



Building Schools for the Future

A Toolkit for Effective Local
Education Partnerships

Summary

June 2009

partnerships **for schools**

building schools for the future



Summary

Introduction and context

Over the next decade, secondary schools in England are to be transformed by a major capital investment programme, called Building Schools for the Future (BSF). This infrastructure programme aims to improve the quality of educational resources and, in doing so, the opportunities available to every young person and teacher in the country.

On an individual level, each renewal programme will, in itself, be a significant capital project and is likely to exceed the resources of a single local authority to deliver. Instead, BSF anticipates that local authorities will choose to form strategic partnerships with private sector providers.

The concept of strategic partnering is, of course, not new to the local government, but the scale, scope and ambition of the BSF programme has led to the development of a specific model that can meet the unique challenges that the programme brings. This preferred model is the Local Education Partnership (LEP), a 10-year strategic partnership between a local authority (or, in some cases, more than one local authority), a private sector partner and Building Schools for the Future Investments (BSFI), which is the funding arm of the BSF programme.

This is a new concept and, to date, there are relatively few operational LEPs. In June 2008, Partnerships for Schools (PFS) commissioned a review of these LEPs, with the aim of finding out what had and had not worked well so far and to help inform the development of the LEP model. The review found that even at the comparatively early stage in the programme, the experiences of those pioneering partnerships showed some clear examples of best practice and highlighted pitfalls that could be avoided.

From this analysis, PFS is providing practical guidance to help all partners involved in future LEPs. In response to one of the Review's recommendation, PFS has produced a Toolkit comprising a series of Practitioner Notes covering nine key aspects of operating a LEP.

The nine notes making up the Practitioner Toolkit are as follows:

- Practitioner Note 1 – Local Authority Strategic Planning
- Practitioner Note 2 – The LEP's role in Education Transformation
- Practitioner Note 3 – Developing a Shared Vision
- Practitioner Note 4 – Effective Governance
- Practitioner Note 5 – Mobilising the LEP

- Practitioner Note 6 – Effective Partnering Behaviours
- Practitioner Note 7 – Capacity to deliver
- Practitioner Note 8 – The Role of the National Bodies
- Practitioner Note 9 – Value for Money in Exclusivity

Each note contains:

- guidance on what constitutes best practice;
- guidance on assessing the effectiveness of the relevant part of the programme;
- links to case study examples; and
- links to further relevant guidance.

Collectively, the Notes provide a 'how to' guide for activities that support the successful strategic planning, set-up, mobilisation and operation of an LEP. The degree to which each is applicable will depend on the priorities of the individual partnership, which will be developed in the context of the local programme and influences. For this reason, the Toolkit does not cover in detail the transactional element of the BSF procurement process. Detailed guidance on the element of the process can be found on the PFS website.

Overview of Practitioner Notes

The following table provides a brief overview of the content of each Practitioner Note.

| Theme | Critical Questions |
|---|---|
| 1. Local Authority Strategic Planning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the local authority have a well-defined view of the LEPs role in the local area? • Is there a resourcing or investment plan to support proposed activity? |
| 2. The LEPs role in Education Transformation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is meant by transformation and what is the LEPs role in its delivery? • Which other organisations are critical to the delivery of transformation? Are their activities co-ordinated with the LEPs? |
| 3. Developing a Shared Vision | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the LEP's business plan and does it have a deliverable pipeline? • Is there a structured plan around the BSF programme and is the LEPs role within it clearly set out and managed? • How do we define the respective roles and responsibilities of the LEP, the local authority (and its advisers); PFS and other approval functions? |
| 4. Effective Governance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the governance structure clearly set out and understood? Is it doing what it was designed to do? • Are the right people in the right roles? • Does the LEP have an independent chair? • Are the interfaces at each organisational level well-established and working effectively? • Is there a coherent and transparent process to identify, rectify, manage and resolve issues? • Are the routine processes of Programme and Project Management (e.g. plans; reporting; critical issues etc.) operating effectively? |
| 5. Mobilising the LEP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there agreed processes for quality standards around stage 1 and 2 approvals for future schemes? • Are projects being managed critically and effectively? • Is school stakeholder engagement being planned and effectively delivered? |
| 6. Effective Partnering Behaviours | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are teams physically located to maximise effectiveness? • How are corporate Council and external relationships managed to help key decisions to be made? • Is issue resolution successful? • Are the LEP and the local authority clear on what each needs from the other? • Are the relationships between people right and is trust building? If not what needs to be done? |
| 7. Capacity to Deliver | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there scope for more effective use of resources across the LEP and local authority establishment? • Have we got the right demarcation between local authority LEP contract management and inputs to the BSF programme (educational; school engagement; planning, etc) to encourage effective delivery? |
| 8. The Role of National Bodies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the LEP and local authority know the people with whom they need to do business? • Are their roles understood and is the LEP and local authority following what is required? • Are they being influenced effectively and are the lines of communication open? |
| 9. Value for Money in Exclusivity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a sound and meaningful basis for continuous improvement? • Does a balanced scorecard of measures exist that highlights effectiveness as an organisation and a partnership? • Is the performance management and benchmarking process meeting local programme needs as well as national PFS requirements? • Can the LEP demonstrate to others how it is getting better? |

How the Toolkit works

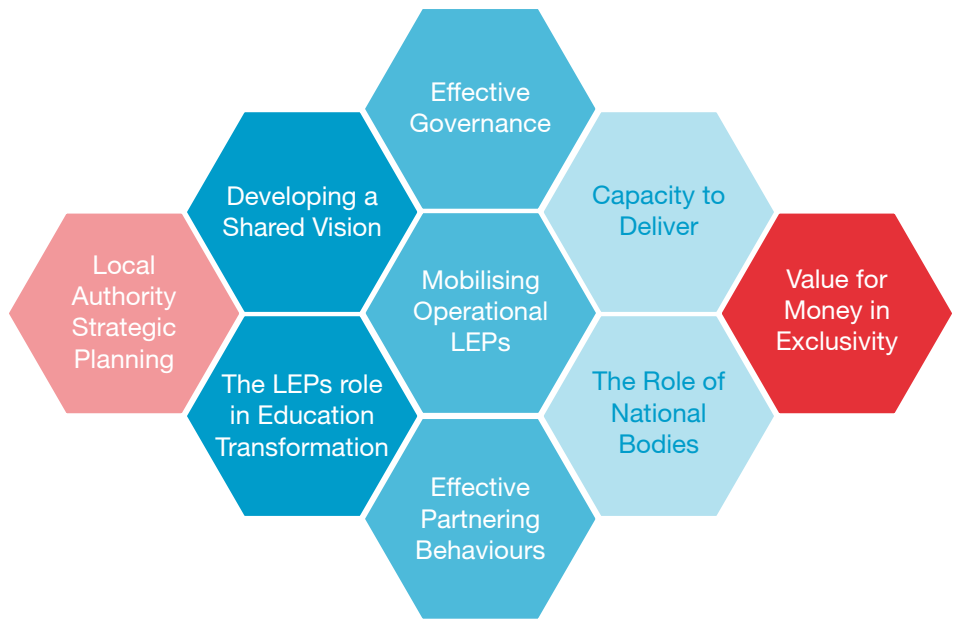
Relationships between the notes

Each of the nine Practitioner Notes is written so that it can be used independently, at the appropriate point in the BSF programme. The diagram on the right illustrates a broad chronological order, from strategic planning, through to the setting of objectives and defining roles, organisations and structure. However, there are also numerous interdependencies between the Notes. For example, establishing good systems, structures and processes will not ensure a successful partnership unless the partners demonstrate the necessary supporting attitudes and behaviours and the capacity exists to deliver.

Therefore whilst the Notes are numbered and have different degrees of significance at each phase of the BSF process, it is important to see how they are linked to achieve the overall outcome of an effective LEP. There are clear signposts where these links exist. The Toolkit is most effective if used in its entirety.

When to use the Notes

There are four distinct phases to the BSF process. These are:

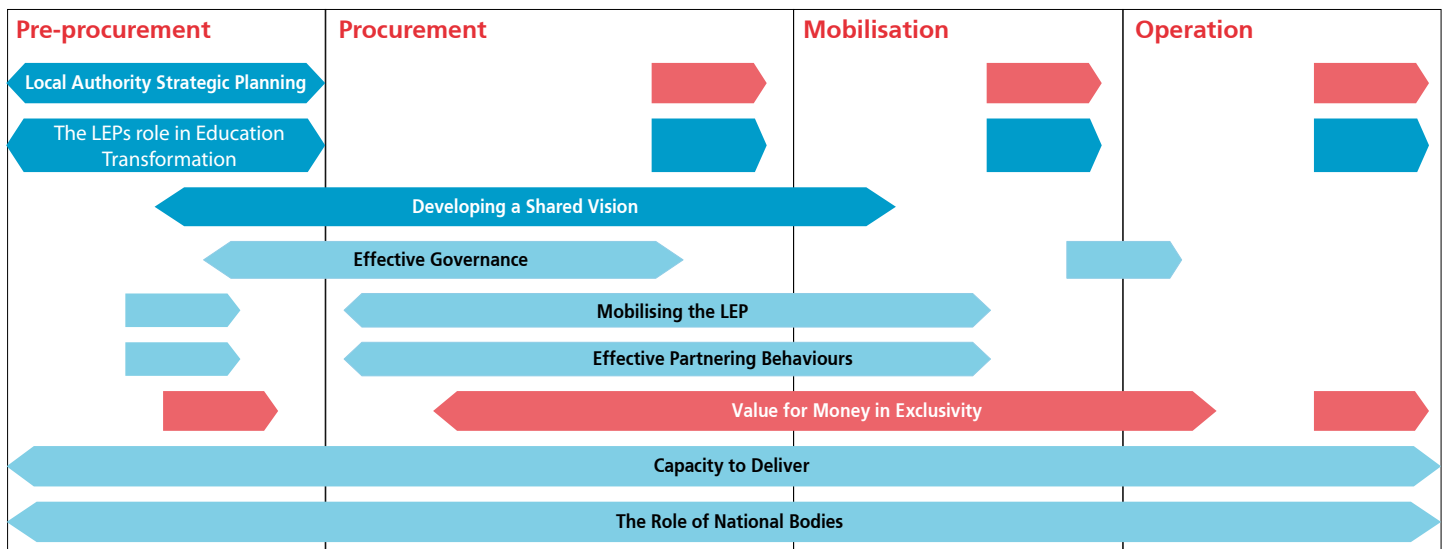


- Pre-procurement
- Procurement
- Mobilisation
- Operation

The diagram below illustrates the relevance of each Practitioner Note to these phases. As you can see, some (such as Capacity to Deliver) are relevant throughout the process while others, such as Local Authority Strategic Planning, may apply at several points and so will need to be revisited several times.

This diagram is repeated in each Note as a handy reminder.

A key theme running through all the Notes is the requirement to review progress continually against the best practice set out across the full Toolkit. As noted earlier, this best practice guidance is based on the experiences of a small number of pioneering LEPs. As new organisations, LEPs will continue to develop and evolve and will need to respond to their own local issues and circumstances. LEPs should review themselves in this context.



The principles of good project management

A consistent theme throughout the Notes is the need for good project management. This is central to an effective operational LEP. While specific points are raised in each Note, the principles set out below are relevant throughout the process:

- **Effective risk management** – systems and processes are in place to identify, assess, mitigate and monitor risks.
- **Understand and manage scope** – the scope of activities is identified, known and understood and managed by all parties.
- **Stakeholders are committed** – relevant stakeholders are engaged with early on in the process and committed to the outcome.
- **Programme and project plans are defined** – activities are planned in a way that allows appropriate engagement of relevant people at the right time and ensures delivery to deadlines.
- **Planned outcomes are achieved** – identify the outcomes of each activity and document how success will be measured.
- **Teams perform well together** – particularly relevant to achieving 'effective partnering' is measuring how both the core and wider teams members perform together.



Who should use this Toolkit?

These notes are for local authority officers associated stakeholders, and private sector partners who are about to, or are already, undertaking a BSF procurement, or for those LEPs which are operational and are keen to ensure their own operational effectiveness.

The Toolkit assumes that the user has an understanding of the BSF programme and therefore does not seek to explain the purpose of the BSF programme or the procurement process itself. Guidance explaining the BSF process can be found on the PfS website <http://www.partnershipsforschools.org.uk>.

Acknowledgements

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