



2008 Guidance on effective working for local social partnerships

This document covers the following areas:

Remit

We propose a minimum remit for local social partnerships focused on the National Agreement, fair play for support staff and, in England, Performance Management for teachers. However, we recognise that many local groups operate to a wider remit and support and endorse a broader workforce reform focus where this is appropriate to local circumstances.

Protocols

The draft protocols are basic rules of engagement which can help create an agreed basis for local social partnership working. We have included topics that should be considered in developing, agreeing, or reviewing, group protocols.

Operational effectiveness

This section sets out a number of areas that are fundamental to the successful and effective operation of local social partnerships. Within each area we have given examples of factors that will influence effectiveness.

The contents are guidance only. Each local social partnership should consider their remit, protocols and operations based on local requirements and structures. The content is intended to focus and guide discussions, but is not intended to be exhaustive or prescribe the ways in which local social partnerships work.

NB: The term local social partnership refers to the local grouping of social partners whose remit includes providing local focus on National Agreement implementation, a commitment to delivering fair play for support staff and, in England, implementation of Performance Management for teachers. In different local authorities these groups may have different names.





Remit: the areas in which the local social partnership will concentrate its effort

Proposed minimum remit for local social partnership

Promote the benefits of the National Agreement, and whole school workforce reform, including Performance Management for teachers in England, across schools within the local authority.

Influence

- Ensure that the objectives and spirit of workforce reform are taken into account appropriately within other local education-based initiatives
- Assure the delivery of nationally agreed priorities
- Ensure effective communications with schools, other local social partnerships and WAMG to identify, promote and share good practice in the implementation of whole school workforce reform

Oversee progress

- Oversee overall progress, working together to direct action and address challenges to progress where they arise
- Resolve queries and respond to concerns as necessary and in a timely manner

Support to schools

- Agree the priorities for the provision of this support through local authority advisers
- Ensure that schools have clear advice on the sustainable implementation of the National Agreement, Performance Management for teachers in England, and other reforms with implications for the whole school workforce, including acceptable and consistent ways of staffing extended services
- Encourage schools to establish workforce change teams with representation from all staff groups
- Monitor issues arising from compliance with relevant statutory regulations

Protocols: providing an agreed and understood basis for local social partnership working

Topic areas for discussion and agreement

Promote clarity, openness and a positive working culture, that allows the local social partnership to function effectively in order to deliver its remit.

Focus/participation

- The level of active support expected for the group's remit
- The roles and responsibilities of the members
- Clear criteria and boundaries for the involvement of "technical" experts
- The representation expected at meetings
- The approach to deputies for the meetings

Ways of working

- Expected levels of mutual trust and respect
- Expected levels of openness between members
- Clarity around information that will be shared with the group
- Confidentiality respected

Building an effective local social partnership

Process

- Process for agreeing key messages and communications prior to dissemination
- Approaches for conflict management and resolution
- Process and protocols around action and communication where conflicts/disputes remain
- Approaches and responsibilities for dealing with school-level challenges
- Criteria and processes for any school-level interventions required

Communication and dissemination

- The promotion of the work of the group
- The communication of the benefits of delivery
- Basis for speaking with one voice
- How and when to voice matters of disagreement

Driving continuous improvement

Operational effectiveness:

Examples of best practice in a local social partnership

Topic areas for discussion and agreement

Clarity of objectives:

- clear remit/terms of reference agreed by stakeholders
- objectives provide focus and priority
- roles are clearly defined
- members support the group's objectives
- members understand and can manage the dynamics of representing their members whilst working to the group's objectives

Representation:

- whole school staff and other appropriate stakeholders are represented
- size of group appropriate
- organisational representation appropriate for promotion as well as dissemination
- appropriate expertise secured
- experts understand their roles/input
- members attend meetings

Appropriateness of focus/ set up:

- delivers to national and local priorities
- has clear boundaries with other local groups
- appropriate process for agreeing priorities
- escalation and referral processes are understood and appropriate
- able to address issues quickly

Cohesion/ commitment:

- members work effectively as a team
- differences are easily resolved
- members understand and are committed to a common purpose
- members support and contribute to information dissemination
- senior LA sponsorship is provided
- confidentiality is within the framework of accountability within the individual organisations
- new members receive an agreed induction

Openness:

- members feel able to talk honestly and freely
- protocols over sharing information and confidentiality are honoured
- challenges lead to constructive debate
- members have equal voice
- members listen and consider each others' views

Running of meetings:

- agreed agenda is clear and appropriate
- meetings run to time
- participants contribute positively
- frequency of meetings

Stakeholder support:

- stakeholder engagement is planned
- clear lines of communication to key stakeholders
- widespread understanding of group's roles and activities
- the group's activities are supported
- clear accountabilities over support to other groups
- support all stakeholders as equal partners in the reform agenda
- provide feedback to WAMG on the effectiveness of local social partnership working
- have effective means of engaging with local schools

Agreement and delivery of actions:

- debate leads to appropriate agreement on actions
- group uses effective decision-making/resolution techniques
- differences are resolved and agreed
- members take ownership of actions
- members undertake actions agreed
- clear lines of communication around actions
- established evidence based monitoring of workforce reforms such as the National Agreement and, in England, Performance Management for teachers