

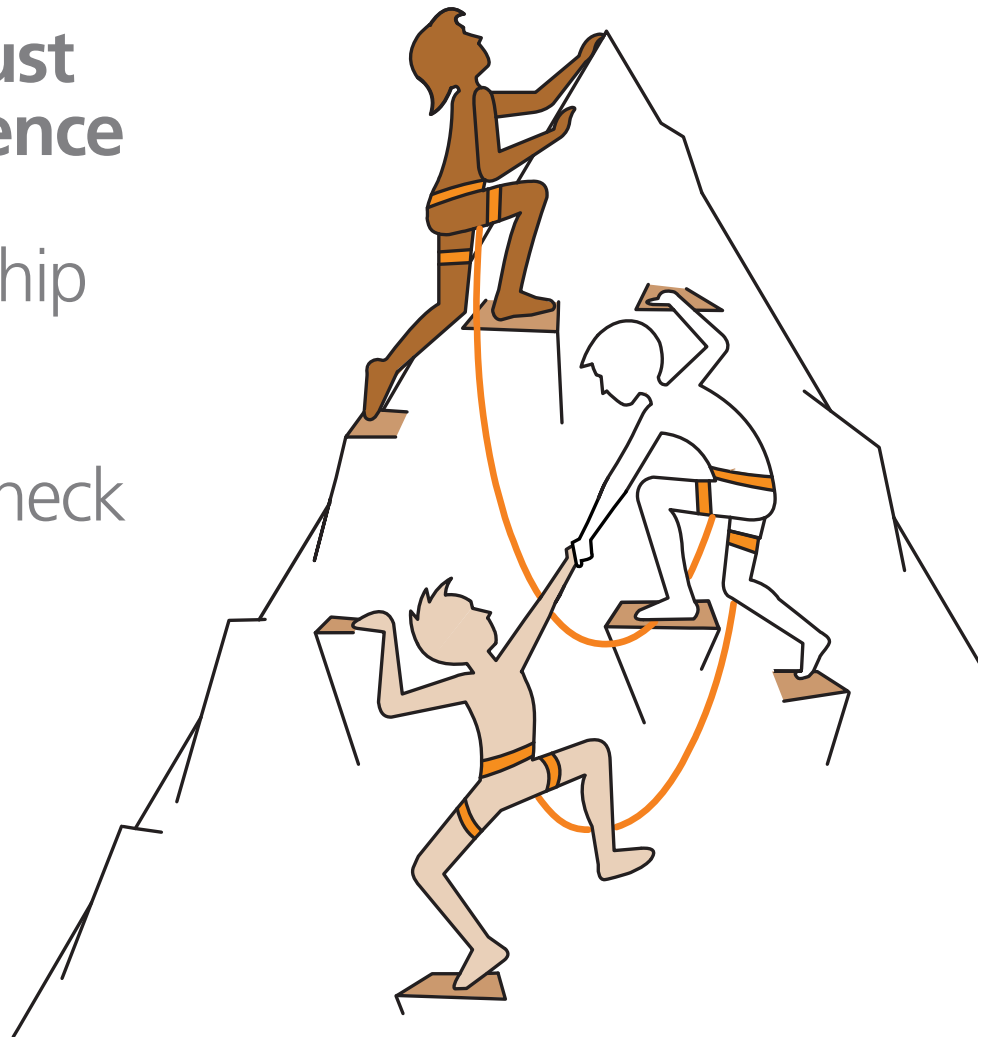


helping people and communities

governance, culture and behaviour  
in public service partnerships

I&DeA

**growing trust  
and confidence**  
governance  
and partnership  
behaviour  
benchmark  
and health check



improvement and development  
agency for local government

Cross sector partnerships will be one of the driving forces that will make a real difference to the services delivered in our communities. To make these partnerships work effectively and to achieve the demanding targets negotiated in Local Area Agreements (LAAs), partner organisations will need to radically rethink their ways of working and challenge themselves and others to do things differently.

It goes without saying that partnerships must have in place robust systems and processes that support good governance such as:

- agreed terms of reference
- a sustainable community strategy
- the right roles, responsibilities and structures
- organisational business plans that show resource and risk management
- effective performance management

Even with these in place, partnerships can struggle to achieve their full potential if the right **culture, values and behaviour** aren't in evidence and partners fail to build and sustain strong relationships across the partnership.

The IDeA has developed an improvement support programme to help strategic partnerships develop their local area agreements and build capacity to deliver them. The **governance and partnership behaviour health check** is a new element of that programme and has been created, through robust and extensive consultation. It includes a benchmark that articulates **culture, values and behaviour** indicators that will drive and underpin excellent governance and partnership working and a peer review methodology that tests partnerships against the benchmark.

## what is the benchmark?

The benchmark is a blueprint for the culture, values and behaviours that should underpin effective partnership working and is based on the well recognised CIPFA/ SOLACE principles of good governance. The principles which should be seen as interrelated and cyclical are outlined on the following page.

## the principles

- engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability
- focusing on the purpose of the partnership, outcomes for the community & creating and implementing a vision for the local area
- partners working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles
- promoting values for the partnership and demonstrating the values of good governance through high standards of conduct and behaviour
- taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk
- developing the capacity and capability of partners to be effective



Under each principle sits a range of positive and negative indicators against which partners both collectively and individually can:

- assess themselves against the benchmark
- discover and share good practice
- identify any development gaps so that they can take actions to address these and improve

## how was the benchmark created?

Between November 2007 and January 2008, IDeA worked with and consulted with people across the public, private and voluntary sector who know about partnership working – the problems and the joys; the challenges and the success stories. People from local councils, primary care, police and fire services, the voluntary sector, social housing and businesses have worked with us not only to create the benchmark but also to determine how best to use it as an assessment tool.

## so how will the benchmark be used?

The benchmark will be used in the IDeA's **governance and partnership behaviour health check**, the purpose of which is to support and develop and not inspect.

The Health Check has been created so that it can be used by any cross sector partnership and it will be carried out by a team of trained and accredited peers who are representative of the organisations within the partnership.

## how will the health check work?

The IDeA will work with the partnership to scope the Health Check Programme: what are the issues and outcomes; who needs to be involved; who should be on the Health Check team; when, where and how to carry out the Health Check. The Health Check team will then learn more about the partnership by carrying out carefully targeted desk and document research and partners participating will complete an individual

confidential questionnaire based on the benchmark.

The team will then spend 3 days working at partner sites and in the community carrying out interviews, facilitating focus groups and observing meetings. At the end of the 3 days the team will give the partnership initial feedback on findings, followed up just a few weeks later with a written report and recommendations.

Based on these findings, the partnership will be expected to produce their improvement/development plan and, where relevant, IDeA will provide tailored support to help the partnership deliver this plan.

## what's happening now?

We will be sharing the learning from at least two pilot health checks which have been conducted at large Local Strategic Partnerships. The learning and development from these and future Health Checks will be posted on the IDeA Knowledge web site and on the LAA/LSP Library

We have a cross sector reference group who have been specifically trained to deliver the health check and provide follow up tailored support to partnerships.

## so what could you do?

Well there are a number of things:

- spread the word and **talk to your colleagues** and partners about the **governance and partnership behaviour health check**
- **sign up** to one of our future training workshops
- talk to your partners about having the **health check** carried out at your partnership

To learn more about what is happening, where and when... and how you could play a part in this important new programme:

contact **Vanessa Walker**, Programme lead, **email** [vanessa.walker@idea.gov.uk](mailto:vanessa.walker@idea.gov.uk)

and visit our **Knowledge website** to keep up to date with what is happening with this and the wider LAA/LSP improvement support programme **[www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=7640506](http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=7640506)**