

Tendering in partnership with statutory partners - Joanna Holmes, Barton Hill Settlement, Bristol

Barton Hill Settlement works in close partnership with Wellspring Healthy Living Centre and Barton Hill Primary School and has formed a partnership with them called A Barton Hill Partnership. This partnership seeks to cut across administrative boundaries in order to deliver the right service in a way that meets local needs most effectively. To further the aims of this partnership the three organisations have been involved in tendering together for joint work.

The partnership is based on shared values and the three organisation heads have spent a lot of time together building trust. This has been essential as the tendering process seems to make it necessary for partners to work incredibly quickly together, accepting that one person is going to take the lead. It also dictates timescales for completion of work - as a group there may be potentially partnership-busting decisions about cutting contributions from some partners. This partnership has had to face all of these issues, and partners have had to put aside their own organisations' interests in favour of the overall good.

In Barton Hill Settlement's case, the statutory partners have a huge respect for our work and are genuinely appalled by the way we have to constantly forage for funds. I hope that in turn we understand their constraints and all bring intelligence from our own sectors to share with the others. From our side we have deliberately tried to bring a specialist knowledge around working co-operatively rather than competitively with others.

One example is finding funding for facilitators to support the process that they might not otherwise have had access to. Another is bringing ideas from the sector that seem fresh and interesting to statutory partners, and making sure that at all times there is something positive we are all contributing.

Challenges

We make sure we are not seen as the poor relative or the one that always has to be supported in some way. It may be that the voluntary sector partner has to take the bulk of the tendering responsibility as statutory partners do not have the experience and do not have the time as part of their normal working days (yet!) to contribute equally to putting everything together. The idea is that all will gain extra money; for the voluntary sector organisation it is so it can perform its daily work and for the others it is additional.

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Benefits

Members of A Barton Hill Partnership all agree that the benefits have been great:

- Having colleagues close by from different disciplines to meet up with frequently to share issues with is a big bonus
- To be able to cross refer clients quickly and effectively, knowing that they will be treated well
- As a cross sector partnership we have had massive success in getting the ear of very senior people in all sectors; our collective credibility is much higher than it would be as individual organisations