



Partnership in youth and community development, 2011

Introduction

Youthline believes that the best approach to youth and community development requires partnership. This includes partnership with other organisations and engagement within the community, as well as the relationships that Youthline build with young people. At its core the relationship between young people and Youthline is a partnership; Youthline promotes youth development and provides youth-focussed services while young people shape Youthline with their unique input as staff, clients and community.

To afford the best opportunities for youth and communities, it is pivotal for organisations, services and government to form appropriate and meaningful partnerships. By working together to share knowledge and resources, healthy partnerships have the potential to provide a consistent and robust approach to supporting New Zealand's young people and achieve common goals.

Youthline currently operates in partnership with a variety of groups from central government agencies to local community groups. A commitment to best practice indicates that these processes are scrutinised to ensure that practice aligns with current policy and evidence.

The aim of this paper is to:

- Describe partnership and how it fits Youthline's vision for youth and community development.
- Link practice to strategy, evidence and current thinking.
- Provide resources to access and support successful partnerships.

What is partnership?

There are many definitions of partnership; the best are those that are recognised widely but just as importantly – *locally*. The definition recognised by the New Zealand Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector was created by the UK Audit Commission and defines partnership as a working relationship between partners who:

- Are otherwise independent bodies
- Agree to cooperate to achieve a common goal
- Create a new organisational structure or process to achieve this goal
- Plan and implement a joint programme
- Share relevant information, risks and reward

On a continuum of partnering relationships, partnership is the highest/closest level of relationship above co-existence, networking, cooperation, coordination and collaboration respectively (Appendix 1).

What are the benefits of partnership?

There are many benefits to creating a culture of collaboration through meaningful partnerships with external agencies and organisations. Partnerships between Youthline and other agencies and organisations in the youth sector have been established and developed within all areas of Youthline's work. Youth development services need to be targeted, ongoing and be part of a wider system of responses and interventions to support young people and their families in need (taken from Youthline's Frame of Reference).

Counsellors, therapists, triage staff and volunteers work collaboratively with external services to provide and receive referrals. This ensures that the people who are accessing different organisations receive appropriate, client specific services that are adaptable to change and progress.

Youthline's model of service delivery is also informed by our partnerships with other organisations; these relationships allow for the sharing of skills, expertise, resources, experiences and good practice. By pooling resources, Youthline and our partners can maximise the quality of the service that is accessed by clients.

Sharing of information through partnerships provides clarity of youth sector goals and insight into how to achieve these collaboratively. Further to this, collaboration ensures the sector grows and develops together by generating new ideas.

Benefits of Partnerships

- Provide and receive referrals
- Deliver a wrap-around service
- Reduce barriers to service users
- Regular review and feedback
- Afford a coordinated approach to provide efficient and effective service delivery
- Contribute to research
- Enhanced opportunities/more effective services for young people and their families
- Provide clarity of youth sector goals
- Ensure the sector evolves together by generating new ideas
- Sharing of skills, expertise and resources/experiences and good practice
- Coordinated strategic partnership between the statutory sector and voluntary youth sector
- Strength of collective voice vs. single voice
- Recognition of the role and contribution of the voluntary youth sector/raised profile
- Support for smaller organisations
- Differences: regional, local, targeted, themed

Indication for partnership

Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa (YDSA)

The YDSA was created by the Ministry of Youth Affairs (2002) as a framework for government, communities and families to support the healthy development of young people. The YDSA is based around six central principles:

1. Youth development is shaped by the ‘big picture’
2. Youth development is about young people being connected
3. Youth development is based on a consistent strengths-based approach
4. Youth development happens through quality relationships
5. Youth development is triggered when young people fully participate
6. Youth development needs good information

Youthline’s work is achieved through the lens of the YDSA; as an organisation, Youthline seek to embed principles of youth development in all youth practice, using a strengths based approach. This involves the young person being connected, having quality relationships, engaging in meaningful participation and being able to access good information. Often, successful youth development will involve more than one youth organisation; united by the framework of the YDSA, Youthline work with internal and external services to ensure young people and their families have the best opportunities for healthy development.

Manukau Youth Development Model

Developed by Youthline for the Counties Manukau District Health Board, the model provides a strengths-based strategy for youth development in Manukau. The model was created by young people and informed by community input. The first outcome of the model in particular suggest the need for partnership in youth development.

“Outcome 1: Youth services, agencies, groups and clubs will work collaboratively to foster the development of young people.”

The following seven outcomes describe the need to build resilient young people by fostering connections with whanau and community, providing access to information and resources, and by encouraging opportunities for personal development.

Government indication for partnership

Under section 91 of the Local Government Act 2002, one of the purposes of the community outcomes process is to “promote the better co-ordination and application of community resources” (Local Government Act, 2002). The use of the word ‘coordination’ in this instance is important, as it implies the need for shared planning and communication amongst those directing community resources.

International indication for partnership

Partnerships are recognised as an important strategy for world health promotion in *The Bangkok Charter for Health Promotion in a Globalized World* (2005). This charter builds upon the principles of the 1986 Ottawa Charter¹ by detailing a further 5 actions for a healthier world:

- **Advocate** for health based on human rights and solidarity
- **Invest** in sustainable policies, actions and infrastructure to address the determinants of health
- **Build capacity** for policy development, leadership, health promotion practice, knowledge transfer and research, and health literacy
- **Regulate and legislate** to ensure a high level of protection from harm and enable equal opportunity for health and well-being for all people
- **Partner and build alliances** with public, private, non-governmental and international organisations and civil society to create sustainable actions.

To facilitate effective health promotion, Youthline's work actions the goals of the 1986 Ottawa Charter and of the 2005 Bangkok Charter. The principles are embedded in Youthline's work to create communities that are supportive of young people and enable them to fulfil their potential; the final action of partnering to create sustainable actions is a priority for Youthline.²

Youthline practises an open model of partnering that promotes the sharing of information and resources. Knowledge-sharing is crucial to good community development as it encourages and facilitates reflective practice within organisations and emerging alliances can be strengthened by sharing resources. Partnerships also create a culture of progress; organisations can build on the work of others, rather than inadvertently replicate existing work, thus wasting resources.

The Youthline House Flexible Integrated Model

A key element of Youthline's service is to provide a wrap-around service for all people engaging in Youthline services. This is illustrated in the Youthline House Model (Youthline's Frame of Reference, 1994). Within the YHM, Youthline House is one of a number of houses in a village community. The house does not stand alone and relies on both internal and external services to best meet the needs of young people and families. Services are therefore, both modular and integrated.

This means that in practice the 'walls' between each service have doors where people may flow from one service to another as their needs and development dictate. Young people may be recommended another service by a Youthline worker or refer themselves and can choose to open or close doors at any time. Similarly, Youthline links young people and families to external services within the 'village' that makes up the wider context of the model.

The YHM demonstrates Youthline's commitment to providing a seamless, wrap around service that links internal services and external organisations to ensure the best possible outcomes for clients. This commitment is realised through effective partnerships with others in the youth sector and a co-

¹ As the first international model of health promotion, The Ottawa Charter sought to improve population health by encouraging public health plans to look further than the provision of health services.

² Further information on Youthline's public health policy can be found at: Y:\Clinical services\Best Practice Papers\Best Practice Papers 2010\Public Health 2010

ordinated approach, which provides clients with efficient and effective service delivery that avoids young people falling through the gaps.

Different services in the youth sector exist to address different areas of need; therefore partnering facilitates a wider scope of service that can be regional, local, targeted and themed. Working with partners also creates the strength of a collective voice which has potential to be greater than a single voice.

Is partnership part of better practice?

Youthline adhere to the YDSA principle that youth development needs good information. With regards to partnerships, this means being up to date with evidence for and against. The nature of partnerships makes them inherently difficult to study because they generally take place over long periods and their outcomes are difficult to measure. Due to this, there isn't a good body of relevant, outcome-based analysis of the benefits of partnerships for organisations like Youthline.

However, despite the lack of outcome-based evidence for partnership in literature, there is enough indication for partnership in Youthline's Frame of Reference as well as national (Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa, 2002) and international (*The Bangkok Charter for Health Promotion in a Globalized World*, 2005) strategy that it should be integral to Youthline's practice.

Leadership of partnership

Successful partnerships rely on effective leadership skills to ensure consistency across both parties and a comprehensive understanding of the way in which the partnership will operate. Leadership is characterised by the ability to empower all members of the organisation, which in turn promotes collaboration and success. Key determinants of effective leadership resulting in positive partnerships include the ability to communicate efficiently; establishing mutual respect and trust; addressing negative perceptions and attitudes and establishing a shared vision to work toward (See Appendix 2).

It is important to recognise that partnerships extend beyond agencies and are inclusive of service users. In alignment with the new thinking around social development being driven by 'co-production', Youthline regularly engage service users in discourse around how improvements can be made. The ethos underpinning co-production is that by encouraging users to design and deliver services in equal partnership with professionals, public services can be reformed. This thinking acknowledges the service users as being, "an immense hidden resource which can be used to transform services – and to strengthen their neighbourhoods at the same time." (Boyle and Harris, 2009). Youth Advisory Groups (YAGs) are also important in ensuring progress and development remains relevant.

Resources to support partnerships

Partnering Practice Guide for Waitakere

Developed by Waitakere City Council to sit alongside their Partnering Policy (Waitakere City Council, 2009), this guide provides a discussion of how partnering benefits organisations locally and nationally and an understanding of the dynamics underpinning a successful partnership. The guide adapts tools prepared by LG Partnerships (see below) to provide a framework around which to develop effective partnering.

LG Partnerships: Smarter Partnerships

The LG Partnerships website is a valuable platform from which organisations currently partnering and those wishing to initiate a partnership can access a range of tools and resources to facilitate informed, meaningful partnerships and evaluations of these partnerships. This website can be accessed at:

<http://www.lgpartnerships.com/default.asp>

<http://www.lgpartnerships.com/resources/tools.asp>

The Partnerships Analysis Tool

The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation has developed an evaluation framework specifically for use by organisations engaged in health promotion partnerships. *The Partnerships Analysis Tool: For Partners in Health Promotion*, provides guidelines for organisations entering into partnerships and a way for partnering organisations to 'assess, monitor and maximise its ongoing effectiveness.' (Moodie, R., Vic Health). The tool is available at:

<http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/About%20Us/Attachments/VHP%20part%20tool%20resources.ashx>

References

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Youthline's Flexible integrated model (2010)

Youthline (1994). *Frame of Reference: Understanding Youthline's Work in The Community*

<http://www.arataiohi.org.nz/>

<http://www.nzaahd.org.nz/>

Appendix 1

The Partnership Continuum

	Co - Existence	Net working	Co-Operation	Co-Ordination	Collaboration	Partnership
Relation-ship	Not Deliberate		Only by mutual agreement	More formal agreement	Deliberately designed	
Mission / Goals	No common goals	Work together on joint goals		Solve common problems		
		No commonly defined mission, structure or planning effort	Work together on program specific goals More compatible missions	Solutions emerge from dealing constructively with difference	Common mission structure & planning	
Risk	Low risk		Limited risk		High risk	
Resource Sharing	Exchange of information		Some resources & rewards shared		Shared risks, responsibilities & rewards	Shared financial risks & benefits
Invest-ment	Fixed & Short term		Limited		Sustained relationship and effort More durable and pervasive	
Process	None		Focused		Emergent	Evolving

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Appendix 2

Smarter Partnerships

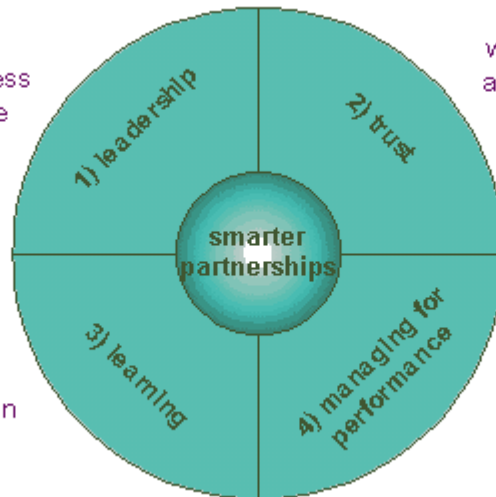
For partnerships that work, there needs to be:

1) Leadership

where partners share a common vision and harness their energies to achieve more than they could on their own

3) Learning

where partners continuously seek to improve what they do in partnership



2) Trust

where partners are mutually accountable, share risks and rewards fairly, and support each other

4) Managing for performance

where partners put in place necessary practices and resources, and manage change effectively

Taken from:

<http://www.lgpartnerships.com/digging.asp>