

# Partnership Framework and Toolkit

Partnership working between local authorities to provide services to citizens is a high priority across the public sector. Discussions with a number of authorities in the North East region highlighted that a formal approach to the development and ongoing management of partnerships was patchy.

The North East Centre of Excellence was keen to support the development of partnership working skills by providing a standard process and toolkit that could be applied universally across all types of partnerships. NECE selected the Bridge Partnering Framework after a positive review from officers across the region and has funded at least one license for each authority which includes access to the framework, training and 12 months of support.

The Partnering Framework contains best practice advice and over 30 downloadable tools including assessment gateways and a comprehensive Partnership Health check. These enable managers of any type of partnership to check that all aspects, parameters and characteristics of successful partnerships are in place and working effectively. For both the development of new and ongoing management of existing partnerships, the toolkit will support diagnosis of weaknesses and help to direct corrective actions. It also enables cross comparisons and support for audit and scrutiny. In effect, providing a valuable basis for continuous improvement.

NECE is also establishing a User Forum, supported by Bridge, to enable the sharing of experiences and best practice amongst authorities as well as identifying further potential developments.

A product overview and a demonstration of the toolkit is available at <http://www.bridge-central.co.uk/>

Peter Schofield, who provides support to Councils in the Durham County area, attended the training and, on behalf of the County Durham Authorities, reports that the initiative is already proving invaluable in providing an independent challenge to proposed partnership working as well as a rigorous health check on any existing arrangements. Peter believes this will lead to positive improvements over the coming months and is particularly pertinent in the current climate which places a high expectation on the Public Sector to collaborate and work in partnership in pursuit of efficiencies as well as to strengthen the way in which Councils already work with stakeholders.

## Further Information

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