

## Case Study

### Discover the crucial importance of relationships, culture and values for successful collaborations and partnerships

#### Identifying the issues

In January 2009 we were commissioned by the North East Improvement Partnership to undertake a project which sought to identify those aspects of culture and behaviour which would lead to partnership improvement and was an attempt to look beyond ways of identifying improvements, which so often concentrated on target driven technical issues to do with factual analysis of data and ignored completely the behaviour, relationships, values and culture which lay at the heart of partnership.

Various methods for reviewing and improving local strategic partnerships had been tried. These were mainly designed as self assessment processes with external validation but without exception have concentrated on the technical and often failing aspects of partnership work. This may have been at the cost of developing and nurturing vital relationships which oil the wheels of partnership. They all lacked a cultural and behavioural element which has been shown to be such an important feature of a successful local strategic partnership.

#### Intervention

The work involved asking questions about how partnerships perceived themselves and then proposing that they could embark on regular self improvement journeys. Various methods were proposed to support them to build this into their working practices through tools and techniques which would best suit their needs at any time. The model was designed to stimulate partnerships throughout the North East to examine, articulate and increase their success

#### Resolution

In the end the "Standard" developed into a guide to the journey or lifecycle of a partnership with various processes which partnerships might use to assess their own performance drawing on best practice case studies and tools, tips, techniques and methods.

A Standard for Excellence structure was proposed intended to bring together our knowledge and experience of what worked well and to look at comparative material. It offered a basic structure to use in order to test out aspects of your partnership and it signposted ways of identifying which areas to concentrate on and when

#### Benefits

The benefits of the work included greater clarity and strategic alignment across the groups comprising the whole partnership family, a consensus about what development opportunities and tools helped partnerships to remain organic and self assessment methodologies which could be used easily.