerships also emerged as an issue of some concern. Increasingly, it was suggested, public sector representatives are seeking to participate in formal partnerships as observers rather than full partners and are very reluctant to take decisions. There was a recognition that given the requirements of enhanced corporate governance and accountability etc. and the issues which may be involved, on occasion individual representatives will not be in a position to take decisions or make commitments on behalf of the parent organisation. However, many felt that this may be a cultural issue

as there are examples of public sector bodies actively participating as full and effective partners.

3.50 The majority of groups stated that from their experience the key factor behind this trend is that public sector bodies are increasingly represented by more junior staff. The concern is that junior staff are unlikely to have the authority or knowledge of their own organisation to take decisions or provide significant input. In this context, NICVA suggested that if partnership members do not have authority and decision making power within their organisations they are unlikely to take decisions within the partnerships. Reflecting such concerns a number of partnerships operating at local level reported that representation was not delegated to junior staff, and senior management attendance was essential if decisions were to be made. SOLACE also emphasised the need for senior management participation.

3.51 The increased number of formal partnerships, particularly given the absence of co-terminosity, may be a contributory factor in this area. As with other sectors, the public sector has limited capacity at senior level and as the number of partnerships grow it becomes necessary to draw representation from more junior levels. A reduction in the number of partnerships should therefore help to address this trend and provide for more appropriate participation where public sector bodies do wish to engage as full partners. However, it is also probable that public sector bodies are engaged in a number of partnerships in which they will continue to seek to play an observer role. In such cases public sector bodies may wish to consider whether membership of the relevant formal partnership is appropriate or whether alternative arrangements may be more effective.

### **Partnership and Local Government**

- 3.52 NILGA and SOLACE highlighted a number of issues relating to the role of local government and partnerships. Both organisations suggested that evidence from GB demonstrated that partnerships worked best when local government took a leading role. Experience in Northern Ireland, it was suggested, has also demonstrated that where local councils do not take a leading role, partnerships do not focus, there is little evidence of strategic thinking, little real partnering and very little effective action.
- 3.53 In light of this, both bodies suggested that the role of local government is often overlooked and largely undervalued by the Northern Ireland administration. SOLACE highlighted the perception that there is very limited engagement of the local government sector by the administration in policy development. It was suggested that this contrasts significantly with the degree to which government has sought to engage with the voluntary sector and other public sector bodies.
- 3.54 Both bodies also raised concerns with regard to the accountability of partnerships. Some within local government have clear concerns that a number of partnerships are engaged in areas or issues on which councils should lead, while others may on occasion see themselves as an alternative to the local council. The key concern in this regard is that such partnerships have the potential to dilute democracy. Community representatives on a partnership, it was suggested, do not have a mandate, they are not directly accountable and there were some concerns that on occasion they may not necessarily represent the community.

## **LOCAL STRATEGY PARTNERSHIPS**

- 3.55 To assist the EPU mapping exercise, the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) provided information on the 26 Local Strategy Partnerships

(LSPs) operating in Northern Ireland. While that information has been included in the general analysis outlined above, there has been considerable debate regarding the future role of LSPs beyond PEACE II. Recognising the complexity of this particular issue and role of this paper as a think piece to assist further detailed consideration, SEUPB's analysis is outlined below.

3.56 There are 26 LSPs in Northern Ireland, one in each District Council area. In total there are some 670 LSP members, drawn on a 50:50 basis from the statutory sector and the four 'social partners', business, trade unions, agriculture and the voluntary/community sector.

3.57 LSPs were established as the key delivery mechanism for two measures of PEACE II:

- Measure 3.1 (ERDF) - to develop the social economy
- Measure 3.2 (ESF) - to support local training initiatives

3.58 In addition, a number of LSPs are also involved in the delivery of Measure 2.11, involving locally based regeneration, and are in receipt of funds from sources other than PEACE II.

3.59 LSPs evolved from, but are fundamentally different to the PEACE 1 District Partnerships. Compared with their predecessors, the LSPs have greater autonomy and are intended to adopt a more integrated and sustainable approach to planning and managing the use of resources.

3.60 Within the EU PEACE Programme it was envisaged that each LSP would develop a local area strategy and action plan for the area that will become the framework for the sustainable regeneration and development of a district area during and beyond PEACE II. This role reflects the

emphasis placed by the Executive on the possibility for LSPs to develop roles beyond the delivery lifespan of the PEACE II programme.

3.61 Reflecting their relatively autonomous nature, there is considerable variation in the number of members per LSP, ranging from 16 in Craigavon to 34 in Magherafelt<sup>26</sup>. The two LSPs covering the largest population areas, with the largest budget, Belfast and Derry, have 27 and 28 members respectively.

3.62 £13,600,000 of technical assistance (TA) costs for administration is awarded to the LSPs, of which £12,100,000 is Measure 3.1 and 3.2 specific<sup>27</sup>. 21 LSPs receive a figure between £300,000 and £400,000. Some receive more:

Belfast:	2,766,430
Derry:	1,253,167
Lisburn:	644,400
Newry and Mourne:	574,800
Craigavon:	461,400

3.63 PEACE II funding is the most significant TA received by each LSP, accounting for over 95% of the total funds received for administration costs. Although the Peace II funding has been extended to the end of 2006, this will be a cause for concern when this funding ends and as LSPs extend their remit as has been suggested.

3.64 Of the 23 LSPs that provided returns, the SEUPB found that 85.6 employees were employed, ranging from 1 to 16 employees per LSP.

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<sup>26</sup> The number of members in the Magherafelt Area Partnership reflects the fact that MAP provides a single administrative umbrella organisation for implementation of PEACE II, LEADER + and Community Safety.

<sup>27</sup> This figure runs over a 4 year period.

The number of employees is reasonably in line with TA costs and project funds, with 2 notable exceptions. Fermanagh employs 7 staff and Magherafelt, 10, which appears very high in comparison with their fund and cost provisions.

### **The Effectiveness of LSPs**

3.65 The responses to SEUPB provided little insight into the actual or perceived effectiveness of LSPs. However, the LSP Working Group recently commissioned Deloitte MCS Ltd to undertake an independent evaluation of their effectiveness. The first stage of that exercise, a mid-term evaluation, has now been completed and a report was produced in September 2004<sup>28</sup>. That report suggests that the absence of a clear cause and effect model for the peace and reconciliation programme makes it difficult to prove that LSP projects are having tangible peace and reconciliation impacts on the ground. This would suggest that the appropriate processes are not in place to allow for a comprehensive evaluation of LSPs in this regard.

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<sup>28</sup> Deloitte MCS Limited, made available a *Mid-Term Evaluation of Local Strategy Partnerships: Stage II Summary*, in January 2005.

## **4.0 KEY ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 This report was commissioned to provide an analysis of the current position with regard to partnerships in Northern Ireland, to serve as a think piece and assist further detailed consideration.
- 4.2 In light of the outcome of the EPU mapping exercise, and taking account of experience elsewhere, this paper has highlighted a number of issues which may require further consideration and recommends action to provide for a more effective and corporate approach to partnership working. These are outlined below.

### **Key Issues**

- **Number of Partnerships**

- 4.3 There is a tendency to see partnership as an ideal model applicable to every context or policy area. However, as outlined earlier, partnership is an expensive and difficult process and can only be effective where it is appropriate. It is widely recognised that there are currently too many partnerships. This has increasingly stretched the capacity of all sectors, including government, to engage effectively. This undermines both the performance of individual partnerships and also confidence in the partnership approach. As a result there is a need for some level of consolidation.
- 4.4 The responses to the mapping exercise indicate that the driving force behind the establishment of the majority of partnerships identified has been government policy, primarily at the regional and national level but also at EU level. This is consistent with the historical evidence presented

previously in this paper. However, there is little evidence of a corporate approach to partnership either at departmental or NICS level.

- 4.5 As a first step in addressing this issue, before entering into partnership, public bodies should ensure that the partnership approach is appropriate and likely to be the most effective and efficient.
- 4.6 To enable partnerships to work effectively and achieve maximum benefit, it is essential that action is taken to reduce the number of partnerships in the longer-term. However, any such action must take account of the outcome of the RPA to ensure that actions are consistent with any new administrative arrangements. Rationalisation in this context may, where appropriate, focus on reducing administrative structures rather than actual partnerships, as has been the case with the Magherafelt Area Partnership. There is also a need to ensure that rationalisation does not create large unfocused partnerships with too many objectives or areas of interest. Rationalisation, therefore, should only take place where it is likely to result in more effective arrangements.
- 4.7 In the interim and beyond, there is a strong need for greater co-ordination from the centre to avoid partnership fatigue and ensure that resources are available for effective partnership working. In light of this, action should be taken to better co-ordinate government policy on partnerships.
- 4.8 ‘Switching off’ individual mandatory or statutory partnerships is likely to prove difficult, even in circumstances where they are not working effectively. The focus, therefore, must be on deciding at the point of inception, whether a formal partnership is needed and indeed whether there are opportunities to utilise existing arrangements.

- **Building the team**

4.9 A partnership is in essence a team and partnership is a process based upon the relationships and skills of the individual partners. Successful teams take time and work to establish. They require the building of relationships and mutual understanding between partners. In addition the team building process requires the development or nurturing of skills to ensure that all partners can contribute and that the partnership itself is resourced for success. This may require facilitation and training to ensure that all partners have the necessary skills to contribute.

- **Effectiveness**

4.10 Partnerships are diverse, while this has the potential to be a weakness in the partnership approach, it is also a particular strength, allowing partnerships to be tailored to issues and needs. Therefore, dissemination of potentially over-rigid or restrictive best practice models should be avoided. However, there are key factors, outlined in section 2, which evidence suggests contribute to the effective working of all partnerships. The EPU templates did not address this issue and do not, therefore, provide an insight into whether appropriate processes and skills etc are in place. In light of this, there may be value in lead departments evaluating all existing partnerships in which they are involved to ensure that the appropriate processes, resources and skills etc. are in place to maximise the potential for success. The Audit Commission checklist for effective partnership working is attached at Appendix Five for information. Any such evaluation will also wish to consider any facilitation or training which may be required to ensure that all partners have the necessary skills to contribute. Where there are a large number of partnerships, as is the case for example in relation to health and social services, the review of existing partnerships may be more appropriately undertaken as part of the outworking of decisions emerging from the RPA.

- **Evaluation**

4.11 It is also clear that a significant proportion of public monies are utilised in progressing partnership working. The responses indicated that some £230m - £500m of government and EU funding is allocated to partnership working. This is a very significant annual public expenditure commitment. However, despite this level of commitment, and given the recognition that partnership working is expensive, difficult and resource consuming, the responses do not indicate that sufficient monitoring or evaluation procedures are in place to determine the impact and effectiveness of the partnership, nor to measure the cost effectiveness and added value of the approach.

### **LSPs – Key Issues**

4.12 The mid-term evaluation and other papers produced by government officials have raised a number of issues which are likely to impact upon any consideration of the future role of LSPs.

4.13 The ending of PEACE II and the outcome of the Review of Public Administration in Northern Ireland (RPA) are likely to have significant consequences for LSPs, particularly with regard to proposals for local government in Northern Ireland. LSPs have acknowledged the need for close working relations with Councils and the value of co-terminosity in terms of planning. Recognising this, the sharing of common administrative boundaries should continue post RPA. The *Mid-Term Evaluation of Local Strategy Partnerships, Stage II Summary*, recognises this concern and concludes that “*the evidence would suggest that there is a need for each local authority to be augmented by one LSP, regardless of the boundary outcomes of the RPA.*”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Deloitte MCS Limited, *Mid-Term Evaluation of Local Strategy Partnerships: Stage II Summary*, Jan 2005, p. 27

4.14 The RPA team has, as part of two-tier model for public administration, suggested enhanced powers and influence for local government. These proposals, if implemented would result in local councils, by means of a community planning model, acting as the locus of several public bodies (e.g. health, policing, economic development, civil service departments, and housing) developing local policy and providing services in their areas. Unlike their counterparts in England and Wales (see section 3) LSPs in Northern Ireland have responsibility for preparing local development strategies. In England and Wales, that statutory duty rests with local authorities, who utilise LSPs to develop that strategy. Implementation of the RPA proposals for local government may require a redefinition of the LSP model in Northern Ireland, more along the lines of their GB and RoI counterparts.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Effectiveness of Partnerships**

**Recommendation 1:** All existing partnerships involving public sector partners should be reviewed by their parent department and necessary action taken to ensure that:

- they are appropriate;
- opportunities for rationalisation are identified where these are likely to result in more effective arrangements;
- all relevant bodies/partners are engaged;
- they have the necessary resources, structures, processes and personnel to

maximise their potential effectiveness;  
and

- appropriate performance criteria, and monitoring and evaluation procedures are in place to enable a longer-term evaluation of their effectiveness.

Where appropriate departments may wish to consider the review of existing partnerships as part of the outworking of the decisions emerging from the RPA.

- **Number of Partnerships and the Need for a Corporate Approach**

**Recommendation 2:** A central unit should have the opportunity to review proposals for new partnerships emerging from departments. The Unit should:

- provide best practice advice to departments, establishing a clear set of principles for effective partnership working that could be utilised by departments;
- advise departments in light of best practice as to whether proposals gave partnerships the best chance of success;  
and
- where appropriate, identify opportunities to utilise existing arrangements.

The unit's role should be advisory, final decisions would be taken by the instigating department(s).

**Recommendation 3:** To provide a means of disseminating information, a detailed list of current partnerships in NI should be made available on-line and updated regularly.

- **Future of Local Strategy Partnerships**

**Recommendation 4:** The future role of LSPs should be revisited following the outcome of the RPANI.

4.15 Government in Northern Ireland remains committed to the principle of partnership working. However, recognising that partnership working is difficult, every effort must be taken to ensure that the benefits of partnership are realised and the risks avoided. Implementation of the recommendations outlined above will facilitate a more effective and corporate approach to partnership working on the part of NICS. However, it is essential that we recognise that any partnership is in essence a team. As with all teams, the potential success of a partnership is to a significant degree dependant upon the relationships and skills of the individual partners. In particular, the ability of all partners to agree and contribute to the realisation of a shared vision and goals.

### Partnerships – Terms of Reference

To undertake a comprehensive analysis of the position in relation to Partnerships in Northern Ireland by:

1. establishing the rationale for partnership working;
2. compiling an overall picture of what Partnerships are currently operating (to include those Partnerships with central government funding and/or membership);
3. examining the accountability, funding and composition of such partnerships. (A distinction will be drawn between administrative, programme and consultancy funding; and, as far as possible, the number of FTE staff involved in providing administrative support will also be determined);
4. clarifying the role of and what constitutes a partnership; and
5. considering partnership experience in NI and elsewhere, including the efficiency and effectiveness of present arrangements, along with relevant key documents produced and current thinking especially in relation to the emerging findings of the Review of Public Administration.

To submit to Ministers by the end of October/early November 2004 a draft paper on Partnerships in NI. It is intended that this paper will serve as a think piece and assist further detailed considerations.

## Appendix Two

### TEMPLATE 1 – PARTNERSHIPS FOR WHICH THE DEPARTMENT HAS FUNDING ROLE/IS LEAD DEPARTMENT

**DEPARTMENT:** .....

**CONTACT NAME:** .....

**CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBER:** .....

**CONTACT E-MAIL ADDRESS:** .....

#### **1. Title of Partnership**

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#### **2. Geographical Scope of Partnership's Operation (i.e. Northern Ireland-wide, District Council area, Board area or other (please specify))**

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#### **3. Legal Basis/Reason for Creation of Partnership**

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#### **4. Role**

<b>(a) Role/Aim of Partnership</b>
<b>(b) Detail Targets Set</b>

## 5. Membership

<b>(a) Composition of Partnership, i.e. how many members from which organisations?</b>
<b>(b) How were members Identified?</b>
<b>(c) Are any members paid for their involvement, over and above their salary from their employers?</b>

## 6. Does the Partnership have a defined lifespan? If so, what is it?

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## 7. Central Government Funding

<b>(a) Total Central Government Funding (please also specify individual Departmental contributions where appropriate) and indicate how much of the funding, if any, is from which EU funds</b>
<b>(b) Administration Funding, i.e. costs of secretariat or office back-up</b>
<b>(c) Project Funding, i.e. awards to projects</b>
<b>(d) Consultancy Funding, i.e. costs paid to consultants for technical assistance, economic appraisals, etc</b>

## 8. Other Funding, i.e. not central government funds

<b>(a) Total Other Funding, i.e. from District Councils, Lottery, Charitable Foundations, etc</b>
<b>(b) Please specify each funding source and contribution (where known)</b>
<b>(c) Administration Funding, i.e. costs of secretariat or office back-up</b>
<b>(d) Project Funding, i.e. awards to projects</b>

**(e) Consultancy Funding, i.e. costs paid to consultants for technical assistance, economic appraisals, etc**

## **9. Staffing**

**(a) Departmental Staff commitment to the work of the Partnership (full time equivalent by grade)**

**(b) Number of Other Staff dedicated to the work of the Partnership (full time equivalent), i.e. non-Departmental staff**

**(c) What are the secretariat arrangements for the Partnership? How many staff are dedicated to running the Partnership (full time equivalent)? In which organisation are they based?**

**(d) Does the Partnership have a full time secretariat?**

**(e) What are the staffing costs associated with the Partnership?**

## **10. Accountability**

**(a) Through which organisation are the Partnership's funds managed?**

**(b) Who is the Accounting Officer for the expenditure?**

**(c) What liability if any does each organisation represented have in relation to the Partnership?**

**(d) What are the Partnership's Reporting Arrangements (financial and performance against objectives)?**

**11. Monitoring & Evaluation Arrangements**

**(a) Department's Monitoring Arrangements i.e. financial and performance in achieving the objectives/desired programme outcomes**

**(b) What evaluation has been carried out of the Partnership's effectiveness in delivering the desired outcomes of the programmes for which it is responsible? (It would be useful if you could attach a copy of the evaluation report if available)**

**(c) What is the Department's view of the evaluation findings?**

**(d) What plans are there for future evaluation?**

**12. General/Further Comments**

**Appendix Three**

**TEMPLATE 2 – PARTNERSHIPS ON WHICH THE DEPARTMENT HAS  
MEMBERSHIP BUT NOT LEAD OR FUNDING ROLE**

**DEPARTMENT:** .....

**CONTACT NAME:** .....

**CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBER:** .....

**CONTACT E-MAIL ADDRESS:** .....

**1. Title of Partnership**

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*2. Why does the Department have membership?*

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*3. What is the Department's commitment to the Partnership in terms of number and grade of staff and their time commitment?*

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**4. What is the Department's assessment of the effectiveness of the Partnership in furthering:**

**(a) the Partnership's Objectives?**

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**(b) the Department's Objectives?**

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**5. Does the Department have any suggestions for improving the effectiveness of this Partnership arrangement?**

**6. General/Further Comments**

## Appendix Four

### Script for Meetings with Partnerships & Regional Bodies

1. What is the meaning and role of partnership?
2. What are the characteristics of good and bad partnerships?
3. What principles should underpin partnership working?
4. What are the benefits of partnership?
5. Is partnership an effective approach?
6. What added value does the partnership approach bring?
7. Are there too many partnerships - is there a need for rationalisation?
8. Is there evidence of an increase in partnership working?
9. Is there evidence of increased engagement by government in:
  - the development of policy/strategy; and
  - the planning and delivery of services?
10. Has participation in partnership led to improved relations with partners?
11. Has the partnership approach led to more efficient and effective use of resources?
12. Are public sector bodies good partners?

13. What particular difficulties or problems do you associate with the partnership approach?
14. To what degree do parent organisations support the partnership approach and is this commitment reflected in how they work?
15. What steps should be taken to improve and enhance partnership working?
16. Do current partnership arrangements/models work, or is there a need to identify new ways of working?

### Effective Partnership Working

#### Checklist for action

Questions for partnerships and for councils, police forces, health authorities and trusts that are involved in partnership working.

#### *Please pull out and copy*

In its management paper, *A Fruitful Partnership*, the Commission identified a number of factors that can help organisations to decide when to work in partnership and to help partnerships to be effective. They have been translated into a series of questions for partnerships, and for councils, health bodies and police forces that are involved in partnership working.

These questions have been drawn together into this checklist. The aim of the checklist is to assist partnerships and their members in reviewing their effectiveness.

## Question

### **DECIDING TO GO INTO PARTNERSHIP**

1. Does this organisation have clear and sound reasons for being involved in its current partnerships?
2. Where new partnerships must be set up to meet national requirements, what groundwork is being done locally to maximise their chances of success?
3. Are changes in behaviour or in decision-making processes needed to avoid setting up partnerships with only limited chances of success?

### **GETTING STARTED**

4. Have all the partnerships in which the organisation is involved been reviewed to evaluate whether the form of the partnership is appropriate to its functions and objectives?
5. Do all the partnerships have an appropriately structured board or other decision-making forum?
6. When setting up a new partnership, how are prospective partners identified?

### **OPERATING EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY**

7. Do partners share the same main objectives for the partnership?
8. Are the partnership's objectives consistent with those of the partnership organisations?
9. If an outsider watched a partnership operate, would he/she be able to identify the partnership's main objectives?
10. Do the partners know where the boundaries between the activities of the partnership and of their own organisations lie?
11. Do the members of partnership steering groups have sufficient authority to commit their organisations to decisions?
12. Are partnerships prepared to delegate responsibility for parts of their work to particular partners?

## Question

13. Do large partnerships have an executive group that all the partners trust to make decisions on their behalf?
14. Are project-planning techniques used to ensure the separate agreement of all the partners to a course of action in good time, when necessary?
15. Do the partnership's decisions get implemented effectively?
16. Are partnership staff selected for their technical competence and for their ability to operate both inside and outside a conventional public sector framework?
17. What actions are taken to build and maintain trust between partners?
18. If members have dropped out of a partnership, what lessons have been learnt about how to maintain involvement in the future?

## **REVIEWING SUCCESS**

19. Does each partnership have a shared understanding of the outcomes that it expects to achieve, both in the short and longer term?
20. What means have been identified for measuring the partnership's progress towards expected outcomes and the health of the partnership itself?
21. Has the partnership identified its own performance indicators and set jointly agreed targets for these?
22. Are the costs of the partnership known, including indirect and opportunity costs?
23. Are these costs actively monitored and weighed against the benefits that the partnership delivers?
24. What steps have been taken to make sure that partnership's are accountable to the individual partners, external stakeholders, service users and the public at large?
25. Are some or all of the partnership's meetings open to the public?
26. Is information about the partnership's spending, activities and results available to the public?
27. Does the partnership review its corporate governance arrangements?
28. Has the partnership considered when its work is likely to be complete, and how it will end/handover its work when this point is reached?

## Top Ten Partnership Killers

### 1. For ever and ever...

*The problem:* A partnership that lives on beyond its purpose will either wither slowly creating dissatisfaction among those who stick to the bitter end, or create an excuse for people to leave the office for useless meetings!

*The solution:* For project-based partnerships and those based on limited funding agree an exit strategy – know when the job is done and what you might leave in place. End the partnership with a party and thank everyone for their input.

### 2. One-upmanship

*The problem:* Competition between organisations can be a good driver, but too much and it will lead to blame, self-righteousness and a trench mentality.

*The solution:* Ensure you spend time early on team building and developing a sense of shared purpose – build relationships between organisations to blur the boundaries.

### 3. Right place, wrong people

*The problem:* A partnership will be powerless if representatives from constituent bodies constantly have to go back to their parent organisations for decisions.

***The solution:*** Make sure the people put on your partnership have sufficient authority to decide much of the business at the meetings – NB they don't have to be at a certain (or similar) level within the organisation but they do need delegated authority.

#### **4. Pulling rank**

***The problem:*** Higher paid or higher graded officers pulling rank around the table will silence others who have just as much to give.

***The solution:*** If you have the right people from organisations, all with delegated authority, the principle of 'equality around the table' should be agreed and adhered to – and written into your terms of reference.

#### **5. Mission creep**

***The problem:*** Often a partnership where people are working well will come up with hundreds of other ideas that can be tackled beyond the partnerships original brief. This will bog you down.

***The solution:*** Agree a clear vision and underpin this with a clear focus on 5-6 priorities. Allow some flexibility for 1-2 priorities to change over time as things develop and don't be afraid to junk activity that isn't working in order to free up time for new ideas.

#### **6. Only here for the cash**

***The problem:*** Many organisations will be attracted to a partnership by money – like bees to the honey pot. This motivation alone can kill a

partnership through representatives unwilling to volunteer for shared activities for instance.

***The solution:*** Set out clear shared common ground from the start (try the ‘common ground’ workshop) and focus on your shared priorities and outcomes (see mission creep above).

## **7. Target? What Target?**

***The problem:*** Many partnerships will come together around a good idea but fail to set real targets around the shared vision. Starting vague will mean you’ll never know what you’ve achieved.

***The solution:*** Set clear targets to support your shared priorities and chart your progress – agree a simple but shared performance management system that everyone signs up to so you’re all speaking the same language.

## **8. Death by drudgery**

***The problem:*** Endless business meetings that no-one wants to attend will result in – guess what? – no-one attending! Tailor your sessions to need – how often do you really need to monitor your activity?

***The solution:*** Rather than business meetings would a workshop or brainstorm be a better use of time? Keep business meetings short and focused on what you need to do not engage in endless report-backs from people who are basically saying “my project is better than yours”. Build in time to celebrate success.

## **9. We know what’s best for you**

***The problem:*** Many partnerships are based on consultation but fail to continually engage. Building your workplan on historical information is not enough – those meant to benefit may not want what you are offering!

***The solution:*** Establish your partnership based on a solid foundation of genuine consultation and ensure that you have built in activities that continually engage your client group.

#### **10. Strictly on a need-to-know basis....**

***The problem:*** Lack of communication between partners and beneficiaries will breed suspicion and resentment and will fuel personal agendas.

***The solution:*** Set up good processes to network and share information. Evidence shows that the more you inform, the more satisfied people will be.