

Healthy Partnerships Checklist Empowerment tools - 1

This is one of the series 'Empowerment Tools' produced by Jim Simpson Consultancy from a major study involving 80 plus organisations and practitioners.

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Empowering People and Healthy Partnerships

Healthy Partnership Checklist

Involving and empowering communities and citizens in either public or voluntary sector partnerships involves some key ingredients and activities for these services to be operating in a healthy way and for them to work well.

The ingredients to healthy empowerment and the ingredients to healthy partnership working are remarkably similar.

This checklist comes from researching what community empowerment participants think are the vital ingredients to making empowerment work.

Who can use the Checklist?

Any frontline worker delivering services, manager, policy maker, or contractor in the public and voluntary sector will want to see that their partnership and joint working arrangements are appropriately empowering to all of those who are involved.

If you want to involve communities, citizens and service users in a public service as a real partner then the checklist here comprises the things you can expect people will want to see happening in any partnership 'places and spaces'.

Places and spaces - such as consultation meetings, local forums, inter-active webspaces, formal Partnership bodies and voluntary sector Boards - together provide an environment that either empowers people to participate or it does not.

Guide to Using the Checklist

The checklist can be used in evaluating partnerships, training, as an aid to planning partnership activity or just as a thinking and grounding device for practitioners.

The checklist identifies the *vital factors* needed for a healthy partnership and the *specific factors* needed for a healthy partnership. Space is provided for you to rate on a scale of 1 to 10 how well you are meeting the factors and whether you need to improve or maintain what you are doing.

The overview that your scoring gives you will help you to identify where you need to maintain activities or make changes to improve levels of empowerment and development of healthy partnerships.

Using this Healthy empowerment Checklist allows any partnership, public service or voluntary organisation to judge how far it is truly empowering.

Healthy empowerment and healthy partnership checklist			
Vital factors needed to empower people and have a healthy partnership	Specific factors needed to empower people and have a healthy partnership	How well are we doing ?	
		Factor score 1 to 10 (low to high)	We need to maintain (m) or improve this (i)
Information	Information is made available and open to all participants		
	Information is easily accessible		
	Information is clear and good quality		
	We aim for parity of understanding between different participants (public, professionals, managers) in order to enable people to influence one another		
Skills and knowledge	Those who need skills to participate have access to a knowledge base and to training		
	Leaders and facilitators have partnership development skills		
	Checking mechanism is in place that confirms different people understand the issues, information, decisions and choices		
	Confidence building measures are in place so that all people can participate		
	Participants have the knowledge, capability and capacity to participate (staff, managers, community representatives, service users)		

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		Factor score 1 to 10 (low to high)	We need to maintain (m) or improve this (i)
Resources	Resources of time, people and money are available for partnership and joint working to take place		
	Citizens, service users and communities influence how resources are deployed and to what they are deployed		
Good relationships	Everyone is respected for the contribution they can make		
	Difference is respected		
	Choices are offered to participants when it comes to making decisions and moving forward		
	Trust between different individuals, organisations and interests is good		
	Trust building activity is integral to the day to day business		
	Roles are explicit and understood by all (who provides information, services forums, leads discussion etc)		
	Leadership is clear, explicit and accountable		
	Relationships are co-operative between people and organisations/departments		
	Where people are trying to change things there is a co-evolutionary spirit where participants develop solutions and improvements together		
Influence and power	Different people understand where they can have power and influence, where they can make decisions and where they can not		
	Discussion and decision making is transparent		
	Different participants in partnerships (public/service users,		

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	frontline workers, managers, policy makers) know how they can influence decisions		
	Choice in how to influence is both available and appropriate		
	Where pledges are made they are stuck to, actioned and consistently reviewed		
	Participants are ready to both influence others and be influenced themselves		
Time	Time is set aside for consultation and involvement		
	Timescales are planned so that processes of consultation and deliberation are appropriate to the business in hand		
Action focus	Decisions and preferences are acted on		
	Actions and decisions reflect, as far as possible, consultation with different people		
Healthy Partnership action points to move us forward:			
Action point 1:			
Action point 2:			
Action point 3:			

By Jim Simpson, Jim Simpson Consultancy¹

¹ This tool-kit is compiled from a) the insight and experience of the many partnership and community engagement practitioners who were involved in a substantial community empowerment research project and, b) the writer's previous practice, training and research
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The Empowerment Tools Series comprises 6 papers all available in the free [Resource Library](#) area at www.jimsimpsonconsultancy.co.uk and at the Local Government Innovation and Development [website](#)

‘Empowerment Tools 1 – Healthy Partnership Checklist’ is a checklist for reflection, learning and evaluation for anyone involved in supporting partnerships. It is easy to use collaboratively or individually and will help you evaluate the key building blocks to a healthy partnership.

‘Empowerment Tools 2 - Practicing participation, methods and stages’ revisits and relocates the international practice ideas about the stages of participation in public places and what this means by way of the public promise that service providers are making to local people.

‘Empowerment Tools 3 - Partnership with Purpose - Involving All the Players’ is another short think-piece that explains the different roles that are key to unlocking the power and potential for an empowered, people-driven public sector.

‘Empowerment Tools 4 - Consumer or Citizen, theory and practice’ debates the theory and idea of empowerment from different viewpoints. Empowering people, communities, citizens and services-users will be critical to the public sector and third sector organisations ‘doing better’ rather than merely ‘doing more for less’. This paper locates both participative and ‘market’ theories of the public sector in a brief and comparative analysis.

‘Empowerment Tools 5 – Public Sector Professional Work and Social Capital’ is a shorter think-piece that emphasise the need for public organisations to nurture social capital rather than ignore it or act against it.

‘Empowerment Tools 6 - Discovering ‘Facilitative Public Management’ is an ideas paper drawing together all of the empowerment tools research. It contrasts the best of a new and more innovative style of public management and decision making with the disadvantages of mechanistic public management that dominates our public services. Whatever your point of view or your role in any public service or community there is something in this for you!