

# A National College Guide to Partnerships and Collaborations

## Resource



**"Federation and other partnership solutions will become central to tackling underperformance and extending the reach of the best leaders."**

Your child, your schools, our future: building a 21st century schools system

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## Leading new models of leadership

Schools across the country are developing new models of leadership for many reasons, primarily to raise and maintain standards by extending the reach of the best leaders, to secure greater operational efficiencies by working in partnership, and to build sustainability of leadership and of small schools.

New models are not just about structural change: they are built on a shared commitment to improving attainment, well-being and life chances for children and young people - and this moral purpose, accompanied by outward-facing vision, is paramount in overcoming barriers to success.

National College research shows that successful leaders make a difference through who they are - their values and attributes- as well as what they do. The importance of their ability to articulate and share their vision and to model the characteristics necessary for effective collaborative working cannot be underestimated in this area of work.

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# Introduction

**This publication is one of a series of practical guides for school leaders, governors and local authorities who are exploring more flexible approaches to leading schools. The booklet *Introduction to Models of Leadership* (National College 2009) gives a brief introduction to the range of models being used by schools across the country.**

New models of leadership are developing rapidly and these guides are only snapshots of the best information available at the time of writing (January 2010). For the very latest information, please visit the National College models of leadership website at [www.nationalcollege.org.uk/modelsofleadership](http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/modelsofleadership), or contact a National College associate.

This guide looks at **partnerships** and **collaborations**.

# The statutory context for collaborations

The statutory framework for collaborations is provided by the *School Governance (Collaboration) (England) Regulations 2003* and the *Collaboration Arrangements (Maintained Schools and Further Education Bodies)(England) Regulations 2007*. Schools using these regulations to formally work together used to be known as soft federations, but that term has now been replaced with collaborations. The term partnerships describes less formal collaborative arrangements that do not make use of the regulations, while the term federations is now only used to describe arrangements where two or more schools are governed collectively under a single governing body.

The statutory instruments and guidance for collaborations can be found on the DCSF Standards Site at **[www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/federations/regulations](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/federations/regulations)**

# Why form a partnership or collaboration?

Recent research and the 2009 white paper *Your Child, Your School, Our future: building a 21st century schools system* supports the development of partnerships and collaborations, identifying their potential for improving pupil learning:

*"No school can meet the needs of all its pupils alone. Delivering the Pupil and Parent Guarantees will require schools to work in partnership with other schools and with wider children's services in order to offer more by working together than any one partner could alone and to provide better value for money. At the same time, federation and other partnership solutions will become central to tackling underperformance and extending the reach of the best leaders."*

An increasing amount of research is emerging across the whole spectrum of models of leadership as many of the new models, which became possible after the Education Act 2002, reach a stage where their impact can be more rigorously assessed.

Manchester University's report for the National College *The impact of federations on student outcomes* (October 2009) looks at the whole range of formal collaborative structures (called federations in the study) and concludes that they can have a positive impact on student outcomes. Furthermore, the impact is strongest where the key reason for collaborating is to raise educational standards by enabling higher and lower attaining schools to work together in performance federations. This analysis supports the policy of schools collaborating to raise standards.

Another report for the National College *Emerging patterns of school leadership 2: a deeper understanding* (October 2009) finds that strong formal systems and procedures established through partnerships, collaborations or federations add strength to a group of schools and have a positive effect on pupil outcomes. These formal arrangements make long-term developments more sustainable because they support systematic joint working rather than relying on individuals, who may change over time.

"Emerging evidence suggests that collaboration underpinned by clearly defined purposes and formal supporting structures is most likely to be sustainable and have a positive impact on student outcomes."

The DCSF paper *Securing our future: using our resources well* – a discussion paper on the better use of resources in schools (November 2009) also recognises that collaborations can present opportunities for greater efficiencies and cost savings, for example by:

- making a broader curriculum more cost effective
- making joint appointments
- achieving economies of scale, for example by aggregating purchasing
- saving on planning and administrative time.

While federation is often seen as the strongest leadership model because it creates a single, strategic governing body for a group of schools, some collaborations and partnerships have developed extremely strong co-ordinated provision. While collaboration can be a stepping stone to federation, the range of collaborative structures is not necessarily a hierarchy. In some cases, statutory structures are not available to schools because of their status or the range of partners with whom they wish to collaborate (see paragraph below). In these instances, less formal partnership arrangements can still achieve the benefits identified above.

# Why form a partnership or collaboration?

## What is a partnership in practice?

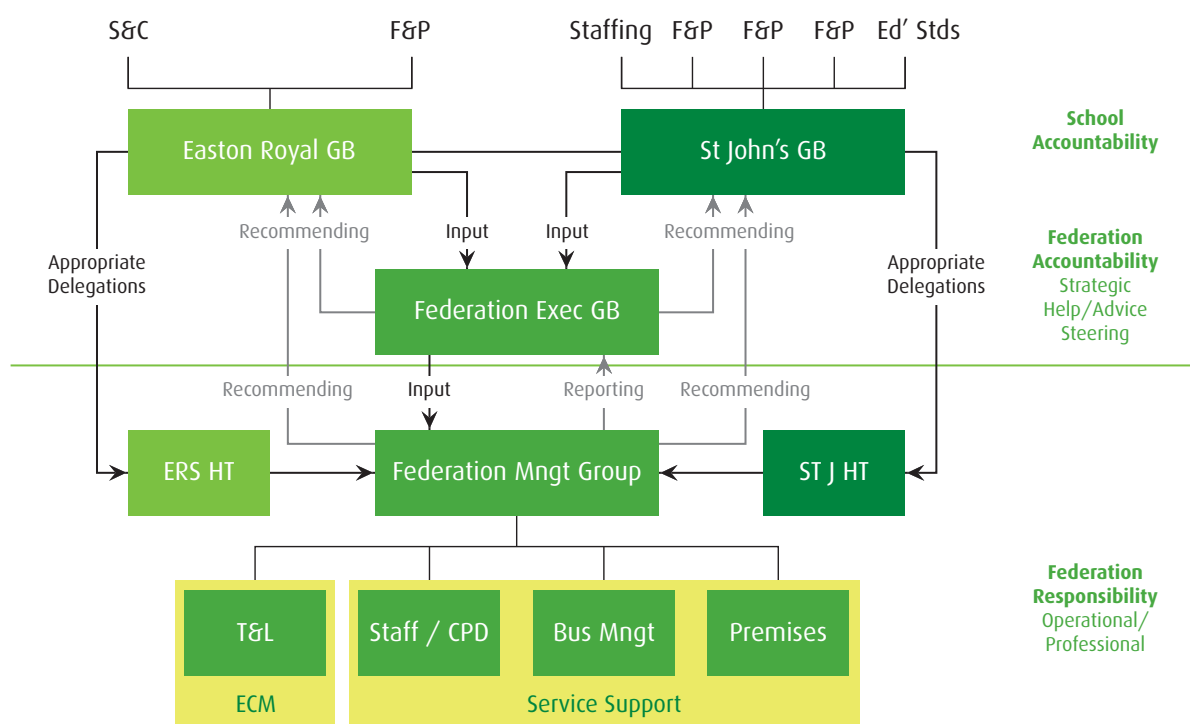
A partnership is an arrangement between schools and other partners that has been reached without the use of the 2003 and 2007 collaboration regulations, which apply only to maintained schools and maintained schools with Colleges of Further Education. Partnerships can be developed across a much wider range of institutions to include partners such as city technology colleges, academies, independent schools and other private providers.

Each partnership is a bespoke arrangement designed to meet the needs of the educational partners involved and is often backed up with service level agreements (SLAs), memoranda of understanding (MOUs) or other arrangements that give partners some security in developing systems and courses or employing staff to oversee or administer the partnership. For example:

### Easton Royal and St. John's Partnership

The governors of Easton Royal Primary School and St. John's Secondary School in Marlborough have established an equal partnership to create closer working arrangements and a shared approach to strategic development. They have developed a thorough and detailed structure to deliver the aims of the partnership without using the collaboration regulations to set out clear roles and responsibilities.

### Governance and Management Structure



# Why form a partnership or collaboration?

## Stevenage 14-19 Partnership

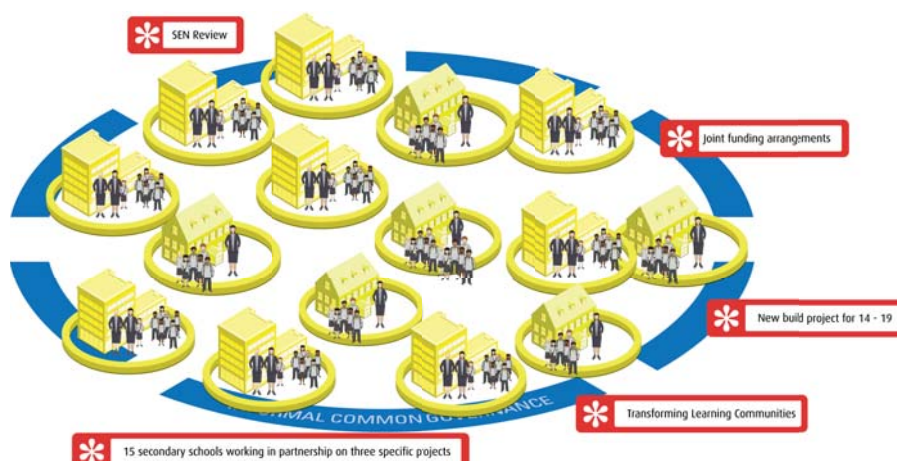
At Stevenage in Hertfordshire, there is a long-standing partnership of nine secondary schools, two special schools, a pupil referral unit and a college of further education which works to deliver 14-19 education across the town. It's a very successful example of how a partnership can deliver services across a number of providers, supported by joint funding arrangements. This partnership, and others like it, may consider a **town-wide trust** to be the next natural development.



## Winsford Partnership

At Winsford in Cheshire, all 15 schools in the town have created a partnership to take strategic advantage of three major local developments: a review of special educational needs provision, a Transforming Learning Communities project and a new build to house 14-19 provision.

In some cases, partnerships have formed limited companies to enhance employment security and accountability.



# Why form a partnership or collaboration?

## What is a collaboration in practice?

A collaboration is a formal arrangement between two or more governing bodies which establishes a joint committee with delegated powers to deliver specific duties on their behalf. Because the responsibilities are usually significant, these committees are often referred to as executive committees.

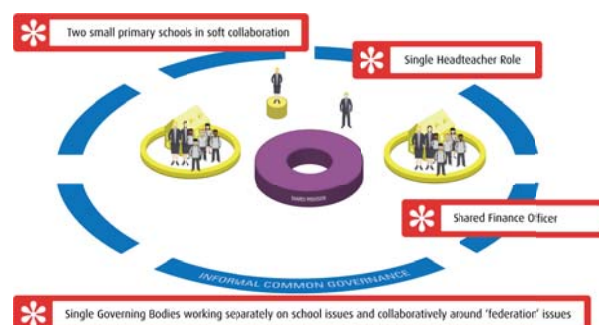
These formal arrangements use the 2003 and 2007 collaboration regulations, which allow the formation of committees with statutory powers between schools and between schools and further education providers. In both cases, the procedure is the same.

The regulations set out the arrangements to establish a joint committee with representation from each of the governing bodies concerned and with executive power in jointly agreed areas. The collaboration doesn't affect the status of the governing bodies concerned and therefore is able to consist of the full range of maintained schools, including community schools, foundation schools, voluntary controlled and voluntary aided schools. This is particularly useful in engaging faith schools in locality partnerships.

The powers delegated to the joint committee may be limited or extensive according to the needs of the group of schools. For example:

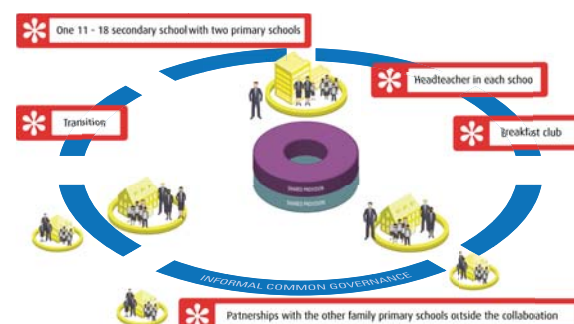
### Middleton and Peasenhall Collaboration

Tat Middleton and Peasenhall Collaboration in Suffolk, the two governing bodies meet as one for most of their functions and have shared committees. The separate governing bodies meet only once a term to look at individual school issues.



### Willingdon Collaboration

Willingdon Collaboration in Eastbourne set up a collaboration committee specifically to oversee the transition of pupils from local primary schools to secondary education.



# Why form a partnership or collaboration?

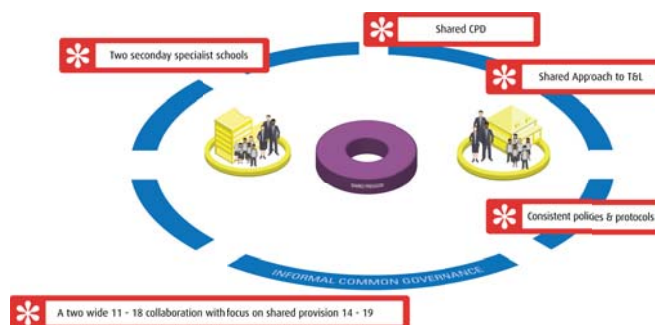
## Exmoor Coast Collaboration

At Exmoor Coast Collaboration at Minehead in Somerset, seven schools provide leadership support and continuing professional development for one another, co-ordinating their work through an executive committee and a rotating executive head role.



## Fair Oak and Hagley Park Schools

At Fair Oak and Hagley Park Schools in Rugeley, the collaboration has established an executive headteacher across the two schools with a joint strategic committee to plan for the future and take responsibility for the joint sixth form. Future considerations include the possible formation of a federation between the two schools.



## Local authority initiative

In Devon management partnerships have been established that use the collaboration regulations to allow schools to formally share a headteacher. A joint committee is established for this sole purpose, without necessarily leading to any other collaborative activity between the schools. In the case of headteacher appointments, the joint committee makes recommendations to the governing bodies concerned, who make the final decision themselves.

## Conclusion

The joint committee's remit may also be time-limited by the task involved. There are a number of instances where a joint committee has been established using the collaboration regulations to explore the possibility of more formal arrangements for the schools concerned - perhaps as a federation or trust. This is a very practical use of the regulations as it establishes a specific remit for the joint committee and allows it to make progress without constant recourse to the individual governing bodies. This is particularly helpful where a large number of schools is involved.

The arrangements by which each governing body participates in the joint committee should be specified in the resolution and agreed by the governing bodies concerned. The committee processes are clearly laid out in the regulations and follow good committee practice already familiar to schools. For example, the committee must appoint a chair annually and a clerk, both of which can be removed from office at any time. Committee minutes and agenda are open to interested parties as with normal governor's meetings.

# Step-by-step guide to forming a collaboration

There are many ways in which the idea of a collaboration is first mooted. Often it comes from an enthusiastic leader or group of leaders who can see the potential benefits of working more formally as a cluster of schools. In some cases, local authorities and diocesan boards of education take the lead and raise awareness of the possibilities through their networks. For example:

- Devon local authority has run a number of events for governors and headteachers to make them aware of the potential benefits of collaboration. It has also created a series of publications to support schools as they develop their plans.
- Gloucestershire local authority has been proactive in bringing headteachers and chairs of governors together to discuss a range of possible collaborative activities and has developed innovative approaches for dissemination across the county.
- Birmingham Catholic Archdiocese has developed detailed guides for headteachers on the continuum of collaboration from partnerships to federation, which include detailed structure diagrams for each stage of the process.

The National College is playing a significant central role in raising awareness of the potential benefits of collaboration through the work of its national regional associates and the development of high-quality supporting materials, such as the Exploring models of leadership toolkit, the Introduction to Models of Leadership booklet and the series of detailed guides to each model of leadership, of which this is one. Since the autumn of 2009, the National College has also been running regional practical workshops and conferences on models of leadership. All of this work has been supported by the succession planning team and the regional leader and school business manager networks.

The development of a collaboration can also be driven by challenging circumstances, such as difficulties in recruiting school leaders and governors, or the need to strengthen performance in some schools where leadership vision and capacity is an issue.

Whatever the reason for considering and proposing a collaboration, the final decision is entirely a matter for the governing bodies of the schools concerned and it is essential that they are fully involved in developing any plan.

The arrangements for delegating the functions of a governing body to a joint committee are the same as those for delegating to any committee of an individual governing body (School Governance (Procedures) (England) Regulations 2003). Where there is a joint committee, each of the governing bodies need to ensure that they receive regular reports - including signed minutes - as they each retain legal responsibility and corporate liability for all decisions taken on their behalf.

The full statutory guidance offered by the School Governance (Collaborations) (England) Regulations 2003 on setting up joint committees can be found at the DCSF Standards Site at [www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/federations/regulations](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/federations/regulations). To further help institutions in forming a collaboration, the National College's models of leadership team has developed the following step-by-step guide:

## Step 1

- The ad hoc group of school leaders and governors, which has been discussing the possibility of developing formal joint working arrangements, agrees there is a need to establish a formal joint committee with delegated powers.

## Step 2

- The group considers the type of committee it requires:
  - an overarching joint committee to take decisions on strategic matters
  - a single issue committee to deal with a specific issue on behalf of two or more governing bodies
  - a time-limited joint committee to consider and make recommendations for further formal collaboration activities
  - an ad hoc meeting to discuss and make decisions on matters of common interest

# Step-by-step guide to forming a collaboration

## Step 3

- The group draws up proposals for the constitution of the committee, including its membership and terms of reference. This becomes the joint resolution which goes to each of the individual governing bodies for consideration. The resolution should be worded to reflect the reasons for collaborating in each case. A sample resolution might look like this:

### The governing bodies of the following schools:

School A  
School B  
School C

resolve to form a joint committee under the Collaboration Regulations 2003 to consider the development of collaborative activities between the schools and issues of common concern. (Alternatively, it might read: 'explore the potential for a federation between the schools', or 'support shared staffing' etc).

The joint committee will consist of the headteacher and chair of governors, or nominee, from each of the schools and will meet at least once each term. The joint committee will be constituted and reviewed according to best practice in school governance, as laid down in the above regulations, and reports from the joint committee will go to each of the governing bodies for consideration and feedback.

The joint committee will be established by a simple majority in each of the governing bodies in the proposed collaboration.

**TIP** - It is good practice at this time to also consider what will happen if one or more of the governing bodies rejects the proposal. The ad hoc group of school leaders and leading governors may need a contingency plan to either reconsider the proposals in the light of any concerns raised or, if there are more than two schools involved, to go ahead with the proposals for those schools whose governing bodies are in favour.

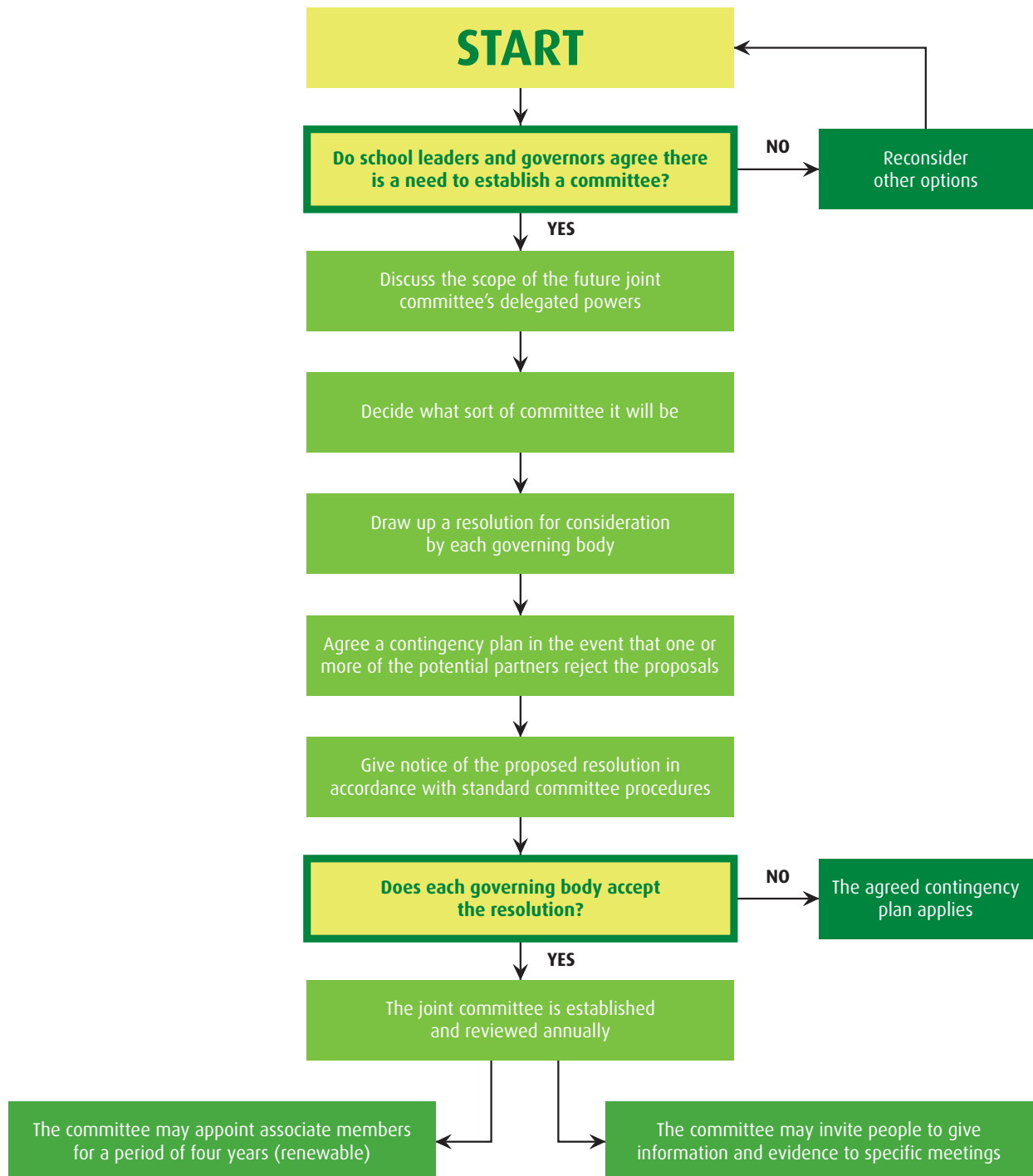
## Step 4

- Each governing body in the potential collaboration considers the resolution to establish the joint committee. This may be at a scheduled governing body meeting or at a meeting called specifically to consider the collaboration. Either way, established committee rules should be followed, with proper notice given to allow full consideration of the resolution.

## Step 5

- If the response is positive, the joint committee is established and begins its work according to the agreed constitution. It makes regular reports to the governing bodies of the schools concerned, enabling the views of all governors to be taken into account. The governing bodies review the constitution, membership and terms of reference of the joint committee every year.
- The joint committee can appoint associate members as required for a period of up to four years, but no less than one year, re-appointing for further periods if required. These associate members are not members of the collaborating governing bodies and cannot vote on admissions, pupil discipline, individual pupil and staff matters (see DCSF guidance) or the budget and financial commitments of the individual governing bodies. They can however make a valuable contribution to the work of the joint committee, especially in locality issues and partnership working.
- The joint committee can also invite external expertise to give presentations to meetings on issues of interest. This can include members of the committee acting in a private capacity.

# The process flowchart



# FAQs

## **How is a collaboration dissolved?**

The status of the joint committee must be reviewed at least once a year by each of the governing bodies involved. If a governing body no longer wishes to take part in the collaboration, it may leave at any time following a properly constituted vote in a governing body meeting. However, it is good practice to establish rules for disengagement from the collaboration at the outset. This helps ensure that remaining members are given enough notice to be able to meet their commitments and proper arrangements can be made for the redeployment or redistribution of staff and resources.

## **Can staff be employed by the collaboration?**

Staff can be employed as part of the activity of a collaboration, including a shared headteacher, but appointments in maintained schools must be made by governing bodies. In some cases, an individual governing body within a collaboration holds the contract for posts shared across two or more schools.

It's important in designing shared posts across a number of schools that committees consider the work-life balance of staff expected to attend meetings of more than one governing body, travel between sites and undergo training. The governors of each school are responsible for the work-life balance of staff in the usual way.

## **Do collaborations need SLAs and MOUs?**

Service level agreements (SLAs) and memoranda of understanding (MOUs) give a firm foundation for long-term budget planning where there are financial implications associated with the collaboration. This is particularly important where there are staff appointments because they help give the staff concerned stability and confidence. SLAs or MOUs should stipulate the responsibilities of the partner governing bodies where the collaboration has financial implications, and the notice requirements for leaving the collaboration and discharging financial responsibilities.

SLAs and MOUs are not required for every collaboration however. Where there are no financial or staffing implications, much of the joint activity can be agreed at the outset as part of the resolution establishing the collaboration.

## **Can we form a collaboration with an academy?**

No. Collaborations are only possible between maintained schools (2003 regulations) or between maintained schools and further education providers (2007 regulations). However, it is possible to have a mixture of collaborations and partnerships where a range of partners, including those outside the maintained sector for example academies, share the same SLA or MOU in order to work collaboratively.

It is also possible for a collaboration to be linked with a federation. This arrangement is sometimes used to include education partners - especially voluntary aided schools - whose governance arrangements sometimes make it difficult for them to federate with community schools.

# Next Steps

## Where to go for further information

To find out more about the Models of Leadership you can:

### Explore the Models of Leadership website

[www.nationalcollege.org.uk/modelsofleadership](http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/modelsofleadership)

### Contact the Models of Leadership team

[mol@nationalcollege.org.uk](mailto:mol@nationalcollege.org.uk)

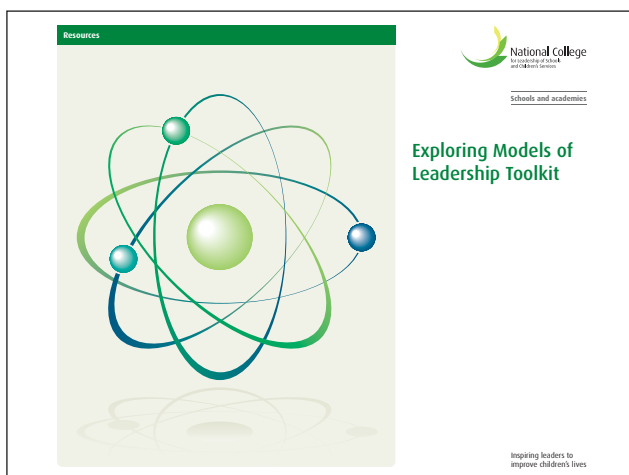
### Attend a Models of Leadership event

[www.nationalcollege.org.uk/modelsofleadership/events](http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/modelsofleadership/events)

### Use the Models of Leadership toolkit

The National College has developed a toolkit to help you explore the right model of leadership for your context.

You can download the toolkit free at the Models of Leadership website or you can order a hard copy, which includes overlays to help you build a diagram of your model, from [www.nationalcollege.org.uk/publications](http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/publications), price £10.



## Look out for further Models of Leadership guides

The National College will be publishing guides on each of the main models of leadership:

- 1 Introduction to Models of Leadership
- 2 Shared headship of a single school
- 3 Collaborations and Partnerships
- 4 Federations
- 5 Trusts
- 6 Academies
- 7 All-through schools
- 8 Executive Heads
- 9 Building Schools for Future and the Primary Capital Programme
- 10 School Business Managers
- 11 14-19 Education
- 12 Chains and Franchises
- 13 Local Authorities

The guides will be available for download from the National College website at

[www.nationalcollege.org.uk/modelsofleadership](http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/modelsofleadership)

The term 'school' is used in this publication for consistency and denotes any learning setting. Further information about the case study examples mentioned can be found on the Models of Leadership website.

The Collaboration Regulations and Guidance 2003 and 2007 can be found at:

[www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/federations/regulations](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/federations/regulations)

The National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services is committed to excellence and dedicated to inclusiveness. We exist to develop and inspire great leaders of schools, early years settings and children's services. We share the same ambition – to make a positive difference to the lives of children and young people.

Membership of the National College gives access to unrivalled development and networking opportunities, professional support and leadership resources.

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