

Yorkshire & Humber 14-19 Challenge

**Developing a firm
understanding of our
14-19 Partnerships**

**Compiled by NYBEP Ltd
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1.0 Background

As a first step to progressing the Yorkshire and Humber 14-19 Challenge, NYBEP was engaged to make an initial audit of the Local Authorities' development of 14-19 Partnerships across our region. When we understand the current position and the infrastructure we are all working within, we can see how far we have travelled and the journey still ahead of us!

This briefing paper should be seen as a snapshot in time – probably outdated even before it hits the printer. The fluid nature of our partnerships is very apparent, and essential to support the developments on the ground on a daily basis; but it is valuable to stand back and assess progress to date.

2.0 Original task commissioned

In the words of the wider Challenge Managers, 'The Challenge is not about the one-off, "today's photo opportunity, tomorrow's fish and chip wrapper" initiatives. The aim has to be to create a framework for the future to ensure the best use of resource going forward for maximum impact in the region ... establishing a process which enables and encourages engagement, the availability and accessibility of information, inspiring the people who will make it happen and some sustainable initiatives evidencing this new approach'.

Within the context of this wider Challenge brief, NYBEP was originally commissioned to complete two tasks:

Task One - Mapping

The initial task was designed to help all relevant partners understand the differing models of 14-19 Partnership development across the 16 Local Authorities within our sub-region. Mapping each partnership, its composition and its pathway from strategy to implementation will allow us to better understand the relationships between partners, and the evolution of the partnership in relation to the area's response to the national 11-19 reform programme.

Task Two - Directory

Through investigating the structure and development of 14-19 Partnerships (and resulting Consortia) we hope to build a directory of known partners, local, regional and national, that contribute to the support/infrastructure at present in Yorkshire and the Humber. This 'who's who' directory will document the roles, objectives and responsibilities of key partners, enabling them all to review the potential impact of their engagement. In addition to the partners known and active within the region, the directory should identify other key partners - not active as yet, but with potential to add value to our Partnerships or Consortia.

Task one having now been completed (with outcomes detailed within this briefing paper) and following the release of the post-Gateway 2 support material, task two has been postponed and is likely to be re-negotiated.

2.1 Methodology

We conducted task one largely through telephone interviewing and email conversations. Having identified within each authority the primary contact, the completion of a common template with follow-up conversations to clarify detail have proved sufficient to gain a sound understanding of the majority of the Partnership structures across the region.

Annex 1 to this report gives the list of contacts identified and worked through. Their individual responses are included in Annex 2 - containing the complete set of fifteen documents gathered.

3.0 Understanding our responses

We appreciate that many of our colleagues across the county are among the busiest people anywhere at present - the pace, scale and nature of this development is tremendous - therefore we would like to place on record our sincere thanks to those contacts listed in Annex 1 and their teams.

Having discussed with the Authorities and having studied the frameworks, there are a number of prominent common themes emerging that we would like to highlight in this paper. Our 'observations' are just that - observations - and we would not wish at this stage to make any value judgements or recommendations on the back of these findings. We feel that would be within the remit of the wider Challenge Team and will follow more extensive work.

3.1 Headline observations

The 'observations' are as follows - in no particular order:

Recording our position at this point in time:

- All Partnerships have undoubtedly been through a challenging and turbulent evolution over the last three years - having grown from the informal to the formal infrastructures we see today. However, without exception all Partnership

Managers were eager to place on record the **'imperfect' infrastructure of their current Partnership model**; many were nervous about committing to their current model, wanting to 'sell' thoughts for the future rather than today's picture. So from our observations, it is widely acknowledged that the structures in place today are not fixed and will need to evolve in order to meet the challenges of the entitlement in 2013 - these changes are happening now and in different ways.

- While acknowledging that structures are currently not 'fit-for-future-purpose', all Partnerships are at present increasing their capacity and expertise within their 'known' teams. There appear to be as many different approaches to this as there are partnerships - **no one common 'expansion' model** is dominant. This undoubtedly will be due to resources, specialisms and priorities identified from self assessment, gateway feedback and GO progress checks, for example.
- The Partnership structures/models developed to date are all different - we thought we might see a level of commonality between authorities of equal size or make-up, but we found that **each Partnership is individual** - influenced locally by their needs, access to urban areas and management of rural communities.
- **Ad hoc and responsive team developments** seem the order of the day - we report this not in a negative way but as a statement of fact - full time permanent posts work alongside fixed term 'consultancy-type' secondments, LA staff alongside 'partner staff', operational alongside strategic. These roles have grown out of need in many instances, responding to feedback; often within a one-year planning timescale. All Partnerships seem eager to gain greater 'consolidation and planning' in terms of constructing their teams - throughout the entire structure, top to bottom. Funding for posts appears to vary (internal and external funding is sought to maintain fixed term contracts in the main); the size of teams is rapidly expanding as people are recognising the scale of work to be done.
- Language divides many of the Partnerships - if commonalities are apparent across the sub-regional/LA boundaries, they may go unrecognised due to the **disparate language** used to describe the set-up in each Authority. The differing perception of strategic and operational groups, their functions, size, remit, 'power' and make-up is not aided by the varying names associated with groups from the highest levels to those on the ground. Though this is an unavoidable effect of the autonomous development of the Partnerships to date, it is probably not helpful when trying to navigate across boundaries, and inter-relate or work cross-border.
- **Who might be considered missing?** It would be fair to note that only a minority of Partnerships have engaged employers - all have however reflected on the need to have employer views represented at this level and have therefore recruited the local EBP or Chamber to ensure this perspective is considered. We could learn from those Partnerships engaging employers directly on the strategic planning group, reflecting on how powerful the representation of employers is at this level.

Do Partnerships engage at a strategic level with the Regional Development Agency or the Economic Development Units effectively? Looking at the make-up of all the Partnerships their representation is not apparent. Should we consider

whether the association between our agenda and that of local economy and skills could be more convergent if the partnership reflected this within its membership, planning and its setting of strategy?

3.2 And so...

From our observations above, one concluding statement (possibly a key recommendation) may be the need to consider offering guidance at a time of re-configuration. One would hope that this will engender a coherent regional infrastructure strategy for the future - **an infrastructure strategy** that will add an element of commonality but remain flexible to allow individual Partnerships to respond to the differing demography of their areas.*

As 11-19 or 14-19 plans unfold within each Authority these thoughts and observations will inevitably need to be re-visited and re-cast. If this exercise were repeated in six months' time we suspect the frameworks would be significantly different to those presented today. Offering some guidance for future Partnership development would bring some order to the rapid expansion and development of the agenda.

*One may consider that national guidance on the establishment, make-up and remit of 14-19 Partnerships was covered/issued by DCSF within the publication: 14-19 Partnerships and Plans (2007). If we were to compare our current 'infrastructure' against the recommendations this document set out we could note that:

- All our partnerships have read and absorbed the information contained; this is reflected in the infrastructure they have adopted
- Approximately two thirds of the frameworks (9 out of the 15 received to date) indicate that the Authorities have established a 14-19 Partnership at the very highest strategic level, forming a 'group' that has the recommended breadth of partners represented by the appropriate level of personnel from each. As recommended, this group reports to be responsible and accountable for the development of a coherent 14-19 strategy. In most instances this group reports directly to the Children and Young People's Board of the respective authority
- The remaining third (6/15) have developed a partnership with the required breadth of membership, but have placed between this group and the Children's Trust at least one additional strategic group - often narrower in membership and in some cases appearing to perform the function of 'strategic direction setting' for the receiving groups below. This may not mean that strategy development is restricted to the accountable partners (namely LSC and LA) but may need considering as an alternative/differing interpretation of the model
- In all frameworks, the list of functions and responsibilities set out in the guidance has been divided appropriately throughout the infrastructure. It appears from reading the remits of the differing groups that most (85%) have clarified what is undertaken by each group. Only in a minority of authorities is there still some need to refine who is responsible for what; and which group reports to which group, to ensure that duplication or confusion does not occur

4.0 For future consideration

At the start of this report we noted the two key tasks originally commissioned from NYBEP. Following the completion of our first task and in light of the recent guidance material issued from DCSF, the need to undertake task two has been superseded. Information originally deemed useful has indeed been issued from DCSF within the document: *Delivery 2009 and beyond*.

From our conversations to date with some exceptionally busy co-ordinators, we should place on record the significant amount of work, resources and staff capacity going into all Partnerships as they grapple with the challenges of implementing the reform. Whereas planning was once seen as a huge draw on our collective time, we are all now recognising the extent of the task yet before us – accessible guidance, support, resources and thinking time are in short supply. Offering clear, logical and practical steps will be vital.

Looking at the common themes and challenges will be essential. Offering collaborative information, support and guidance (as a regional toolkit?) on employer engagement, e-learning, IAG, WFD, quality assurance and protocols would save a significant amount of valuable time - allowing the energies of those grappling with this on the ground to be one of local interpretation rather than creation, or duplication of effort. A critical step will be the establishment of networks that work to allow the sharing of best practice - not for sharing's sake but for learning's sake!

Our conversations across the region have been left open, and the results contained in this briefing paper are only the tip of the iceberg in terms of the story still to be told; NYBEP looks forward to supporting the Y&H Challenge Team in revealing more lessons to learn and establishing a framework to support the next few years.

NYBEP
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