

DARTFORD

BOROUGH COUNCIL

KEY PRINCIPLES & RISK MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES FOR EFFECTIVE JOINT WORKING¹

1. Bringing different organisations together to operate as one is never easy. Each body brings with it its own culture, values, ways of working, and priorities. Working together to deliver a shared agenda makes collaboration easier, but this is only the starting point.
2. This summary guide lists some suggested key principles which, if adopted and interpreted locally, could help you to articulate what is important to you as you implement your joint and integrated working arrangements.
3. You can use these principles as a starting point on which to reflect on how to forge links with public, private, voluntary, independent and third sector organisations.
4. Given the significant increase in joint working and the subsequent need for formalised joint working arrangements, the Code of Practice on Effective Joint Working Arrangements and its supporting Toolkit (templates and suite of documents) have been developed to ensure that where the Council engages in joint working arrangements, it will do so with sound governance in place, but adopting a flexible, efficient and robust approach to such working practices.
5. For the purposes of the Code of Practice on Effective Joint Working Arrangements, the term 'partnership' is to be interpreted in different ways – the term is to be used interchangeably with collaboration, coalition, shared services and joint working.

Key Principles for establishing effective joint working

Principle 1 Recognise and accept the need for joint working

The benefits of joint working arrangements include making service users the focus of planning, commissioning and delivering services and better value for money.

Principle 2 Develop clarity and realism of purpose

Successful joint working arrangements are characterised by a shared vision or purpose, where all parties agree to modify their own activities and resources to achieve the goals within a joint working structure.

Principle 3 Ensure commitment and ownership

The centre point of joint working is gaining commitment and developing a shared vision, and some ownership of the ideas which are to be put into practice.

Principle 4 Develop and maintain trust

Trust is an essential foundation for all aspects of participation and joint working. It comes from working together and through that, discovering shared values and ways of doing things.

Principle 5 Create clear and robust governance arrangements and risk management processes

Parties need to bring clarity to the governance of their collaboration. This requires agreement among them about purpose, membership, accountability and risk management. Parties should be clear whose interests they represent and how they will handle disputes.

Principle 6 Monitor, measure and learn

Establish a means of reviewing how well joint working arrangements help to achieve statutory and/or corporate objectives and identify what resources are committed to joint working and evaluate the costs and benefits from joint working.

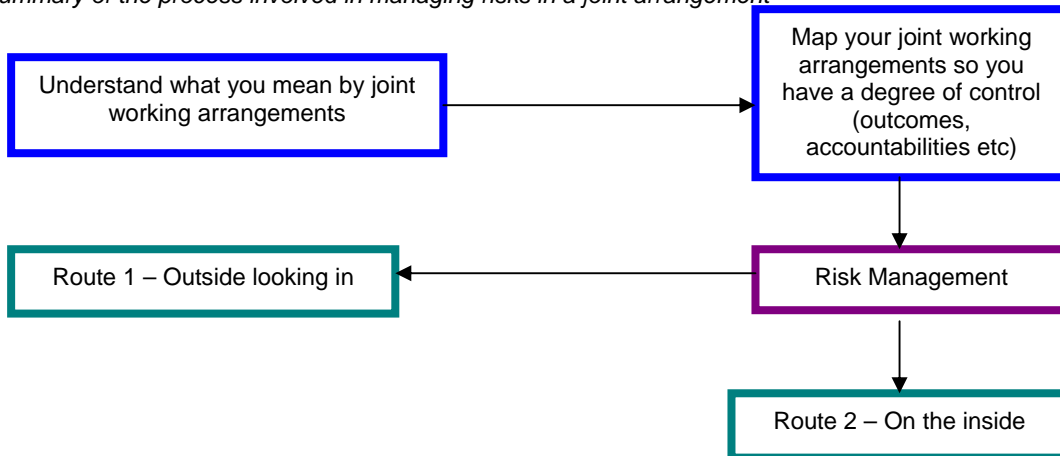
¹ For detailed guidance, refer to the Code of Practice on Effective Joint Working Arrangements

Key responsibilities for effective risk management in joint working

Within local government, best practice states that local authorities must meet two key responsibilities when in a joint working relationship. These are:

1. provide assurance that the risks associated with working jointly with another organisation have been identified and prioritised and are being appropriately managed;
2. ensure that the joint working arrangements have effective risk management procedures in place.

A summary of the process involved in managing risks in a joint arrangement



Route 1—Outside looking in - From the Council's perspective

Consider a number of areas of risk the Council as an organisation faces in joint working arrangements:

- financial risk;
- reputation risk;
- resource conflicts;
- reliance on partners to deliver the Council's objectives etc.;
- the need to gain assurance on how well the partner organisation is managing risk.

Route 2—On the inside - From the perspective of the joint working arrangement

Include the partner or prospective partner organisation in the risk identification process, as it is necessary to consider the risks faced by all partners to the joint working arrangements:

- lack of 'buy in' from all partners;
- confused governance arrangements;
- unable to blend cultures;
- seen as public body led.

The specific challenge is to be clear about where partners' objectives overlap and where these can be aligned, to address a common goal with common risks, as opposed to where they are fully independent. At stake for all the partners are:

- service delivery;
- reputation;
- organisational objectives;
- investments of time, money, resources & expertise.

Remember: The Council can never transfer the risk to its reputation, political or service impact from the failure of a partner to deliver on its behalf. Where a key or statutory service is being supplied by a partner organisation it will, therefore, usually be necessary (as part of the risk mitigation process), to draw up contingency plans in the event of partner failure.