

Best Value toolkit: Effective partnership working



Prepared by Audit Scotland
July 2010

Contents

Introduction	2	Best Value toolkit: Effective partnership working (organisation level)	6
The Audit of Best Value	2		
The Best Value toolkits	4		
Using the toolkits	4	Best Value toolkit: Effective partnership working (partnership level)	27
Auditors' evaluations	5		

Introduction

The Audit of Best Value

“Achieving Best Value is about ensuring sound governance, good management, public reporting on performance and a focus on improvement”

The duty of Best Value applies to all public bodies in Scotland. It is a statutory duty in local government, and in the rest of the public sector it is a formal duty on Accountable Officers.

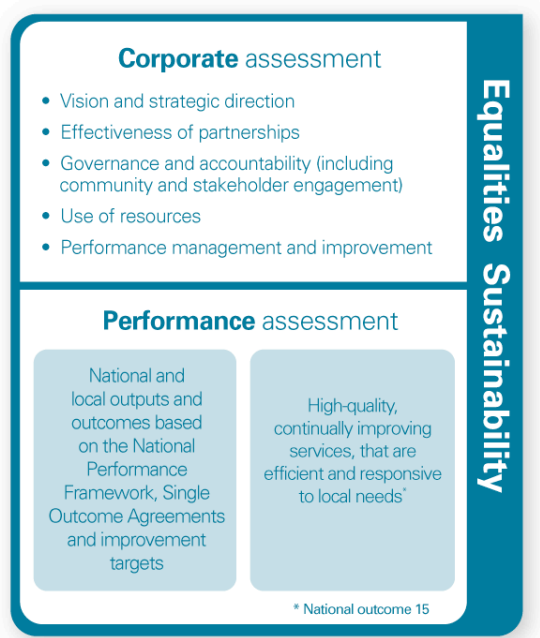
Best Value has already been a powerful force for improved performance and accountability in local government, and it will play an important role in supporting the Concordat and the development of Single Outcome Agreements between the Scottish Government, councils and their partners, and in streamlining and coordinating the scrutiny of public services. It also has the potential to underpin the National Performance Framework and the ‘management scorecard’ elements of Scotland Performs.

On behalf of the Auditor General and the Accounts Commission, Audit Scotland has identified a set of principles that form the basis for a consistent approach to the audit of Best Value across the public sector, although its application will differ to reflect factors such as the different accountability regimes and reporting arrangements in place in different sectors. This will enable us to apply a consistent set of expectations across all the bodies that we audit, and to reflect and support the reality of partnership working between organisations.

The Best Value toolkits are a key part of the practical application of the BV audit. They provide an evaluation framework that will help auditors to reach robust judgements on how public bodies are delivering Best Value. However, they cannot generate Best Value judgements on their own. They cover only part of the process. Judgements about Best Value also involve consideration of service standards and performance, outcomes and how effectively continuous improvement is being achieved. The framework through which the various elements of the Best Value audit are brought together to arrive at an overall conclusion on the extent to which an organisation is achieving Best Value is outlined below:

Exhibit 1

Framework for a BV audit of a public body



Source: Audit Scotland

As the diagram demonstrates, Audit Scotland's approach to the audit of Best Value entails both corporate assessment and performance assessment elements. The former focuses on how an organisation plans and conducts its business and manages its resources while the latter looks at the quality of those services and the outcomes for service users.

Audit Scotland is committed to ensuring that Best Value auditing across the public sector adds value to existing arrangements, is risk-based and builds on our existing knowledge of individual public bodies, and that of our scrutiny partners. Specifically we aim to:

- report on the delivery of outcomes for people who use services
- protect taxpayers' interests by examining use of resources
- put an increasing emphasis on self assessment by public bodies with audit support and validation
- work collaboratively with other scrutiny bodies to ensure our work is aligned and prevent duplication.

The Best Value toolkits

The Best Value toolkits are a series of audit diagnostics, which will help reviewers to establish the extent to which public bodies' arrangements are designed to achieve, and are actually delivering, Best Value. They have been developed to support the corporate assessment process around the five corporate assessment areas noted in Exhibit 1, and the two cross-cutting themes of equalities and sustainability. However, as each Toolkit also incorporates a series of questions on the impact of the area under review, they will also provide some evidence to support the assessment of service performance and outcomes.

The Best Value toolkits have been developed as audit tools in consultation with specialist practitioners, and representatives of public bodies and professional groups.

The toolkits take the form of structured key questions, with a matrix of possible levels of performance, ranging from basic to advanced practice. The matrices cannot of course capture all of the ways in which a public body may address the requirements of Best Value, so there is clearly scope for auditors to exercise balanced judgement and for public bodies to respond flexibly in demonstrating how the key areas of challenge are addressed. Individual evaluations are made about the level a public body has attained in each question or area. However, these have not been weighted and it is not intended that these be used to determine an overall scoring for any Toolkit. They are designed to contribute to sound professional judgements, not to replace them.

Using the toolkits

The toolkits are designed for application by Audit Scotland's auditors when carrying out Best Value audits of public bodies. In practice, the toolkits will be applied as part of an audit process, whereby the auditor makes enquiries, seeks supporting information and forms conclusions based on the evidence obtained.

Audit Scotland recognises that bodies may find the toolkits helpful in carrying out general organisational reviews or specific service reviews and are therefore available in the Audit Scotland website www.audit-scotland.gov.uk. It should be stressed however that public bodies using the toolkits do so at their own discretion. The toolkits are designed principally as audit tools that are part of Audit Scotland's overall Best Value audit methodology and are not expressly produced for self-assessment purposes.

Any organisation using the toolkits to inform their own corporate or service-based self-evaluation processes will need to consider the local context when applying them, and also the indicative rather than conclusive nature of the findings when interpreting the results. The toolkits were designed to elicit contextual information and provide evidence for arriving at professional audit judgements. They are not intended to be, and cannot be, used in a "tick-box" fashion.

The Best Value toolkits are generic in nature, in that they are not specific to any one type of public body or to any one sector and are designed so that they can be applied to all public bodies. Auditors

will require to be sensitive to the differences between organisations both in terms of different sectors and varying scales of operation.

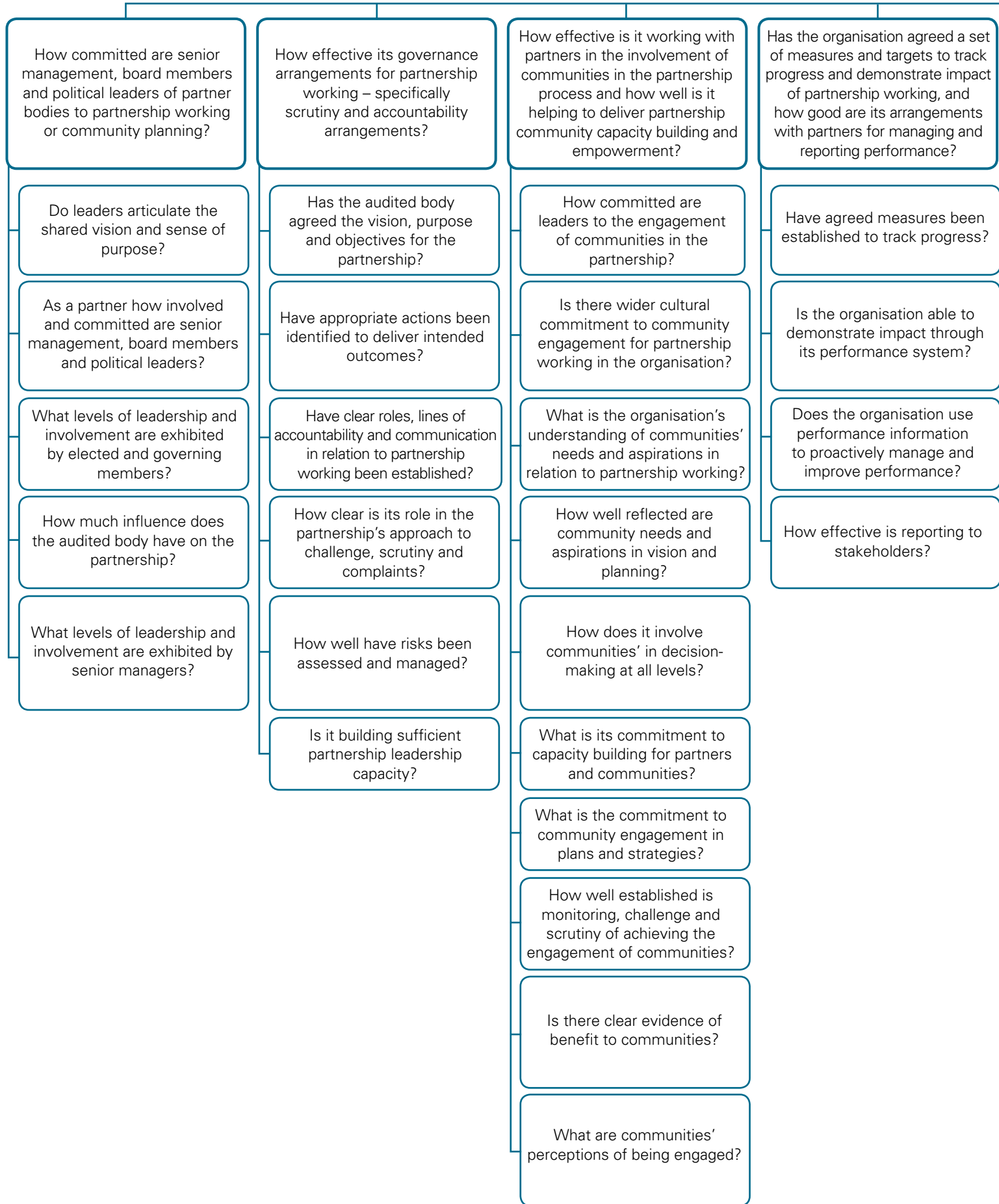
There are two versions of the assessment matrix for partnership working. The first is to be applied to an individual organisation; the second is to be applied to a partnership body.

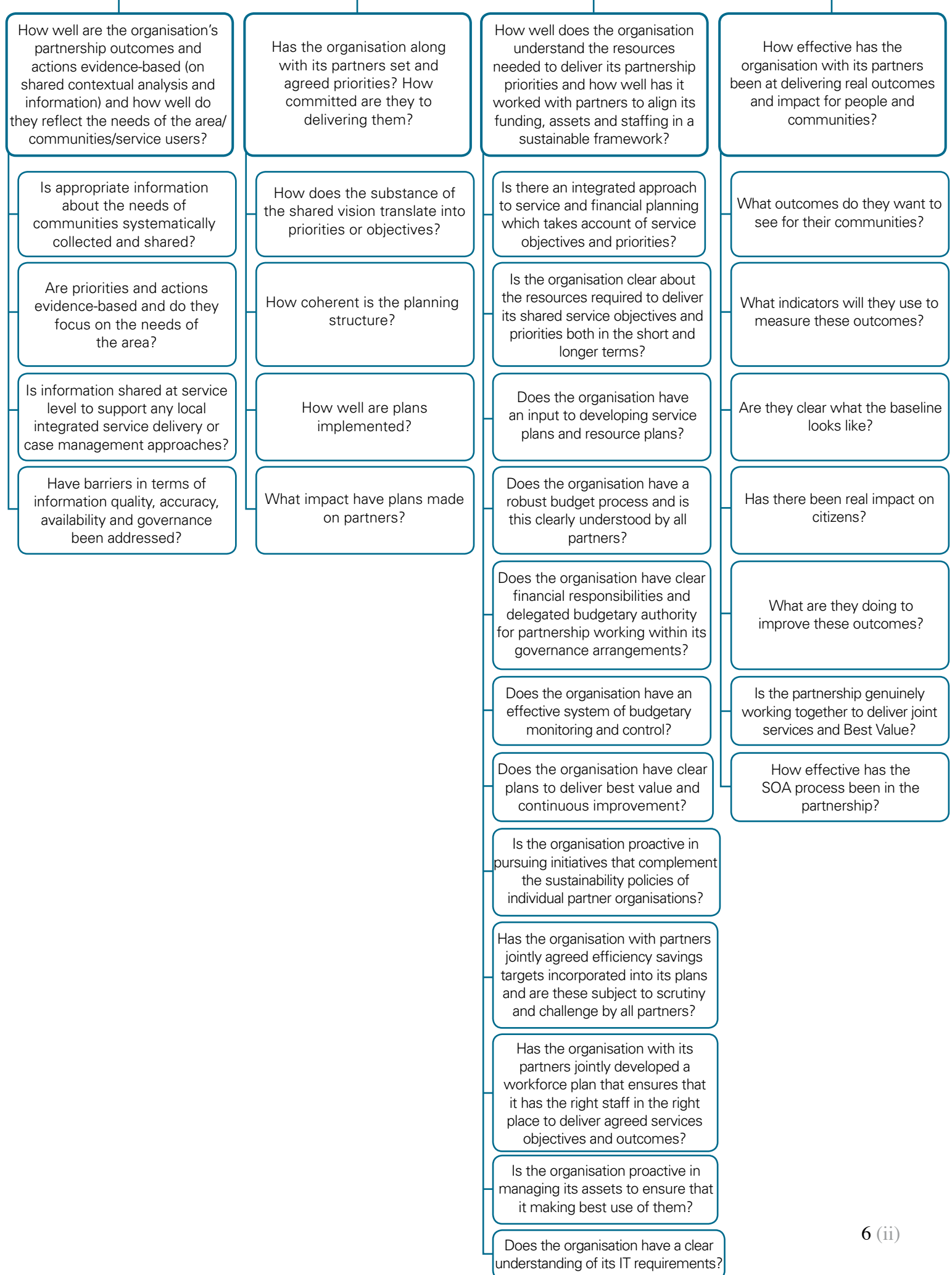
This toolkit forms part of a suite of audit products that will be applied, over time, to support a structured, evidenced based, judgment on an organisation’s approach to the use of the resources with which it has been provided and its achievement of Best Value.

Auditors’ evaluations

The toolkit takes the form of a series of questions based on identified best practice. It then offers three sets of descriptors, these being:

Does not meet basic requirements	An organisation may not yet demonstrate the basic practice level in any particular category.
Basic practices	Minimum acceptable standards, which would be sufficient to allow an organisation to demonstrate sound performance.
Better practices	As basic, with some elements of good or even best practice, but not on a consistent basis.
Advanced practices	Consistently demonstrating good or best practice and contributing to innovation.





BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (ORGANISATION LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
1. How committed are senior management/board members/political leaders to partnership working or community planning?			
1.1 Do leaders articulate the shared vision and sense of purpose of the partnership?	Leaders acknowledge and can articulate the vision for the partnership, but there is not a sense of ownership.	Leaders articulate a clear and consistent shared vision and sense of purpose for the partnership.	Leaders actively promote and communicate the shared vision and sense of purpose of the partnership. They can demonstrate – and are committed to - ensuring its use and profile throughout partnership activity.
1.2 As a partner how involved and committed are senior management, board members and political leaders?	The audited body is taking a leading role in developing the partnership. However they or other partners may not feel or be fully involved in the partnership e.g. across relevant themes, in leading relevant groups, in contributing resources or in terms of commitment to the overall process.	They can articulate and demonstrate a shared commitment to the partnership and are signed up to a formal partnership agreement. They understand their own and each other's role. Chief executives and leaders (or equivalents) and senior management of partner organisations meet or communicate frequently formally and informally, to improve and further develop partnership working.	It is recognised by key stakeholders that as a partner the organisation is jointly involved and responsible for delivering partnership outcomes.
1.3 What levels of leadership and involvement are exhibited by elected and governing members?	Elected and governing members have a limited involvement in partnership working or community planning, beyond receiving annual updates/review reports. Some elected members demonstrate active visible partnership leadership but there is potential for this being more consistent, either across the partnership or within partner bodies. The organisation has identified how to further develop elected member involvement in, and responsibility for, community planning and partnership working.	Elected and governing members play an active visible partnership leadership role and can demonstrate commitment to delivering the agreed outcomes – and ensure their organisations fulfil their commitments. They fully understand their roles and responsibilities and participate accordingly.	A wide range of elected members (across parties) and members of governing bodies have active involvement at all levels of partnership working and can communicate benefits/outcomes from partnership working.

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (ORGANISATION LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
1.4 How much influence does the audited body have on the partnership?	Senior management, board members and political leaders are members of the key strategic community planning decision making body. However, there are no clear delegated powers for their involvement in this.	Senior management, board members and political leaders are members of the key strategic community planning decision making body and take an active role in decision-making in the interests of their organisation.	Senior management, board members and political leaders are active members of the key strategic community planning decision making bodies and there are clear delegated powers for their involvement in decision-making.
1.5 What levels of leadership and involvement are exhibited by senior managers?	Although senior managers are endeavouring to change ways of working to enable partnership priorities to be delivered effectively, this is not corporate and not consistent across the whole organisation.	Senior managers recognise the need to work corporately to deliver partnership priorities, and actively work to promote change within their organisations.	There is a corporate and consistent approach to partnership working. Senior managers demonstrate strong leadership through joint working at management level. They lead change in their organisation and partnership working is embedded at all staffing levels.

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (ORGANISATION LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
2. How effective its governance arrangements for partnership working – specifically scrutiny and accountability arrangements?			
2.1 Has the audited body agreed the vision, purpose and objectives for the partnership?	<p>The audited body has with partners contributed to and developed a clear vision, a purpose and range of objectives although:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it has only a limited awareness and understanding of them • its own vision, purpose and objectives are not aligned with those of the partnership • it has not clearly communicated these to all its stakeholders • it does not review these regularly to ensure that they are sufficiently appropriate and challenging or aligned with their own ('fit for purpose'). 	<p>It has agreed the partnership's vision, purpose and objectives, and is clear about their role in meeting shared objectives.</p> <p>Its vision and purpose are closely aligned to those of the partnership.</p> <p>It is able to demonstrate that the vision, purpose and objectives are reviewed at appropriate intervals to ensure they remain fit for purpose and aligned with its own.</p> <p>The partnership's vision, purpose and objectives are clearly communicated to its stakeholders</p>	<p>It regularly seek the views of its stakeholders and these are used to shape the partnership's vision, purpose and objectives</p>
2.2 Have appropriate actions been identified to deliver intended partnership outcomes?	<p>It has identified a number of specific actions, these are not clearly linked to its objectives and therefore it is difficult to demonstrate that they are intended to deliver the planned outcomes.</p>	<p>It has identified appropriate actions to deliver the intended outcomes, and reviews these at regular intervals to ensure they are 'SMART' and remain fit for purpose.</p>	<p>It is able to clearly demonstrate that the actions it carries out produce the intended outcomes and achieve the relevant objectives.</p>

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (ORGANISATION LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
2.3 Have clear roles, lines of accountability and communication in relation to partnership working been established?	<p>It has agreed and put lines of accountability in place. It has some understanding of roles and responsibilities although there is scope for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lines of accountability to be more clearly communicated to, and approved by key decision-making bodies • greater clarity of its own and partners' roles and responsibilities • raising within the organisation an awareness of the partnership's decision-making processes and use of resources. <p>Where there is a nationally defined governance and accountability framework, it has signed up to this with partners.</p>	<p>It has clearly defined - and agreed - roles and responsibilities which are clearly articulated through an appropriate governance framework.</p> <p>There are clearly-understood lines of accountability in place which are effectively communicated to interested parties.</p> <p>It ensures that the partnership leaders regularly account for the use of resources in an open and transparent way, and the partnership's decision-making process is clearly communicated to all its stakeholders.</p>	<p>It reviews the partnership's governance framework - along with the roles and responsibilities - to ensure agreed approaches to its involvement in partnership working is efficient and effective.</p>
2.4 How clear is its role in the partnership's approach to challenge, scrutiny and complaints?	<p>It has put in place its own complaints handling system for responding to partnership issues.</p>	<p>The organisation has developed with partners a system for internal challenge/scrutiny of partnership decisions and performance. It invites and responds to both internal and external challenge and scrutiny, and communicates its responses to stakeholders.</p> <p>It has established with partners a complaints handling system for handling partnership issues which operates well, seeks feedback from complainants and is reviewed regularly to look for improvements.</p>	<p>The organisation actively promotes and contributes to a mature partnership approach to internal and external challenge of partnership decisions and performance.</p> <p>It has a robust approach to the handling, reporting and follow up of partnership complaints which has influenced improvements in the way the partnership works.</p>

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (ORGANISATION LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
2.5 Is its role to partnership working been risk assessed and managed?	<p>It has put in place an approach to the assessment of risk for partnership working and has a management system in place to assist this. There is scope for this to be more embedded with partners.</p>	<p>It has established with partners a system for addressing potential joint risks and measures for mitigating the effects of identified risks.</p> <p>The risk management system is based on ‘good practice’ guidelines and has been benchmarked against other organisations’ systems.</p> <p>It is able to demonstrate that its joint risk management system operates effectively and is embedded in its work.</p>	<p>The importance of the partnership’s joint risk management is embraced, well understood and established in the organisation and is seen as part of its partnership culture.</p> <p>With partners it regularly reviews the effectiveness of its system and makes necessary changes to secure improvements.</p>
2.6 Is it building sufficient partnership leadership capacity?	<p>Its leaders involved in partnership are fulfilling the basic requirements of their roles.</p> <p>It has defined the key skills required for its leaders in their partnership work.</p> <p>Although the partnership has a performance evaluation system in place there is scope for improving the way it addresses under-performance.</p> <p>It provides its leaders with access to appropriate development opportunities to improve their performance in partnership working. Leaders recognise and can articulate this as a personal and organisational development need.</p>	<p>With partners it has put in place and uses a robust performance evaluation system which evaluates the partnership performance of its leaders. It promotes improvement and deals effectively with underperformance.</p> <p>With partners it is able to demonstrate that it effectively develops the capability of people with partnership governance responsibilities. It recognises that this forms an important part of the partnership’s review, monitoring and self-evaluation activities.</p>	<p>With partners it regularly reviews the way it develops people with partnership governance responsibilities and is able to demonstrate that it uses the most effective approaches.</p> <p>Its leaders involved in partnership working are performing to a high standard and have received external recognition for their performance.</p>

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (ORGANISATION LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
3. How effective is it working with partners in the involvement of communities in the partnership process and how well is it helping to deliver partnership community capacity building and empowerment?			
3.1 How committed are its leaders to the engagement of communities in the work of the partnership?	Leaders of the organisation can articulate a clear understanding of and commitment to community engagement for the partnership.	Leaders can point to how, with partners, their commitment has resulted in positive changes to the way the partnership engages with communities.	Leaders actively seek and can demonstrate innovative ways of building community involvement and empowerment in the partnership. There is community representation in the partnership and they are treated as equal partners.
3.2 Is there wider cultural commitment to community engagement for partnership working in the organisation?	There is demonstration and awareness of commitment to community engagement for partnership working throughout the organisation which is consistent with that of the leadership.,	The organisation sees community engagement with partners and across the partnership as being part of joined-up activity and has resulted in positive change.	There is a consistent approach across the organisation through working with individual partners to involving communities, where appropriate, in innovative working and activities to deliver positive outcomes
3.3 What is the organisation's understanding of its communities' needs and aspirations in relation to partnership working?	As an organisation it has individually identified community needs. These are mainly regarded in terms of high level outcomes, (e.g. in a Single Outcome Agreement). There is less emphasis on community aspirations.	With partners it has developed a shared and consistent recognition of community aspirations as well as need at a strategic level, reached and agreed through dialogue with communities. These are reflected in local outcomes and contribute to positive change.	With partners it recognises that community needs and aspirations are constantly changing. It works together with communities and partners to review, challenge and develop proposed outcomes at strategic and operational levels.
3.4 How well does it reflect community needs and aspirations in its approach to developing the partnership vision and planning?	The organisation's outcomes are related to identified community needs and are strategic priorities which have been agreed by partners and reflected in the partnership's vision and planning.	The organisation recognises that community needs and aspirations are complex and changing. It regularly reviews its outcomes and has an established approach to sharing these with partners. It influences the review of the partnership's vision and planning approach.	The organisation has a robust approach to understanding community needs and aspirations with robust intelligence at its core, and ensures that this is reflected in partnership plans and planning processes.

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (ORGANISATION LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
3.5 How does it involve communities' in decision-making at all levels?	The organisation has a coherent approach to involving communities in its own decision-making; however it is limited in the types and channels used.	With partners the organisation seeks ways of involving communities in decision-making in partnership working.	With partners it has agreed that communities are represented at a strategic level and have a full partnership role, this includes the voluntary/third sector.
3.6 What is its commitment to capacity building for partners and communities?	The organisation shows recognition of the need to support and develop partners and local community representatives involved in decision-making.	It has established with partners that a core partnership activity is building the capacity of communities in partnership working and this is supported by programmes and resources.	The organisation, with partners ensures that capacity building and learning is championed and regarded as a shared responsibility for the partnership and communities. It works with partners to coordinate engagement activity to support this.
3.7 What is the organisation's commitment to community engagement in its plans and strategies?	Its commitment to community engagement is set out in the organisation's key strategic plans.	A multi-faceted approach, involving different channels, for community engagement is clearly articulated in the organisation's strategic plan or in an effective engagement strategy. This influences the way it works with partners.	Community engagement and empowerment permeates throughout the organisation's thinking. All its strategies have community engagement as a core element. This approach is shared and influences its approach to partnership working.
3.8 How well established is the organisation's monitoring, challenge and scrutiny of achieving the engagement of its communities in partnership working?	The organisation has developed measures to monitor the impact of its approach to the engagement of communities in partnership working. Monitoring is limited to measuring outcomes.	The organisation has developed a series of measures in conjunction with local communities to monitor its engagement strategy, engagement activities and impact. This is evaluated robustly and reported on a regular basis. This is publicly reported with communities involved in scrutiny.	The organisation has an embedded approach to the monitoring and reporting of its performance and the impact of its community engagement activities in partnership working. The approach to evaluation is rigorous and inclusive, involving scrutiny and dialogue with communities as an equal partner where monitoring and challenge by all participants lies at the core of the approach.
3.9 Is there clear evidence of benefit to communities of the organisation's approach to community engagement?	The organisation can evidence that there is a greater level of community awareness of its decision-making process and options available.	The organisation has good evidence of greater levels of community involvement in decision-making and this informs its approach to partnership working.	The organisation has good evidence of changes in policy or service provision arising from community involvement and sense of increased community empowerment through individual and collective learning. It works closely with partners to deliver this.

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (ORGANISATION LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
3.10 What are communities’ perceptions of being engaged by the organisation?	<p>Although communities can point to consultation and ‘being asked’, there is a feeling that engagement is limited.</p> <p>The general opportunity and mechanisms to engage may not be widely advertised.</p>	<p>Communities can articulate confidently that they have contributed to change in policy or service provision by the organisation.</p> <p>The general opportunity and mechanisms to engage are widely advertised and communicated through all partners.</p>	<p>Communities feel that they have had influence and been empowered as a result of influencing or taking part in decision-making within the organisation and through partnership working.</p>

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (ORGANISATION LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
4. Has the organisation agreed a set of measures and targets to track progress and demonstrate impact of partnership working, and how good are its arrangements with partners for managing and reporting performance?			
4.1 Have agreed measures been established to track the organisation's progress in partnership working?	The organisation has agreed a number of measures for tracking progress against agreed actions and priorities for partnership working.	<p>The organisation has robust process, output and outcome measures in place which assess cost and quality for each area of partnership activity and focus on the outcomes and experience of users.</p> <p>Baselines have been established for all areas of its partnership working; data is recent and available at frequent intervals throughout the year.</p> <p>It has arrangements in place across all partnership theme groups for the regular production of high-quality performance reports and review of trend information - these are used to inform current and future partnership activity and plans.</p>	The organisation regularly reviews its performance measures in relation to partnership working and demonstrates a programme of improvement where new or better measures are progressively introduced.

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (ORGANISATION LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
4.2 Is the organisation able to demonstrate the impact of partnership working through its performance system?	<p>Although outcomes, indicators and targets have been agreed for most areas, further work is required to ensure impact can be demonstrated in the short, medium and long term across all partnership working.</p>	<p>Success in partnership working is demonstrated through a meaningful number of intermediate and long term outcome measures and targets, which cover all key areas.</p> <p>The organisation can demonstrate the way that it delivers services with partners, through the monitoring and reporting of relevant measures, has an impact on delivering outcomes.</p>	<p>The organisation has a corporate Citizens' charter in place, which, has been developed with local communities, which specifies the minimum service standards that users can expect to receive. These incorporate how it will work with partners to deliver services. These are regularly monitored and publicly reported. Poor performance is challenged and addressed.</p> <p>The organisation demonstrates innovation in modelling the links between environment, interventions and impact in the way it delivers services</p> <p>The organisation is able to identify and measure the additional impact (in terms of either quality or quantity of outcomes) achieved by acting in partnership through regular feedback from local communities.</p>

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (ORGANISATION LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
4.3 Does the organisation use performance information to proactively manage and improve performance in how it works with partners?	<p>The organisation has arrangements in place for reviewing progress against agreed plans in how it works with partners although:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> information or monitoring arrangements may not be fully developed. There is a risk that the causes of poor or successful performance are not properly identified (and appropriate action taken) results from reviews do not inform future planning and / or no improvement plans are in place 	<p>The organisation has an effective performance management framework which incorporates information on its approach to partnership working and regularly reviews progress on agreed plans at appropriate intervals.</p> <p>Information from reviews informs future approaches to partnership working and this is shared with partner organisations to improve service delivery, and this included some specific improvement actions.</p> <p>The organisation carries out regular self assessments to improve its approach to partnership working.</p> <p>Performance in partnership working is subject to regular challenge and scrutiny at a strategic level within the organisation.</p>	<p>The organisation regularly undertakes benchmarking of performance in partnership working against other areas and adopts innovative practice, or exhibits innovation within its own activity which is being adopted by other areas.</p> <p>Self assessment of its approach to partnership working is routinely carried out within the organisation.</p> <p>There is a mature approach to monitoring performance in partnership working through rigorous challenge and scrutiny. The organisation is proactively subjected to external challenge and scrutiny of its approach to partnership working as part of a robust improvement programme.</p> <p>Identified best practice of partnership working is widely adopted in the organisation.</p> <p>The organisation can demonstrate that there is a clear link between its performance management systems and the identification of future priorities and improvement actions in how it works with partners.</p>

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (ORGANISATION LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
4.4 How effective is the organisation’s reporting to stakeholders on its approach to partnership working?	<p>There is minimal public reporting of progress on partnership working.</p> <p>Public performance reporting on partnership working is limited to the SOA annual performance report. It is based mainly on prescribed performance indicators and/or service outputs and project completions. There is limited reporting on the impact that working in partnership is having for local communities.</p> <p>Reporting on partnership working is not yet fully integrated in the organisation or shared with partners. This results in information from all partners and partnership groups, unnecessary duplication, or the proliferation of individual reports across different reporting mechanisms.</p>	<p>The organisation, with its partners, reports on partnership working through frequent, regular and integrated public performance reporting, which is outcomes-focused and demonstrates the impact that working in partnership is having for local communities..</p> <p>The organisation makes reports on partnership working available in a variety of formats to ensure they are accessible to all sections of the community.</p> <p>Reports tend to be positive, focussing on achievements, and would benefit from greater balance.</p>	<p>Progress on agreed plans for partnership working are reported regularly to the public through balanced and comprehensive reports, utilising a range of communication channels appropriate to different audiences.</p> <p>The organisation has reviewed the effectiveness of reporting arrangements and made improvements in response to feedback from key stakeholders, which demonstrate innovation in developing a positive dialogue with the hardest to reach.</p> <p>The organisation regularly reviews its approach to public reporting on partnership working and changes its approach to meet those requirements.</p>

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (ORGANISATION LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
5. How well are the organisation’s partnership outcomes and actions evidence-based (on shared contextual analysis and information) and how well do they reflect the needs of the area/communities/service users?			
5.1 Is appropriate information about the needs of communities systematically collected and shared?	<p>The organisation has systems in place for the collection and analysis of information about the needs of communities; however, there are some gaps in information.</p> <p>The organisation shares some information with partners and there has contributed to some local analysis, there is insufficient co-ordination of data and information is not collected, shared or analysed at partnership level on a systematic basis.</p>	<p>The organisation makes good use of both national and local data to identify local problems and their causes, with specific regard to the needs of different equalities groupings.</p> <p>The organisation, with partner organisations, has a co-operative approach to sharing and jointly developing their information resources. Information collection and interpretation is co-ordinated across the partnership and provides a comprehensive picture of local need, including the needs of minority groups. New methods are adopted as a result, including the borrowing of best practice from other areas.</p>	<p>The organisation communicates its understanding of local need to its communities. Community members and groups are enabled and encouraged to highlight local needs to the organisation and this is shared with partners. This ongoing dialogue underpins the organisation and its partnership approach to collecting and sharing information.</p> <p>The organisation works in partnership to regularly review the types of information it collects, how it is gathered and the ways in which it is jointly analysed and used to inform planning and service delivery.</p>
5.2 Are priorities and actions evidence-based and do they focus on the needs of its area?	<p>The organisation’s plans and strategies for partnership working do not always reflect consistent use or analysis of information.</p>	<p>The organisation’s plans and strategies are based upon a robust shared understanding of the local area profile, which includes comprehensive baseline information.</p> <p>There are clear links between local issues and partnership priorities and these are translated into the organisation’s service priorities.</p>	<p>The organisation regularly maps the underlying relationships between local needs and issues, and ensures services are designed and delivered in partnership according to evidence-based best practice in achieving outcomes.</p> <p>The organisation with its partners continually reviews its priorities, taking account of new or changed information about need on an ongoing basis.</p>

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (ORGANISATION LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
5.3 Is information shared at service level to support any local integrated service delivery or case management approaches?	<p>The organisation focuses on sharing socio-demographic information and has developed joint case management arrangements within key health and social work services. It is yet to develop this approach within other service areas. A general information sharing protocol is in place.</p> <p>Although the organisation participates in 'Customer First' initiatives, it lacks the joint data-handling, security and risk management arrangements to allow the sharing of detailed customer information with partner organisations.</p>	<p>The organisation has service level partnerships with service specific information sharing protocols to facilitate the effective sharing of operational information to better integrate service delivery with partners.</p> <p>These generally work well, however practitioners may still resist sharing the most sensitive data and seek to address concerns regarding liability where consent may require to be overridden.</p>	<p>The organisation has an overarching information sharing protocol in place for working in partnership with specific data sharing agreements in place at thematic level.</p> <p>Local communities have been involved in their development and there had been a good level of awareness raising to get local community support.</p> <p>Effective joint information and risk management arrangements support the protocols, with regular review taking into account current legal and information security best practice.</p>
5.4 Has the organisation addressed barriers in terms of information quality, accuracy, availability and governance?	<p>The organisation has some issues in relation to data availability or quality; some data may not allow disaggregation to the appropriate geographies of partner organisations, or may be collected with insufficient frequency to allow robust analysis over time.</p> <p>The partnership pools its information and uses the principle of 'collect once and use numerous times' (COUNT) to underpin data collection, storage and sharing. It also monitors information sharing processes. However, partners' information security and data protection policies often act as a barrier to sharing some types of information.</p>	<p>The organisation has, with its Partners, clearly defined responsibilities for ensuring data is accurate, valid, reliable, timely, relevant and complete.</p> <p>Protocols with its partners are in place to allow the sharing of information and a systematic programme of collection, analysis and reporting has been agreed.</p> <p>With partners it regularly monitors and benchmarks its approach to collecting and sharing information and adopts good practice from other areas.</p> <p>Along with partners the organisation seeks ways of disaggregating data to appropriate levels even where boundaries are not co terminus.</p>	<p>The organisation ensures that it provides valid and reliable quantitative and qualitative information that is regularly collected. It has with partner's arrangements in place that this information is owned by the partnership and is easily accessible by all partners.</p> <p>The organisation has worked with partners to ensure that it has good quality and accurate information based on partnership boundaries. It has good disaggregation and sharing of information across all partners.</p> <p>Along with its partners the organisation regularly reviews its systems for sharing information, develops new methods as required and shares this learning across the public sector.</p>

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (ORGANISATION LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
6. Has the organisation along with its partners set and agreed priorities? How committed are they to delivering them?			
6.1 How does the substance of the partnership’s shared vision translate into the organisation’s priorities or objectives?	Senior members and officers of the organisation have with partner organisations worked collectively to agree a manageable number of strategic priorities based on community views and shared information. These add value to the organisation’s own work.	The organisation has translated partnership priorities into its key strategies and operational action plans.	Strategic priorities can be demonstrated as providing direction across the partnership and contribute to the direction of the organisation and are key elements within its plans and strategies.
6.2 How coherent is the organisation’s planning structure for partnership working?	The organisation’s key strategies and the community plan/SOA are demonstrably linked, albeit only at a corporate level with few linkages at service levels.	There are clear links between the organisation’s key plans and strategies, partner’s plans and strategies and the overall partnership plans, reflecting key priorities and actions for the area.	The organisation along with its partners has a joint planning approach to ensure that its plans, strategies and budgets and those of the partnership are aligned both at strategic and service level and reflect key priorities and actions for the area.
6.3 How well are the organisation’s plans for partnership working implemented?	The organisation assigns responsibility to individuals for delivery of key partnership work; this is not coordinated across the organisation.	The organisation has assigned responsibility for partnership action plans however there is limited challenge and holding people to account on delivery of these.	The organisation works with partners to ensure there is a coordinated and consistent approach to implementing agreed actions across the organisation and partnership. Responsibility for delivery is clear and shared across partner organisations. It works with partners to ensure that there is a mature approach within the partnership to challenge and holding to account for delivery of these actions.
6.4 What impact has the organisation’s plans made on partners?	There is shared working in some areas of the organisation but this is on an ad hoc basis or primarily through initiatives. In some areas, staff on the ground work well with staff from partner agencies, primarily on a bilateral basis.	The organisation has with partners put plans in place which progress working across a number of partnership and service boundaries.	The organisation and its partners have well developed partnership plans and shared working opportunities are widespread and routinely considered in planning the delivery of services across the area to support the delivery of partnership outcomes.

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (ORGANISATION LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
7. How well does the organisation understand the resources needed to deliver its partnership priorities and how well has it worked with partners to align its funding, assets and staffing in a sustainable framework?			
7.1 Is there an integrated approach to service and financial planning in the organisation, which takes account of service objectives and priorities for partnership working?	The organisation has developed a plan for working in partnership which sets out key objectives and priorities but it is difficult to link these to the strategic aims and priorities of the partnership. Its financial plan underpinning partnership working is still to be fully developed including current and future sources of funding.	With partners the organisation has agreed a partnership plan which outlines key aims and objectives. These objectives are aligned to the organisation’s corporate plan. The approach to working in partnership is supported by an annual financial plan based on the aggregate spend of the individual partners.	With partners the organisation has agreed and formally approved a partnership plan (or equivalent) which sets out clearly the vision, aims and priorities of the partnership and the finances needed to achieve these. The organisation’s plan is aligned to the strategic objectives and priorities of the partnership and is supported by a well thought out financial plan, covering the life span of the partnership plan. Along with partners it reviews, updates and reports at regular intervals to take account of funding and budget settlements.
7.2 Is the organisation clear about the resources required to deliver its shared service objectives and priorities for partnership working both in the short and longer-terms?	There is limited resource commitment shown by the organisation to supporting partnership working. It has not carried out a detailed review of their adequacy. Resource planning is focused on an annual cycle with limited forecasting of future needs.	There is a commitment by the organisation to the provision of resources required to deliver shared services objectives and partnership priorities. These have been identified and agreed in the short-term. The organisation within the partnership has yet to agree on its resource requirements in the medium to longer term.	There is a strong commitment within the organisation to resourcing partnership objectives and priorities. Along with partners it has carried out a detailed baseline review and identified the resources (i.e. workforce levels, finances, assets, capital spend, IT support) required to deliver its services objectives and priorities. The resource requirements are subject to regular review and forecasting of future commitments to confirm they remain relevant.
7.3 Does the organisation have an input to developing service plans and resource plans to support the SOA?	The larger partners dominate decisions on resource planning and in determining service priorities.	The organisation with all partners has an opportunity to input into service and resource plans although for areas of disagreement the larger partners hold sway.	The organisation with all other partners contributes to service and resource plans All partners are consulted on service priorities and resource allocation. All key decisions are based on a consensus amongst partners.

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (ORGANISATION LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
7.4 Does the organisation have a robust budget process for partnership working and is this clearly understood by all partners?	The organisation has a well-documented annual budget process in place which is based on aligned budgets with partners. This process is well documented and has been communicated to all partners.	The organisation's annual budget process is based on the aligned budgets of partner organisations. Its budget is based on a detailed analysis of the resources required to deliver the partnership plan. The basis for compiling the budget and the underlying assumptions has been agreed amongst the partners.	The organisation's medium to longer term financial plans for partnership working is based on an explicit agreement about the delivery of joint outcomes/outputs in line with a Strategic Partnership Agreement. The process is understood by key staff within partner organisations. Partners consult with each other when setting their budgets to ensure that adequate finances are available to support shared objectives.
7.5 Does the organisation have clear financial responsibilities and delegated budgetary authority for partnership working within its governance arrangements?	The organisation has identified budget holders with responsibility for partnership working. A scheme of delegation including authorisation limits has been developed and documented.	The organisation has a written and explicit scheme of delegation for financial decision-making and accountability including detailed protocols for virement and management of resources for partnership working. These arrangements are consistently applied and are updated annually for any changes.	The organisation works within an approved partnership scheme of delegation and aligned budgets. There are agreed, and transparent, lead arrangements where it is appropriate for one partner to take the lead. There are clear operational line management arrangements for staff that satisfy the requirements of all partners.
7.6 Does the organisation have an effective system of budgetary monitoring and control for partnership working?	The organisation ensures that designated budget holders for partnership working are routinely provided with timely and accurate statements of actual, and forecast, outturn against budget so that they can control their budgets.	The organisation ensures that designated budget holders for partnership working are routinely provided with relevant, timely and accurate cost information which includes variance analysis and comparison of outturn against budget. Areas of recurring cost pressures are highlighted to allow budget holders to take prompt action to control their budgets.	The organisation ensures that budget holders for partnership working are consulted on the format and content of budgetary control reports to ensure that they meet their needs. The organisation ensures regular financial monitoring reports are submitted to the partnership board with explanations for significant variances against budget.

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (ORGANISATION LEVEL)

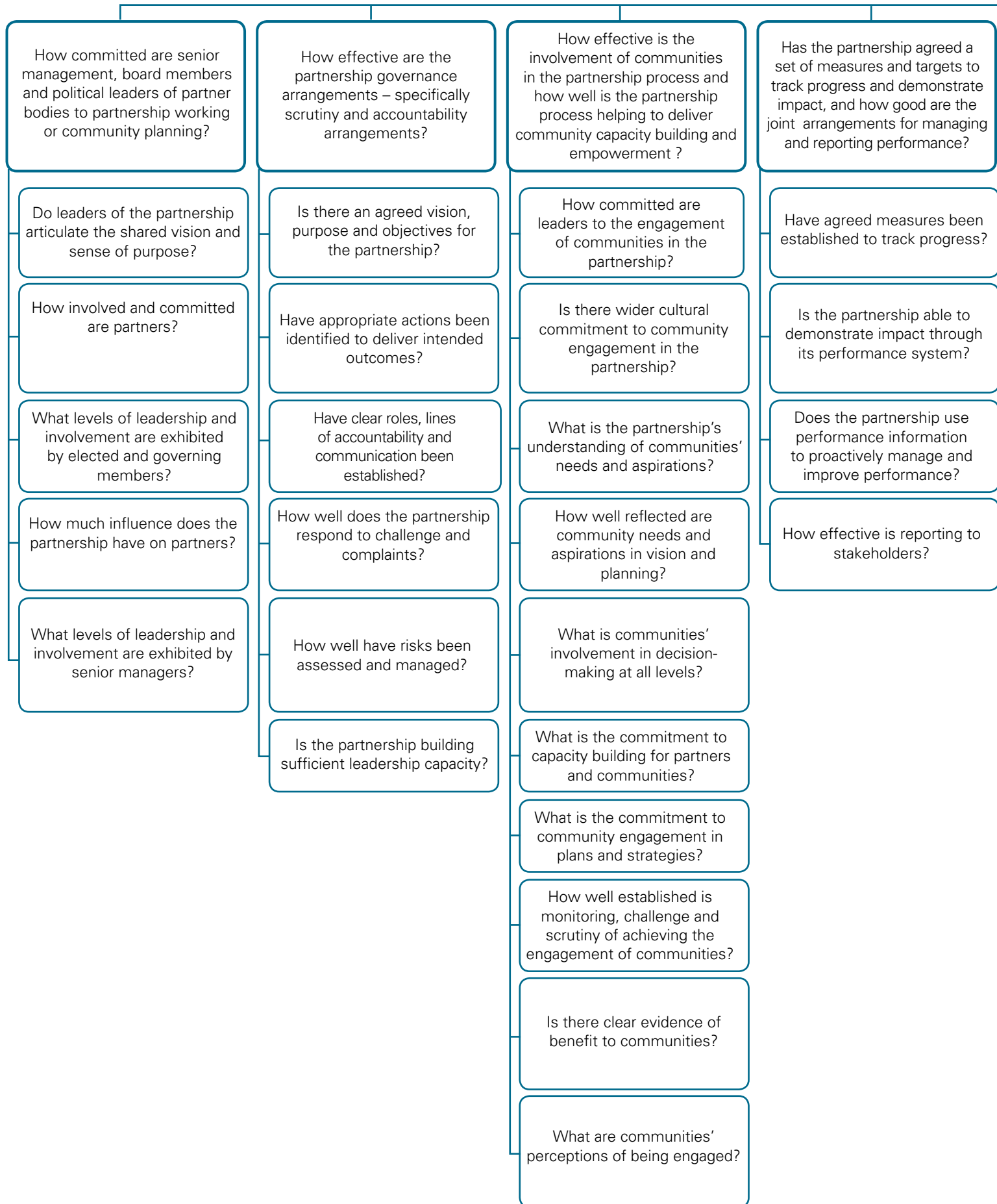
	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
7.7 Does the organisation have clear plans to deliver best value and continuous improvement in relation to partnership working?	The organisation has an explicit commitment to deliver best value in how it works with partners. Its approach lacks specific details on how this is to be achieved.	The organisation's Best Value principles are detailed in their plan for partnership working. A number of actions with lead responsibilities have been identified to support best value and continuous improvement.	The organisation has a best value improvement plan (described in SMART terms) that specifically addresses the delivery of best value for delivering partnership working. The Best Value improvement plan is regularly reviewed by partners for progress in implementation.
7.8 Is the organisation proactive in pursuing initiatives that complement the sustainability policies of the partnership?	The organisation's key plans for partnership working contain a commitment to sustainable services and efficient resource utilisation. The plan lacks detail on specific initiatives.	The organisation's service plans contain details of a number of initiatives on sustainable development (eg waste reduction, recycling, energy saving) and these complement the sustainability policies of the partnership and its partner organisations.	The organisation has with partners developed and is committed to delivering on cross cutting sustainability priorities for the local area which are based upon the sustainability policies of partner organisations and the priorities of local communities.
7.9 Has the organisation with partners jointly agreed efficiency savings targets and incorporated these into its plans and are these subject to scrutiny and challenge by all partners?	The organisation has with partners jointly agreed an Efficiency Savings Target based on a percentage of its budget. The specific actions needed to achieve this target have not been outlined.	The organisation with its partners has identified and agreed a number of initiatives for achieving efficiency savings. These have been subject to review and scrutiny by all partners and the level of savings are consistent with the efficiency agenda of individual partner bodies. The organisation actively promotes shared services (e.g. payroll, administration) to ensure the efficient use of resources.	Efficiency savings schemes have jointly been agreed amongst partners and these are aligned to each organisation's own efficiency plans and targets. Within the partnership plan, each scheme is described in SMART terms and the overall level of savings is consistent with National Outcome indicator number 15. The organisation along with its partners can demonstrate efficiency savings as a result of delivering shared services.

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (ORGANISATION LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
7.10 Has the organisation with its partners jointly developed a workforce plan that ensures that it has the right staff in the right place to deliver agreed services objectives and outcomes?	The organisation has prepared unilaterally an annual workforce plan specifically for areas of partnership working. It cannot demonstrate that there are sufficient processes in place to accurately estimate and plan for future workforce requirements, or control its recruitment and retention activities.	The organisation has quantified workforce requirements to resource its partnership activities in the short and longer-term, taking cognisance of changes in its operating environment including likely changes to working practices, service delivery and available resources. This is recorded within its workforce plan and this has been shared with partners.	The organisation's workforce plan is aligned to the partnership work force plan and financial plan. Further, the partnership has an approved staff appraisal system which has been communicated to and understood by all staff.
7.11 Is the organisation proactive in managing its assets to ensure that it making best use of them and contributing to partnership working?	<p>The organisation holds basic information on it's assets including their location and number but does not actively measure the performance of the assets.</p> <p>The organisation has not explored with partners the opportunities for asset sharing across partners.</p>	<p>The organisation as well as holding basic information on assets also holds details of the condition of its assets, maintenance required and plans for replacement. This information is regularly reviewed and shared with partners and informs the partnership's asset strategy.</p> <p>The organisation is proactive in identifying opportunities for asset sharing with partners e.g. co-location of service delivery. .</p>	<p>The organisation has with partners aligned its capital programmes to support shared asset plans</p> <p>The organisation along with partners has developed a strategy for each type of asset (eg equipment, IT, estate vehicles) and these underpin the overall strategy. Asset details are held electronically.</p> <p>The partnership has examples of asset sharing that have delivered efficiencies and improved service delivery for local communities.</p>
7.12 Does the organisation have a clear understanding of its IT requirements to deliver partnership working?	The organisation has a basic IT strategy that does not fully address the information needs to fulfil its commitment to partnership working.	The organisation's IT strategy sets out clearly the information needs for partnership working and those of partners and is regularly reviewed to recognise the changing information requirements of partners. The organisation along with its partners has also carried out a skills audit to ensure that it has sufficient staff with the right skills to support its IT infrastructure and future developments.	The organisation contributes to the partnership strategy, this includes plans and can demonstrate examples for integrated working, contingency arrangements and protocols for storing and sharing data between partners.

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (ORGANISATION LEVEL)

8. How effective has the organisation with its partners been at delivering real outcomes and impact for people and communities?	
	Evaluation Questions
8.1 What outcomes do they want to see for their communities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a clear rationale for selecting these outcomes? • Do they clearly reflect local priorities and the views of citizens and service users ?
8.2 What indicators will they use to measure these outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do they have genuine outcome indicators for the big longer term outcomes? • Do they also have indicators that clearly show progress in the short to medium term? • Can they demonstrate a clear methodology or process in which they've thought through these measures and keep reviewing them? • Do they use case study examples to also show real progress towards outcomes on the ground?
8.3 Are they clear what the baseline looks like?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are baselines for their indicators robust? • Are they measuring consistently? (Not changing the measures or the basis for the measurement etc.)
8.4 Has there been real impact on citizens?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has there been a genuine improvement in these indicators over time i.e. an increased impact ? • See previous comment re pace of change.
8.5 What are they doing to improve these outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are decisions based on evidence, analysis and experience? • Are they using managed innovation? • How does it link to resource allocation? • What performance measures will they then use to know if these remedial actions are working?
8.6 Is the partnership genuinely working together to deliver joint services and Best Value?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can we see real examples of joint working on the ground? • Is there evidence of sharing resources (to increase efficiency/effectiveness and improve outcomes) beyond just sharing premises?
8.7 How effective has the SOA process been in the partnership?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of the SOA – first round and second round – level of involvement/inclusion. • Governance and accountability arrangements. • Integration of reporting arrangements.



How well are partnership outcomes and actions evidence-based (on shared contextual analysis and information) and how well do they reflect the needs of the area/communities/service users?

Have partners set and agreed priorities and how committed are they to delivering them?

How well does the partnership understand the resources needed to deliver its priorities and partners align their funding, assets and staffing in a sustainable framework?

How effective has the partnership been at delivering real outcomes and impact for people and communities?

Is appropriate information about the needs of communities systematically collected and shared?

How does the substance of the shared vision translate into priorities or objectives?

Is there an integrated approach to service and financial planning which takes account of partners' service objectives and priorities?

What outcomes do they want to see for their communities?

Are priorities and actions evidence-based and do they focus on the needs of the area?

How coherent is the planning structure?

Are partners clear about the resources required to deliver their shared service objectives and priorities both in the short and longer terms?

What indicators will they use to measure these outcomes?

Is information shared at service level to support any local integrated service delivery or case management approaches?

How well are plans implemented?

Do all partners have an input to developing service plans and resource plans?

Are they clear what the baseline looks like?

Have barriers in terms of information quality, accuracy, availability and governance been addressed?

What impact have plans made on partners?

Does the partnership have a robust budget process and is this clearly understood by all partners?

Has there been real impact on citizens?

Are staff within partner organisations clear about their financial responsibilities and delegated budgetary authority?

What are they doing to improve these outcomes?

Does the partnership have an effective system of budgetary monitoring and control?

Is the partnership genuinely working together to deliver joint services and Best Value?

Does the partnership have clear plans to deliver best value and continuous improvement?

How effective has the SOA process been in the partnership?

Is the partnership proactive in pursuing initiatives that complement the sustainability policies of individual partner organisations?

Has the partnership jointly agreed efficiency savings targets into it plans and are these subject to scrutiny and challenge by all partners?

Has the partnership jointly developed a workforce plan that ensures that it has the right staff in the right place to deliver agreed services objectives and outcomes?

Is the partnership proactive in managing its assets to ensure that it making best use of them?

Does the partnership have a clear understanding of its IT requirements?

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (PARTNERSHIP LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
1. How committed are senior management, board members and political leaders of partner bodies to partnership working or community planning?			
1.1 Do leaders of the partnership articulate the shared vision and sense of purpose?	There is a shared vision for the partnership and leaders acknowledge and can articulate it. However there is not a consistent sense of ownership.	Leaders of the partnership articulate a clear and consistent shared vision and sense of purpose for the partnership.	Leaders of the partnership actively promote and communicate the shared vision and sense of purpose of the partnership. They can demonstrate – and are committed to - ensuring its use and profile throughout partnership activity.
1.2 How involved and committed are partners?	Partners may not feel or be fully involved in the partnership eg across relevant themes, in leading relevant groups, in contributing resources or in terms of commitment to the overall process.	The full range of partner organisations are mobilised and fully involved, understanding their own and each other’s roles. They can articulate and demonstrate a shared commitment to the partnership and are signed up to a formal partnership agreement. Chief executives and leaders (or equivalents) and senior management of partner organisations meet or communicate frequently formally and informally, to improve and further develop partnership working.	The approach is further strengthened by full commitment and regular communications at thematic and service delivery levels in the partnership. It is recognised by the public and other organisations that partners are jointly involved and responsible for delivering partnership outcomes.

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (PARTNERSHIP LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
1.3 What levels of leadership and involvement are exhibited by elected and governing body members?	<p>Elected and governing body members of partner organisations have a limited involvement in partnership working or community planning, beyond receiving annual updates/review reports.</p> <p>Although there are examples of active visible partnership leadership being demonstrated by some elected and governing members, there is potential for this being more consistent, either across the partnership or within partner bodies.</p> <p>The partnership has identified how to further develop elected member involvement in, and responsibility for, community planning and partnership working.</p>	<p>Elected and governing members play an active visible partnership leadership role and can demonstrate commitment to delivering the agreed outcomes – and ensure their organisations fulfil their commitments.</p> <p>They fully understand their roles and responsibilities and participate accordingly.</p>	<p>A wide range of elected members (across parties) and members of governing bodies have active involvement at all levels of partnership working and can communicate benefits/outcomes from partnership working.</p>
1.4 How much influence does the partnership have on partners?	<p>The leadership forum of the partnership is used primarily for discussion and to share information. There is limited evidence of decision-making and of joining up services or plans.</p>	<p>The leadership forum takes collective decisions and encourages a more joined-up approach to service delivery in some areas.</p> <p>There are cross –cutting issues evident in key plans across partners.</p>	<p>The leadership forum takes collective decisions and directs joint working approaches.</p> <p>Partnership working is used as one of the main mechanisms for planning and delivering improvements in services and in achieving national and local targets.</p> <p>There is evidence of delivering benefits for local communities on cross-cutting issues across all sectors.</p> <p>The approach to shared services is well developed and delivering efficiency and effectiveness for all partners.</p>

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (PARTNERSHIP LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
1.5 What levels of leadership and involvement are exhibited by senior managers?	Although senior managers in some partner organisations are endeavouring to change ways of working to enable partnership priorities to be delivered effectively, this is not consistent across all partners.	Senior managers in all partner organisations recognise the need to work differently to deliver partnership priorities, and actively work to promote change within their organisations.	Senior managers across all partners demonstrate strong leadership for partnership working through joint working at management level. They lead change in their organisations and partnership working is embedded at all staffing levels.

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (PARTNERSHIP LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
2. How effective are the partnership governance arrangements – specifically scrutiny and accountability arrangements?			
2.1 Is there an agreed vision, purpose and objectives for the partnership?	<p>The partnership has developed a clear vision, a purpose and range of objectives although:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some organisations only have a limited awareness and understanding of them • member organisations vision, purpose and objectives are not aligned with those of the partnership • they are not clearly communicated to all stakeholders • they are not reviewed regularly to ensure that they are sufficiently appropriate and challenging ('fit for purpose'). 	<p>All member organisations have agreed the partnership's vision, purpose and objectives, and are clear about their role in meeting shared objectives.</p> <p>Partner organisations vision and purpose are closely aligned to those of the partnership.</p> <p>All partners play an active role in developing the partnership's vision, purpose and objectives.</p> <p>The partnership is able to demonstrate that the vision, purpose and objectives are reviewed at appropriate intervals to ensure they remain fit for purpose</p> <p>The partnership's vision, purpose and objectives are clearly communicated to stakeholders</p>	<p>Partner's regularly seek the views of stakeholders and these are used to shape the partnership's vision, purpose and objectives</p> <p>The partnership is recognised by other partnerships as a model of good practice in the way it develops, agrees and communicates its vision, purpose and objectives.</p>
2.2 Have appropriate actions been identified to deliver intended outcomes?	<p>Although the partnership has identified a number of specific actions, these are not clearly linked to the partnership's objectives and therefore it is difficult to demonstrate that they are intended to deliver the planned outcomes.</p>	<p>The partnership has identified appropriate actions to deliver the intended outcomes, and reviews these at regular intervals to ensure they are 'SMART' and remain fit for purpose.</p>	<p>The partnership is able to clearly demonstrate that the actions it carries out produce the intended outcomes and achieve the relevant objectives.</p>

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (PARTNERSHIP LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
2.3 Have clear roles, lines of accountability and communication been established?	<p>The partnership has lines of accountability in place and some understanding of roles and responsibilities although there is scope for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lines of accountability to be more clearly communicated to, and approved by all partners • greater clarity of partners' roles and responsibilities • raising partners' awareness of the partnership's decision-making processes and use of resources. <p>Where there is a nationally defined governance and accountability framework, this has been implemented.</p>	<p>All partners have clearly defined - and agreed - roles and responsibilities which are clearly articulated through an appropriate governance framework.</p> <p>There are clearly-understood lines of accountability in place which are effectively communicated to interested parties.</p> <p>The partnership leaders regularly account for the use of resources in an open and transparent way, and the partnership's decision-making process is clearly communicated to all stakeholders.</p>	<p>The partnership's governance framework - along with the roles and responsibilities - is reviewed regularly to ensure partnership working is efficient and effective.</p>
2.4 How well does the partnership respond to challenge, scrutiny and complaints?	<p>The partnership has developed internal approaches to challenge and scrutiny of its decisions and performance.</p> <p>It has put in place a complaints handling system for responding to partnership issues.</p>	<p>The partnership has an embedded system for internal challenge/scrutiny of its decisions and performance. It invites and responds to both internal and external challenge and scrutiny, and communicates its responses to stakeholders.</p> <p>It has an established complaints handling system in place for handling partnership issues which operates well, seeks feedback from complainants and is reviewed regularly to look for improvements.</p>	<p>The partnership can demonstrate a mature approach to internal and external challenge of its decisions and performance.</p> <p>It has a robust approach to the handling, reporting and follow up of partnership complaints which has influenced improvements in the way the partnership works.</p>

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (PARTNERSHIP LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
2.5 How well have risks been assessed and managed?	<p>The partnership has put in place a joint risk assessment and management system although there is scope for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • these to be more embedded in the partnership culture • to have a more systematic approach to reviewing these systems, and • for the systems to reflect good practice 	<p>The partnership has an established system for addressing potential joint risks and measures for mitigating the effects of identified risks.</p> <p>The risk management system is based on 'good practice' guidelines and has been benchmarked against other organisations' systems.</p> <p>The partnership is able to demonstrate that its joint risk management system operates effectively and is embedded in the work of the partnership at all levels.</p>	<p>The importance of joint risk management is embraced, well understood and established among all partners and is seen as part of the partnership's culture.</p> <p>The partnership regularly reviews the effectiveness of its system and makes necessary changes to secure improvements.</p>
2.6 Is the partnership building sufficient leadership capacity?	<p>Partnership leaders are fulfilling the basic requirements of their roles.</p> <p>The partnership has defined the key skills required for its leaders.</p> <p>Although the partnership has a performance evaluation system in place there is scope for improving the way it addresses under-performance.</p> <p>Partnership leaders have access to appropriate development opportunities to improve their performance. Leaders recognise and can articulate this as a personal and organisational development need.</p>	<p>The partnership has a robust performance evaluation system in place which evaluates the performance of its leaders. It promotes improvement and deals effectively with underperformance.</p> <p>The partnership is able to demonstrate that it effectively develops the capability of people with governance responsibilities. This forms an important part of the partnership's review, monitoring and self-evaluation activities.</p>	<p>The partnership regularly reviews the way it develops people with governance responsibilities and is able to demonstrate that it uses the most effective approaches.</p> <p>Partnership leaders are performing to a high standard and have received external recognition for their performance.</p>

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (PARTNERSHIP LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
3. How effective is the involvement of communities in the partnership process and how well is the partnership process helping to deliver community capacity building and empowerment?			
3.1 How committed are leaders to the engagement of communities in the partnership?	Leaders of the partnership can articulate a clear understanding of and commitment to community engagement.	Leaders can point to how their commitment has resulted in positive changes to the way the partnership engages with communities.	Leaders actively seek and can demonstrate innovative ways of building community involvement and empowerment in the partnership. There is community representation in the partnership and are treated as equal partners.
3.2 Is there wider cultural commitment to community engagement in the partnership?	There is demonstration and awareness of commitment throughout the partnership which is consistent with that of the leadership, although there is potential for better consistency amongst partners and partnership groups.	Community engagement is widely held within partners and across partnership as being part of joined-up activity and has resulted in positive change.	There is a consistent approach across the partnership and with individual partners to involving communities, where appropriate, in innovative working and activities to deliver positive outcomes
3.3 What is the partnership’s understanding of communities’ needs and aspirations?	Community needs have been identified and agreed by the partnership and are mainly regarded in terms of high level outcomes, (e.g. in a Single Outcome Agreement). Less emphasis on community aspirations.	There is a shared and consistent recognition of community aspirations as well as need at a strategic level, reached and agreed through dialogue with communities. These are reflected in local outcomes and contribute to positive change.	Community needs and aspirations are recognised as constantly changing. Communities and partners work together to review, challenge and develop proposed outcomes at strategic and operational levels.
3.4 How well reflected are community needs and aspirations in vision and planning?	Outcomes related to community need have been identified and are strategic priorities.	Community needs and aspirations are recognised as being complex and changing, and outcomes are regularly reviewed.	Dialogue regarding community needs and aspirations is seen as an iterative dynamic process with robust intelligence at its core, and is reflected as such in partnership plans and in planning processes.
3.5 What is communities’ involvement in decision-making at all levels?	The partnership has a coherent approach to involving communities in decision-making, however it is limited in the types and channels used.	The partnership is committed to involving communities in decision-making through a wider range of channels.	Communities are represented at a strategic level and have a full partnership role., this includes the voluntary/third sector.

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (PARTNERSHIP LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
3.6 What is the commitment to capacity building for partners and communities?	The partnership shows a recognition of the need to support and develop local communities and those participants involved in decision-making.	A core partnership activity is building the capacity of communities in partnership working and this is supported by programmes and resources.	Capacity building and learning is championed and regarded as a shared responsibility for the partnership and communities. Partners coordinate engagement activity to support this.
3.7 What is the commitment to community engagement in plans and strategies?	Commitment to community engagement is set out in the partnership's strategic plan or in a limited partnership engagement strategy.	A multi-faceted approach involving different channels for community engagement is clearly articulated in the partnership's strategic plan or in an effective partnership engagement strategy.	Community engagement and empowerment permeates throughout the partnership's thinking, and thus all partnership strategies have community engagement as a core element.
3.8 How well established is monitoring, challenge and scrutiny of achieving the engagement of communities?	The partnership has developed measures to monitor the impact of its approach to the engagement of communities. Monitoring is limited to measuring outcomes.	The Partnership has developed a series of measures' in conjunction with local communities to monitor its engagement strategy, engagement activities and impact. This is evaluated robustly and reported on a regular basis. This is publicly reported with communities involved in scrutiny.	The partnership has an embedded approach to the monitoring and reporting of its performance and the impact of its community engagement activities. The approach to evaluation is rigorous and inclusive involving scrutiny and dialogue with communities as an equal partner where monitoring and challenge by all participants lies at the core of the approach.
3.9 Is there clear evidence of benefit to communities?	There is good evidence of greater levels of community awareness of decision-making process and options available.	There is good evidence of greater levels of community involvement in decision-making.	There is good evidence of changes in policy or service provision arising from community involvement and sense of increased community empowerment through individual and collective learning.
3.10 What are communities' perceptions of being engaged?	Although communities can point to consultation and 'being asked', there is a feeling that engagement is limited. The general opportunity and mechanisms to engage may not be widely advertised.	Communities can articulate confidently that they have contributed to change in policy or service provision. The general opportunity and mechanisms to engage are widely advertised and communicated through all partners.	Communities feel that they have had influence and been empowered as a result of influencing or taking part in decision-making in the partnership process.

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (PARTNERSHIP LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
4. Has the partnership agreed a set of measures and targets to track progress and demonstrate impact, and how good are the joint arrangements for managing and reporting performance?			
4.1 Have agreed measures been established to track progress?	<p>The partnership has agreed a number of measures for tracking progress against agreed actions and priorities although:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is a lack of balance in terms of coverage of priority areas and / or information is out-of-date and not available at sufficiently frequent intervals • partnerships place too much reliance on prescribed performance indicators or prescribed targets as the primary tool for measuring performance • the 'right' things may not be measured (e.g. baseline information), meaning that the partnership may be unable to demonstrate the quality, efficiency, effectiveness or economy of its services overall • agreed measures relate primarily to output information, rather than long-term outcomes, resulting in the partnership being unable to demonstrate impact • Some indicators are not measureable, clear and quantified, or are vague. 	<p>Robust process, output and outcome measures are in place which assess cost and quality for each area of activity and focus on the outcomes and experience of users.</p> <p>Baselines have been established for all areas; data is recent and available at frequent intervals throughout the year.</p> <p>Arrangements are in place across all theme groups for the regular production of high-quality performance reports and review of trend information - these are used to inform current and future partnership activity and plans.</p>	<p>The partnership regularly reviews its performance measures and demonstrates a programme of improvement where new or better measures are progressively introduced.</p> <p>Performance trends and projections, including contextual data such as demographic projections, are used to highlight changes to baseline information and these inform planning in the medium to long term.</p>

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (PARTNERSHIP LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
4.2 Is the partnership able to demonstrate impact through its performance system?	<p>Although outcomes, indicators and targets have been agreed for most areas, further work is required to ensure impact can be demonstrated in the short, medium and long term across all areas.</p> <p>Targets or minimum service standards may not have been published, with the result that the public are unaware of the quality of service they are entitled to expect.</p> <p>There is little or no consideration of the way that partners deliver services delivery links with the delivery of overall outcomes, resulting in an inability to sufficiently demonstrate the impact of partnership service delivery.</p>	<p>Success is demonstrated through a meaningful number of intermediate and long term outcome measures and targets, which cover all key service and outcome areas.</p> <p>The relationships between service outputs and outcomes are considered at the strategic planning level within the partnership and the way partnership services are delivered is reviewed on this basis.</p> <p>The Partnership can demonstrate the way that it delivers services, through the monitoring and reporting of relevant measures, has an impact on delivering outcomes.</p>	<p>The partnership has a Citizens' charters in place, that has been developed with local communities, which specify the minimum service standards that users can expect to receive. These are regularly monitored and publicly reported. Poor performance is challenged and addressed.</p> <p>The partnership demonstrates innovation in modelling the links between environment, interventions and impact in the way it delivers services</p> <p>The partnership is able to identify and measure the additional impact (in terms of either quality or quantity of outcomes) achieved by acting in partnership through regular feedback from local communities.</p>

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (PARTNERSHIP LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
4.3 Does the partnership use performance information to proactively manage and improve performance?	<p>The partnership has arrangements in place for reviewing progress against agreed plans although:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> information or monitoring arrangements may not be fully developed. There is a risk that the causes of poor or successful performance are not properly identified (and appropriate action taken) results from reviews do not inform future planning and / or no improvement plans are in place 	<p>The partnership has an effective performance management framework and regularly reviews progress on agreed plans at appropriate intervals.</p> <p>Information from reviews informs future planning of the partnership and partner organisations to improve service delivery, and this included some specific improvement actions.</p> <p>The partnership carries out regular self assessments to improve working across the partnership.</p> <p>Performance is subject to regular challenge and scrutiny at a strategic level within the partnership.</p> <p>Identified best practice is widely disseminated amongst partners.</p>	<p>The partnership regularly undertakes benchmarking of performance against other areas and adopts innovative practice, or exhibits innovation within its own activity which is being adopted by other areas.</p> <p>Self assessment is routinely carried out within the partnership.</p> <p>There is a mature approach to monitoring partnership performance with partners holding each other to account through rigorous challenge and scrutiny. The partnership is proactively subjected to external challenge and scrutiny as part of a robust improvement programme.</p> <p>Identified best practice is widely adopted amongst partners.</p> <p>The partnership can demonstrate that there is a clear link between its performance management systems and the identification of future priorities and improvement actions.</p>

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (PARTNERSHIP LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
4.4 How effectively is partnership reporting to stakeholders?	<p>There is minimal public reporting of progress on agreed plans.</p> <p>Public performance reporting is limited to the SOA annual performance report. It is based mainly on prescribed performance indicators and/or service outputs and project completions. There is limited reporting on the impact that partnership activity is having for local communities.</p> <p>Reporting is not yet fully integrated in the partnership. This results in information from all partners and partnership groups, unnecessary duplication, or the proliferation of individual reports across different reporting mechanisms. The availability of partnership performance reports is limited.</p>	<p>The partnership reports through frequent, regular and integrated public performance reporting, which is outcomes-focused and demonstrates the impact that partnership working is having for local communities..</p> <p>Reports are made available in a variety of formats to ensure they are accessible to all sections of the community.</p> <p>Reports tend to be positive, focussing on achievements, and would benefit from greater balance.</p>	<p>Progress on agreed plans is reported regularly to the public through balanced and comprehensive reports, utilising a range of communication channels appropriate to different audiences.</p> <p>The partnership has reviewed the effectiveness of reporting arrangements and made improvements in response to feedback from key stakeholders, which demonstrate innovation in developing a positive dialogue with the hardest to reach.</p> <p>The partnership regularly reviews its approach to public reporting and changes its approach to meet those requirements.</p>

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (PARTNERSHIP LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
5. How well are partnership outcomes and actions evidence-based (on shared contextual analysis and information) and how well do they reflect the needs of the area/communities/service users?			
5.1 Is appropriate information about the needs of communities systematically collected and shared?	<p>Although individual partners have systems in place for the collection and analysis of information about the needs of communities, there are some gaps in information.</p> <p>Although there is some information sharing between partners and the partnership has undertaken some local analysis, there is insufficient co-ordination of data and information is not collected, shared or analysed at partnership level on a systematic basis.</p>	<p>The partnership makes good use of both national and local data to identify local problems and their causes, with specific regard to the needs of different equalities groupings.</p> <p>Partner organisations have a co-operative approach to sharing and jointly developing their information resources. Information collection and interpretation is co-ordinated across the partnership and provides a comprehensive picture of local need, including the needs of minority groups. New methods are adopted as a result, including the borrowing of best practice from other areas.</p>	<p>The partnership communicates its understanding of local need to its communities. Community members and groups are enabled and encouraged to highlight local needs to the partnership. This ongoing dialogue underpins the partnership's approach to collecting and sharing information.</p> <p>The partnership has a joint system in place and regularly reviews the types of information it collects, how it is gathered and the ways in which it is jointly analysed and used to inform planning and service delivery. The partnership is innovative and new methods are adopted as a result. It is seen by other partnerships as a leader in displaying best practice.</p>
5.2 Are priorities and actions evidence-based and do they focus on the needs of the area?	<p>Partnership plans and strategies do not always reflect consistent use or analysis of information.</p>	<p>Partnership plans and strategies are based upon a robust shared understanding of the local area profile, which includes comprehensive baseline information.</p> <p>There are clear links between local issues and partnership priorities and these are translated into service priorities.</p>	<p>The partnership regularly maps the underlying relationships between local needs and issues, and ensures services are designed and delivered according to evidence-based best practice in achieving outcomes.</p> <p>The partnership continually reviews its priorities, taking account of new or changed information about need on an ongoing basis.</p>

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (PARTNERSHIP LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
5.3 Is information shared at service level to support any local integrated service delivery or case management approaches?	<p>The partnership focuses on sharing socio-demographic information and has developed joint case management arrangements within key health and social work services. It is yet to develop this approach within other service areas. A general information sharing protocol is in place.</p> <p>Although partner agencies participate in 'Customer First' initiatives, they lack the joint data-handling, security and risk management arrangements to allow the sharing of detailed customer information.</p>	<p>Service level partnerships have developed service specific information sharing protocols to facilitate the effective sharing of operational information to better integrate service delivery.</p> <p>These generally work well, however practitioners may still resist sharing the most sensitive data and seek to address concerns regarding liability where consent may require to be overridden.</p>	<p>An overarching information sharing protocol is in place for the partnership with specific data sharing agreements in place at thematic level.</p> <p>Local communities have been involved in their development and there had been a good level of awareness raising to get local community support.</p> <p>Effective joint information and risk management arrangements support the protocols, with regular review taking into account current legal and information security best practice.</p>
5.4 Have barriers in terms of information quality, accuracy, availability and governance been addressed?	<p>There are some issues in relation to data availability or quality; some data may not allow disaggregation to the appropriate geographies, or may be collected with insufficient frequency to allow robust analysis over time.</p> <p>The partnership pools its information and uses the principle of 'collect once and use numerous times' (COUNT) to underpin data collection, storage and sharing. It also monitors information sharing processes. However, partners' information security and data protection policies often act as a barrier to sharing some types of information.</p>	<p>Partners have clearly defined responsibilities for ensuring data is accurate, valid, reliable, timely, relevant and complete.</p> <p>Protocols are in place to allow the sharing of information and a systematic programme of collection, analysis and reporting has been agreed.</p> <p>The partnership regularly monitors and benchmarks its approach to collecting and sharing information and adopts good practice from other areas.</p> <p>The partnership seeks ways of disaggregating data to appropriate levels even where boundaries are not co terminus.</p>	<p>Valid and reliable quantitative and qualitative information is regularly collected, is owned by the partnership and is easily accessible by all partners.</p> <p>The partnership has good quality and accurate information based on partnership boundaries. It has good disaggregation and sharing of information across all partners.</p> <p>The partnership regularly reviews its systems for sharing information, develops new methods as required and shares this learning across the public sector.</p>

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (PARTNERSHIP LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
6. Have partners set and agreed priorities and how committed are they to delivering them?			
6.1 How does the substance of the shared vision translate into priorities or objectives?	Senior members of partner organisations have worked collectively to agree a manageable number of strategic priorities based on community views and shared information, and which add value to individual partners own work.	Partners have translated priorities into clear operational action plans across all theme groups, with activities attributed to all relevant partners.	Strategic priorities can be demonstrated as providing direction across the partnership and thus have considerable profile within individual partners plans and strategies.
6.2 How coherent is the planning structure?	Partner strategies and community plan are demonstrably linked, albeit only at a corporate level with few linkages at service levels.	There are clear links between individual partner plans and strategies and partnership plans, reflecting key priorities and actions for the area.	There is a joint planning approach to ensure that partnership plans and individual partner plans, strategies and budgets are aligned both at strategic and service level and reflect key priorities and actions for the area.
6.3 How well are plans implemented?	Although partnership groups action plans assign responsibility to individuals and organisations for delivery, this is not coordinated across the partnership.	There is responsibility for partnership action plans assigned across the partnership, however there is limited challenge and holding people to account on delivery of these.	There is a coordinated and consistent approach to implementing agreed actions across the partnership. Responsibility for delivery is clear and shared across partner organisations. There is a mature approach within the partnership to challenge and holding to account for delivery of these actions.
6.4 What impact have plans made on partners?	There is shared working in some areas, on an ad hoc basis or primarily through initiatives.	Partnership plans are in place which progress working across a number of partnership and service boundaries.	Partnership plans are well developed and shared working opportunities are widespread and routinely considered in planning the delivery of services across the area to support the delivery of partnership outcomes.

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (PARTNERSHIP LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
7. How well does the partnership understand the resources needed to deliver its priorities and how well have partners aligned their funding, assets and staffing in a sustainable framework?			
7.1 Is there an integrated approach to service and financial planning in the partnership, which takes account of partners' service objectives and priorities?	The partners have developed a partnership plan which sets out key objectives and priorities but it is difficult to link these to the strategic aims and priorities of the individual partners. The financial plan underpinning the partnership plan has still to be fully developed including current and future sources of funding.	Partners have an agreed partnership plan which outlines key aims and objectives. These objectives are aligned to the corporate plans of individual partners. The partnership plan is supported by an annual financial plan based on the aggregate spend of the individual partners.	The partnership has an agreed and formally approved partnership plan (or equivalent) which sets out clearly the vision, aims and priorities of the partnership and the finances needed to achieve these. The partnership plan is aligned to the strategic objectives and priorities of the individual partner bodies and is supported by a well thought out financial plan, covering the life span of the partnership plan explicitly linked to the financial strategy of each of the individual partners. It also sets out clearly all likely sources of funding from partners. This is reviewed and updated and reported at regular intervals to take account of individual partners' funding and budget settlements.
7.2 Are partners clear about the resources required to deliver their shared service objectives and priorities both in the short and longer-terms?	There is limited resource commitment shown by individual partners to supporting partnership working. There is a basic approach; the partnership has aggregated the resources available from each of the partner bodies without carrying out a detailed review of their adequacy. Resource planning is focused on an annual cycle with limited forecasting of future needs.	There is a commitment by partners to the provision of the resources required to deliver shared services objectives and priorities. These have been identified and agreed in the short-term. The partnership has yet to agree on its resource requirements in the medium to longer term.	There is a strong commitment across the partnership to resourcing partnership objectives and priorities. The partnership have carried out a detailed baseline review and identified the resources (i.e. workforce levels, finances, assets, capital spend, IT support) required to deliver its services objectives and priorities. The resource requirements are subject to regular review and forecasting of future commitments to confirm they remain relevant.
7.3 Do all partners have an input to developing service plans and resource plans to support the SOA?	The larger partners dominate decisions on resource planning and in determining service priorities.	All partners have an opportunity to input into service and resource plans although for areas of disagreement the larger partners hold sway.	All partners contribute to service and resource plans All partners are consulted on service priorities and resource allocation. All key decisions are based on a consensus amongst partners.

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (PARTNERSHIP LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
7.4 Does the partnership have a robust budget process and is this clearly understood by all partners?	A well-documented annual budget process is in place which is based on the contribution from partner's budgets. This process is well documented and has been communicated to all partners.	The annual budget process is based on the aligned budgets of partner organisations. All budgets are based on a detailed analysis of the resources required to deliver the partnership plan. The basis for compiling the budget and the underlying assumptions has been agreed amongst the partners.	The partnership budget is aligned to the medium to longer term financial plans of individual bodies and is based on an explicit agreement about the delivery of joint outcomes/outputs in line with a Strategic Partnership Agreement. The process is understood by key staff within partner organisations. Partners consult with each other when setting their budgets to ensure that adequate finances are available to support shared objectives.
7.5 Does the partnership have clear financial responsibilities and delegated budgetary authority within its governance arrangements?	Budget holders within the partnership have been identified. A scheme of delegation including authorisation limits has been developed and documented but not yet formally approved by all partners.	There is a written and explicit scheme of delegation for financial decision-making and accountability including detailed protocols for virement and management of resources. These arrangements are consistently applied and are updated annually for any changes.	Partnership officials work within an approved scheme of delegation and aligned budgets. There are agreed, and transparent, lead arrangements where it is appropriate for one partner to take the lead. There are clear operational line management arrangements for staff that satisfy the requirements of all partners.
7.6 Does the partnership have an effective system of budgetary monitoring and control?	Designated budget holders are routinely provided with timely and accurate statements of actual, and forecast, outturn against budget so that they can control their budgets.	Designated budget holders are routinely provided with relevant, timely and accurate cost information which includes variance analysis and comparison of outturn against budget. Areas of recurring cost pressures are highlighted to allow budget holders to take prompt action to control their budgets.	Budget holders are consulted on the format and content of budgetary control reports to ensure that they meet their needs. Regular financial monitoring reports are submitted to the partnership board with explanations for significant variances against budget.
7.7 Does the partnership have clear plans to deliver best value and continuous improvement?	The partnership plan has an explicit commitment to deliver best value. The plan lacks specific details on how this is to be achieved.	Best value principles are detailed in the partnership plan. A number of actions with lead responsibilities have been identified to support best value and continuous improvement.	The partnership plan contains a best value improvement plan (described in SMART terms) that specifically addresses the delivery of best value. The Best Value improvement plan is regularly reviewed by partners for progress in implementation.

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (PARTNERSHIP LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
7.8 Is the partnership proactive in pursuing initiatives that complement the sustainability policies of individual partner organisations?	The partnership plan contains a commitment to sustainable services and efficient resource utilisation. The plan lacks detail on specific initiatives.	The partnership's service plan contains details of a number of initiatives on sustainable development (eg waste reduction, recycling, energy saving) and these complement the sustainability policies of partner organisations.	The partnership has developed and is committed to delivering on cross cutting sustainability priorities for the local area which are based upon the sustainability policies of partner organisations and the priorities of local communities.
7.9 Has the partnership jointly agreed efficiency savings targets into it plans and are these subject to scrutiny and challenge by all partners?	The partnership has jointly agreed an Efficiency Savings Target based on a percentage of its budget. The specific actions needed to achieve this target have not been outlined.	The partnership have identified and agreed a number of initiatives for achieving efficiency savings. These have been subject to review and scrutiny by all partners and the level of savings are consistent with the efficiency agenda of individual partner bodies. The partnership actively promotes shared services (e.g. payroll, administration,) to ensure the efficient use of resources.	Efficiency savings schemes have jointly been agreed amongst partners and these are aligned to each organisation's own efficiency plans and targets. Within the partnership plan, each scheme is described in SMART terms and the overall level of savings is consistent with National Outcome indicator number 15. The partnership can demonstrate efficiency savings as a result of delivering shared services.
7.10 Has the partnership jointly developed a workforce plan that ensures that it has the right staff in the right place to deliver agreed services objectives and outcomes?	The partnership has prepared an annual workforce plan although it cannot demonstrate that there are sufficient processes in place to accurately estimate and plan for future workforce requirements, or control its recruitment and retention activities.	The partnership has quantified workforce requirements to resource its activities in the short and longer-term, taking cognisance of changes in its operating environment including likely changes to working practices, service delivery and available resources. This is recorded within its workforce plan.	The workforce plan is aligned to the partnership plan and financial plan. Further, the partnership has an approved staff appraisal system which has been communicated to and understood by all staff.

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (PARTNERSHIP LEVEL)

	Basic practice	Better practice	Advanced practice
7.11 Is the partnership proactive in managing its assets to ensure that it making best use of them?	<p>The partnership holds basic information on it's assets including their location and number but does not actively measure the performance of the assets.</p> <p>The partnership has not explored opportunities for asset sharing across partners.</p>	<p>The partnership as well as holding basic information on assets also holds details of the condition of its assets, maintenance required and plans for replacement. This information is regularly reviewed and informs the partnership's asset strategy.</p> <p>The partnership is proactive in identifying opportunities for asset sharing e.g. co-location of service delivery. .</p>	<p>The partnership has aligned its capital programmes to support shared asset plans</p> <p>The partnership has developed a strategy for each type of asset (eg equipment, IT, estate vehicles) and these underpin the overall strategy. Asset details are held electronically.</p> <p>The partnership has examples of asset sharing that have delivered efficiencies and improved service delivery for local communities.</p>
7.12 Does the partnership have a clear understanding of its IT requirements?	<p>The partnership has a basic IT strategy that does not fully address the information needs of all partners.</p>	<p>The partnership IT strategy sets out clearly the information needs of partners and is regularly reviewed to recognise the changing information requirements of partners. The partnership has also carried out a skills audit to ensure that it has sufficient staff with the right skills to support its IT infrastructure and future developments.</p>	<p>The partnership strategy includes plans and can demonstrate examples for integrated working, contingency arrangements and protocols for storing and sharing data between partners.</p>

BEST VALUE TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT MATRIX – EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING (PARTNERSHIP LEVEL)

8. How effective has the organisation with its partners been at delivering real outcomes and impact for people and communities?	
	Evaluation Questions
8.1 What outcomes do they want to see for their communities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a clear rationale for selecting these outcomes? • Do they clearly reflect local priorities and the views of citizens and service users ?
8.2 What indicators will they use to measure these outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do they have genuine outcome indicators for the big longer term outcomes? • Do they also have indicators that clearly show progress in the short to medium term? • Can they demonstrate a clear methodology or process in which they've thought through these measures and keep reviewing them? • Do they use case study examples to also show real progress towards outcomes on the ground?
8.3 Are they clear what the baseline looks like?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are baselines for their indicators robust? • Are they measuring consistently? (not changing the measures or the basis for the measurement etc.)
8.4 Has there been real impact on citizens?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has there been a genuine improvement in these indicators over time i.e. an increased impact ?
8.5 What are they doing to improve these outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are decisions based on evidence, analysis and experience? • Are they using managed innovation? • How does it link to resource allocation? • What performance measures will they then use to know if these remedial actions are working?
8.6 Is the partnership genuinely working together to deliver joint services and Best Value?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can we see real examples of joint working on the ground? • Is there evidence of sharing resources (to increase efficiency/effectiveness and improve outcomes) beyond just sharing premises?
8.7 How effective has the SOA process been in the partnership?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of the SOA – first round and second round – level of involvement/inclusion. • Governance and accountability arrangements. • Integration of reporting arrangements.

Best Value toolkit: Effective partnership working

If you require this publication in an alternative format and/or language, please contact us to discuss your needs.

You can also download this document at:
www.audit-scotland.gov.uk



Audit Scotland, 110 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 4LH
T: 0845 146 1010 E: info@audit-scotland.gov.uk
www.audit-scotland.gov.uk