

beyond partnership



**The Learning from the
Beyond Partnership Learning Set
2004 – 2006**

**Written by Valerie Iles and Julia Vaughan Smith
On behalf of the Learning Set**

Contents

Introduction.....	3
Why think about Partnership?.....	5
The Purpose of partnership	6
Four types of Partnerships	7
Table 1	8
Figure 1	10
Descriptions of the four types of partnership	11
Cooperation.....	11
Coordination	11
Collaboration	11
Co-evolution	12
Potential for co-evolution.....	12
Potential for Co-operation	13
Potential Collaboration	13
Discussion Points.....	13
Conclusion.....	14
The focus of the partnership	16
Types of Partners	19
Power and influence.....	19
Leadership.....	20
Ego-states.....	20
Table 2	23
Action orientation of the Partners.....	24
Table 3	25
Some practical tips	28
Appendix 1: Outlines of some relevant theory.....	30
Game theory.....	31
Table 4	32
Organisational Learning	33
<i>The Essence of the Theory</i>	33
<i>Ways of Applying in Practice</i>	35
<i>Self Assessment Questions</i>	35
Group Relations: The work of Wilfred Bion	37
Contributions from open systems theory.....	42
Figure 2	42
Transactional Analysis: Ego-States.....	44
Table 5	45
Table 6	46
Appendix 2 : Relating the theory to the four types	47
Appendix 3 : Reading Lists/Bibliography	54

Introduction

The Learning Set

The dozen members of the Beyond Partnership learning set met for nine one-day sessions over the period from September 2004 to January 2006. In between these meetings members read texts, summarised them and reflected on their application in their own partnership contexts. The meetings were an opportunity to share understanding of the theory, test it against wider experience, and explore members' current partnership experiences through action learning. It was a rich learning experience, not least because members brought experiences of participation in a wide range of partnerships including:

- Local Strategic Partnerships
- Cancer Networks
- Palliative Care Networks
- Health Action Zones
- Range of integrated health and social care forums

This resource

The purpose of this resource is to make some the learning more widely available in the hope and belief that it will be of interest and relevance to others.

We have drawn on existing partnership concepts (notably those of Chris Huxham and Plamping, Gordon and Pratt¹), on many other strands of relevant theory, and on the experience and reflective practice of members.

As we have done so we have become increasingly convinced of the need to distinguish between different types of partnership. Unless we do that we will expect more (or less) from the partnership than it can deliver, and we may behave in ways that are inappropriate for this partnership.

There are many ways of cataloguing partnerships, and we have considered several. However, we have discovered that it is possible to distinguish between four different types by asking a small number of questions about their circumstances. These circumstances are largely outside the control of the partners and they combine to determine the potential of the partnership and the kinds of behaviour that will be most helpful. When we have identified the type of partnership, then we are able to answer some practical questions. Questions such as:

- Is this partnership going to be worth joining?

¹ **Partnership: fit for purpose?** Julian Pratt, Diane Plamping and Pat Gordon. London Health Partnership. King's Fund. November 1998

Pursuing Collaborative Advantage Chris Huxham . ESRC/ORS Series. December 1990

- How should I behave in this partnership to achieve the best results for my organisation or service?
- What does this partnership need to do differently if it going to be more effective?
- Is partnership the best way of approaching this problem?

In this resource we introduce and describe these types and explore the different dynamics of each.

This paper is for anyone who is thinking of joining or initiating a partnership, or who is already involved in one and wants to reflect on how it is working. An individual can use it with a particular partnership in mind, or partners can use it collectively as a means of reflecting together on the most appropriate way forward for their partnership.

As these ideas have been tested by thoughtful people immersed in partnerships, we are confident this resource can make a valuable contribution to partnership working. We hope you will let us know of your own experiences of trying to use it.

Valerie Iles, Julia Vaughan Smith and the members of the Beyond Partnership learning set:

Linda Bartlett
Marion Goodrich
Mary Hutton
Kathryn Macdermott
Stephen Morris

Kathryn Berry
Kay Harwood
Sandy Keen
Claudia McConnell
Ann Smart

Brenda Houston and Helen Mather were also starter members of the learning set.

Why think about Partnership?

There are several reasons why thinking about partnership is both timely and important:

- Policy makers have ascribed positive and remarkable benefits to partnership working, and their enthusiasm has resulted in the establishment of a large number of different kinds of partnership. The experience of many, however, has been that these benefits have been elusive and that inter-organisational working has proved both time consuming and energy sapping. High levels of cynicism, frustration and wariness about partnership have often been the result.
- However, although partnerships are often difficult vehicles through which to effect change, if they are able to realise their potential they can achieve a degree of change far greater than can any one of the partners on their own. If they *are* to realise their potential, those involved need to understand the factors that enable them to do so.
- Partnerships are not always the best response to problems or opportunities experienced by organisations. Giving more thought to the costs and benefits over those of alternatives may prevent an unnecessary and ineffectual partnership being established. It may also help any partnership that *is* set up to adopt practices that enhance its chance of success.
- Creating a partnership is often a response to difficult, long-standing problems. However, partnerships are rarely 'quick fixes' and they require significant resources of time, money and energy. So if they are to have a chance of making a real impact the necessary resources need to be made available over a substantial period of time.
- There is a wealth of literature and anecdotal evidence about partnerships and not all of it is helpful in every partnership situation. We therefore need a means of assessing the potential of specific partnerships so that individuals and organisations can decide how much time and energy to devote, and the behaviours that will lead to optimal results.

The Beyond Partnership learning set has drawn on existing partnership theory and on the experience of its members to develop a taxonomy of partnerships: a description of four distinct types of partnership. We believe this classification will help partners or potential partners decide how much energy to invest in a partnership and what behaviours to adopt within it, as well as diagnose some of the dangers. In this resource we introduce the four types and explore their implications.

The Purpose of partnership

The rationale for any partnership is 'collaborative advantage'²: the partnership must lead to developments that leave the partners as a whole better off than before. Within this overall rationale, partnerships may be formed for many reasons, an understanding of which can be helpful in assessing likely outcomes and some of the behaviour that can be expected.

Reasons may include any of the following:

- We think it's a good idea to work in partnership – we don't have any particular issues to address but we are dealing with the same population and we are likely to find ways of working more efficiently or of meeting needs more effectively if we do. (Sometimes we have been *told* to think this).
- We both deal with some intractable, multi-faceted issues in which we both have a stake. We don't know exactly how we can address these but we reckon we can find out if we try thinking them through together.
- We both have a specific problem that we can readily devise ways of resolving if we work at it together.
- We are wasting resources or letting clients fall through gaps in our services because of lack of coordinated scheduling.
- My organisation has a problem that is caused by policies or practices of your organisation.
- Our organisations have agreed to work in partnership (for one of the above reasons) and now we need to set up a cascade of strategic and project management boards in order to operationalise this.

Members of the set recalled many occasions when different partners had different understandings of the reasons for the partnership's existence, so it is important that these are not assumed, but are clarified.

Partnerships come in many different forms so even when partners are clear about the underlying purpose they will still have to make decisions about how to design the partnership so that it is more effective. That is what we consider in the next section.

² The term coined by Chris Huxham, see bibliography.

Four types of Partnerships

When we are considering joining or forming a partnership we want to be able to assess its potential to deliver outcomes of value. We also want to identify the behaviour we ourselves may need to adopt if it is to achieve these outcomes. The learning set discovered that answering four questions enabled us to identify a number of distinctly different types of partnership each with its own potential outcomes, and in each of which a different set of behaviours is appropriate.

In other words, the type of the partnership and the behaviour that will lead to the best results depend on factors that are outside our control and we can waste a lot of time and engage in behaviour that won't be helpful if we don't analyse these.

To find out what these factors are answer the questions in the left-hand column of Table 1 on the following page, with one of the answers in the middle column. Tick the one that applies to the partnership you have in mind.

If the answer you want to give is not one of those given then we suggest that partnership may not be the best way forward.

If your partnership is part of a bigger, overarching, partnership, then it is likely that the type is determined by the way the umbrella partnership answers these questions.

Table 1

Questions	Options: choose one for each question	Tick if applies
<p>1. Is the partnership driven by a general desire to partner, or by recognition of specific issues* that need to be addressed?</p> <p><i>* Issues = problems that need solving, or opportunities that can be exploited</i></p>	<p>a) If we work in partnership we may find some problems we can solve or opportunities we can exploit; after all we are working with the same population/value base etc</p>	
	<p>b) There are specific issues that we need to address and partnership is the best way of doing this</p>	
<p>2. Are the issues complex and ill understood, or straightforward and readily understood?</p>	<p>c) The issues we are tackling are highly complex and we don't know what the solutions might look like</p>	
	<p>d) The issues are straightforward and the solutions are clear although possibly complicated</p>	
<p>3. Who owns the problem or will benefit from the opportunity, or the knowledge?</p>	<p>e) The issue 'belongs' to one party</p>	
	<p>f) The issue 'belongs' to both/all parties</p>	
<p>4. Do the partners want to achieve their own goals, help each other achieve their own goals, or work towards collective goals?</p>	<p>g) The parties want to achieve only their own goals</p>	
	<p>h) The parties want to help achieve each other's goals</p>	
	<p>i) The parties want to develop collective goals (more than the sum of the individual goals) and achieve them</p>	

You may have noticed that there is one question that may be relevant to you that is not asked:

“Is the solution to the problem in the gift of one partner or of both/ all?”

That is because we believe that if it is the former, i.e. ‘my organisation has a problem that is caused by yours’, then partnership is unlikely to be the most suitable organisational form to address it. It may be addressed as a by product of some other form of partnership, but on its own, it is better addressed through direct lobbying, Service Level Agreements or some other task group convened explicitly for the purpose.

If we answer these questions in this sequence we have an algorithm* that leads us to the different categories of partnership (see Figure 1 on the following page).

The boxes in the Figure 1 represent the different options to the questions posed in Table 1, and this is indicated by the numbering.

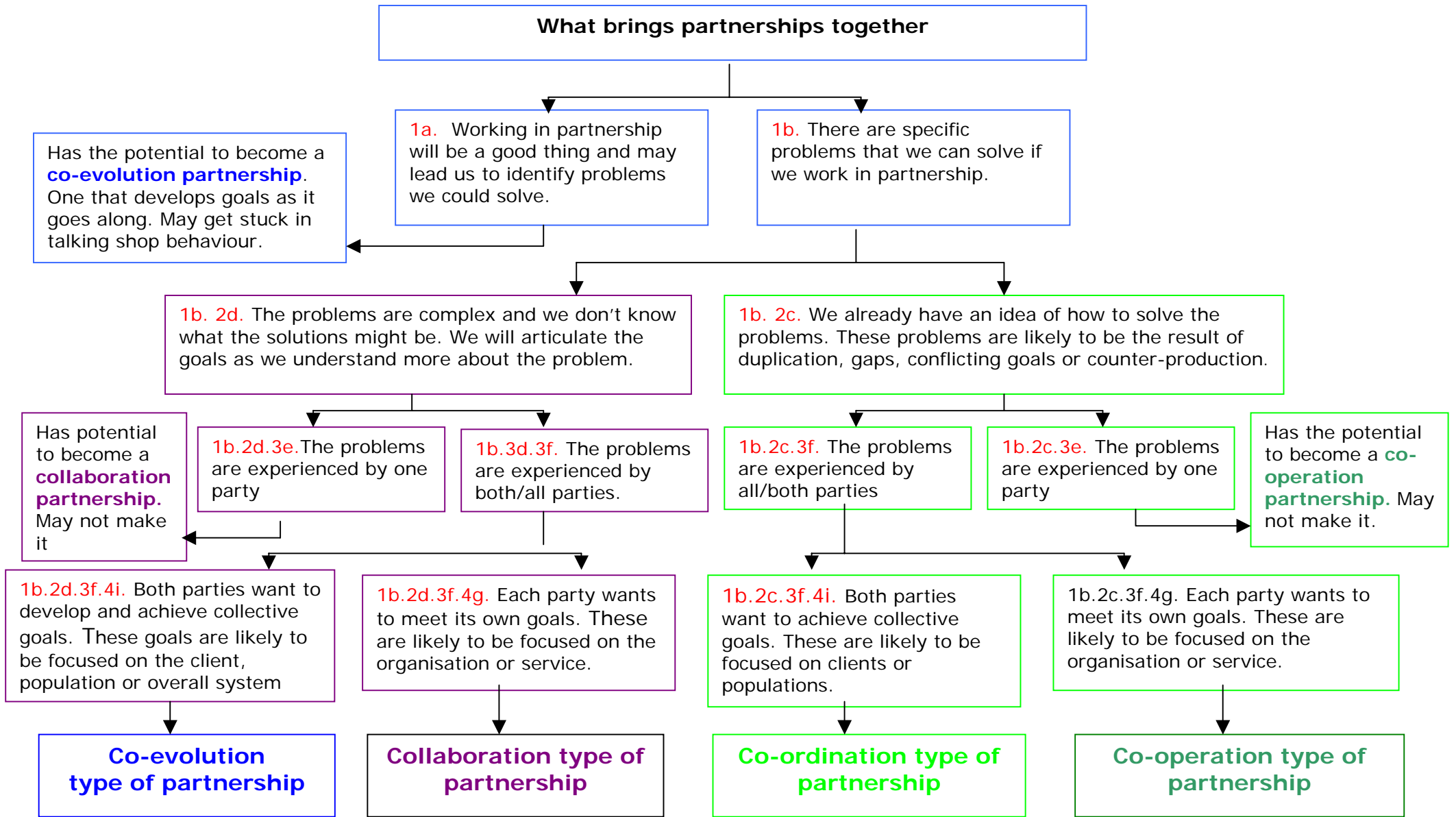


Recommendation

Have a partnership in mind as you work through the algorithm. Then think of a different partnership and go through it again. You could do this for all the partnerships you are involved with.

* By ‘algorithm’ we mean that the way the questions are answered create a number of pathways that lead to different conclusions.

Figure 1



Descriptions of the four types of partnership

In this section we describe the four fundamental types and we also consider potential partnerships which have not yet moved into one of these types.

Cooperation

Of the four types of partnership, cooperation could be characterised as the simplest form, the least 'partner -like', in that it requires the least generous and creative behaviour.

In cooperation both partners are looking after their own interests and pursuing existing goals. They come together to address specific problems in ways that do not require new ways of thinking.

Examples include:

- District nursing and home care staff working together on a schedule of timings of home visits
- Service goals, e.g. non-elective care, discharge planning, increased attendance at GUM clinics. For example, cooperation between PCTs/GPs and Acute Trusts is required to meet the four hour A & E target.

Coordination

Coordination is slightly further along the partnership spectrum. The partners are working towards each others goals as well as their own, and may be open to developing bigger, collective goals. The methods used to make progress towards these goals are still fairly predictable, however, and do not involve new thinking.

Examples include: -

- More complicated service issues, e.g. smoking cessation, prescribing in primary and secondary care, better child care, better diabetes care, better dual diagnosis services (e.g. mental health and learning disabilities or mental health and addictions)
- Delayed transfers of care – a joint/ shared target.

Collaboration

Unlike cooperation and coordination collaboration *does* require new thinking because the problems or opportunities being addressed are complex and the solutions are not readily apparent. Partners are trying to meet their own goals rather than those of their partners, but may be open to identifying joint goals if these become apparent.

Examples include:

- An education directorate in a local authority working with a Primary Care Trust to tackle teenage pregnancy. Here the LA goals will be focused on educational attainment, while the PCT's are to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies

- A lot of public health areas where organisations are working together but with rather different organisational goals e.g.: sexual health, reducing health inequalities, drug action teams, health and social care in mental health and learning disability, and children's services.

Co-evolution

This is the 'deepest' form of partnership. It can consume considerable time from key players, so it is not for the fainthearted! It should, therefore, not be attempted if one of the other forms is more appropriate. It requires new thinking, new insights, new generosity about opportunities or problems, and these problems or opportunities are as yet unarticulated or not understood. As the outcomes aren't at all clear, neither party can simply pursue their existing goals; they will need to be prepared to develop new goals as they become apparent. Thus it will be important to be able to examine assumptions, invert thinking, acknowledge where things (or thinking) have gone wrong, and where partners may need to let resources go in order to achieve the greater good. Many of these partnerships will fail in that they do not yield a good return on the time invested. This is not an argument to avoid them, but it does suggest that individuals and organisations cannot sustain involvement in many of these at a time.

Examples of areas that may benefit from a co-evolution partnership:

- Child protection (perhaps in addition to cooperation, coordination and collaboration about specific aspects)
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- Work on race and equalities
- National policy development about, for example: mental health of offenders, healthcare for refugees and asylum seekers, etc
- The development of commissioning processes needed co-evolutionary partnerships between acute and primary care trusts. Arguably, it is the fact that in so many areas collaboration or even competition was the norm that has led to the underdevelopment of commissioning.

You will see in Figure 1 that there are some forms that have the potential to become one of the four types but may not do so. These are described below:

Potential for co-evolution

(1a)

In this form, both parties may believe that working in partnership will be a good thing in itself and may lead them to identifying problems they can solve or opportunities they can exploit. However, as they are not at all clear what the outcomes will be, they will have to be happy to accept that they will develop goals as they go along. While this can lead to some productive forms of co-

evolution, partnerships in this box can suffer from lack of attention from partners as they respond to more pressing priorities elsewhere. They may also get stuck in talking about the issues rather than addressing them.

Potential for Co-operation

(1b 2c 3f)

Because only one party experiences these problems others may not be prepared to put enough energy into this partnership for it to work at all. Even if they do, they have no goals of their own to pursue in relation to this agenda, so cooperation is the most likely form of partnership.

Potential Collaboration

(1b 2d 3e)

Although new thinking is needed, only one partner has any incentive to engage in it, so it may not happen. Even if it does the other partner has no related goals to meet (although some may emerge if they can be generous enough to participate) and so collaboration is the most likely form if partnership behaviour takes place at all.

Discussion Points

1. Our experience as a set suggested that most partnerships have not thought through the nature of their partnership in this way and, as a result, have a confused or indistinct model in mind. For example, members have differing perceptions of appropriate partnership behaviour, which cause tensions and frustrations, and can lead to recrimination and blame.
2. Partnerships that look similar to the outside observer may not be to those with a greater understanding of the task. For example work on care pathways could require coordination when the redesign work is straightforward, but co-evolution when creative new thinking is required.
3. Over time a partnership can move from one type to another, e.g. a policy generating partnership in co-evolution mode may shift to a collaboration for the implementation phase. Partnerships may also change as circumstances change. For example, where an early coordination or co-evolution has successfully secured additional resources, partners may now compete for these, and cooperation or collaboration become more appropriate.
4. Where parties without any direct interest in the problem or opportunity are invited to join the partnership their presence can confuse the issue and obscure the decision about which of the four types of partnership is the most relevant. For example, in particular work on delayed transfers of care, the mental health representatives were not

active partners, and their presence simply caused unnecessary discussion and poor use of everyone's time.

5. The tools suggested by the Audit Commission for monitoring or managing the performance of partnerships are relevant to coordination partnerships (and **only** this type).

6. A particular form of **co-evolution** occurs where the problem is bigger than the group (e.g. race equality). This can lead to a sense of helplessness, and lack of priority being given to this work.

Conclusion

Answering the questions enables us to identify the type of partnership that has the greatest chance of success in these circumstances. Once we know what type it is, it is worth making it the best of this type possible. We may prefer to be in a different type but this will not yield the best results unless we have been mistaken in our answers. If members of the partnership want to behave in a different way, as part of a different type of partnership, they will need to reconsider the answers to the questions, and this thinking can, itself, be valuable.

Some partners may want to **cooperate** (focusing on their own goals) while others want to **coordinate** (working towards each other's or collective goals) - one example the set came across was around the front of house A and E target. Furthermore, partners who have initially **coordinated** may change to **cooperating** as the partnership develops. This is especially likely where additional resources are gained as a result of early **coordination**, when the partners may start to compete for access to these, becoming **co-operators** (or even competitors) instead.

Similarly there are likely to be some partners who want to **collaborate** while others wish to **co-evolve**. Indeed there may be others who wish to **cooperate** or **coordinate**, or who want to **compete** and see membership of a partnership as the means of preventing action rather than supporting it. Partners perceiving the need for **co-evolution** will therefore need to be careful that they are not naïve or over generous in their interactions with others. In general, partners should ensure that their own needs (for meeting targets or other goals) are met. If they fail to do so they will not be in a position to assist other partners; they will be fighting for their own survival. **Co-evolution** requires a strong sense of self-interest as well as a strong desire to support the interests of others.

This will become even more important when the partnership manages to secure additional resources, since it is likely that at this point, former partners will now become competitors. This should be seen as natural rather than disloyal (see section on game theory in appendix 1). It will

also arise if it becomes apparent in a **collaborative** or **co-evolutionary** partnership that the solutions or ways forward allocate risk disproportionately. If one partner now bears more risk than others, it will affect their behaviour within the partnership, unless it is explicitly discussed and considered as part of the joint decision making process. If all of the risk is borne by one partner, a partnership may no longer be the best entity for this purpose.

Understanding these four distinct types of partnership makes it possible to make much better use of relevant theory, and of our own practical experience. The learning set looked at a wide range of theory and applied it to these four types, and some of the results can be seen in Appendix 2. Drawing on this and on our experience we became aware of the large number of ways in which partnerships can become unproductive. We explore some more of these in the next three sections: the focus of the partnership; types of partners and their behaviours; and the action orientation of the partners.

The focus of the partnership

The members of the learning set observed that, in practice, partnerships tend to focus on different aspects, according to the experiences and concerns of individual partners. Sometimes the focus is suitable for the type of partnership, and sometimes it is not. If there is a mismatch, then the chance of successful outcomes is much reduced. The different kinds of focus are summarised in the table below. Sometimes a partnership may move through these as different stages, but not always.

Focus on sharing information	The emphasis is on talking, on making information available to the other partners.
Focus on structures	The emphasis is on the machinery of the partnership, its rules, membership and purpose. The partnership effectively <i>is</i> its structure.
Focus on contracts (psychological contracts and expectations)	This focus is on the agreements and expectations (more or less formal depending on the partnership's characteristics) about behaviour between partners, how those agreements relate to the partnership's purpose, and actions the partners will take.
Focus on resources:	The focus is on the resources that can be brought to bear on the issue. The resources are not only the people in the partnership, but also the resources that they personally can commit and their ability to unlock things. Partnerships can often start here, as two or more people coming together to try to sort out a problem. They may need to go back to the structure stage to secure organisational legitimacy, so that the partnership becomes established within formal accountability systems.
Focus on sponsoring partnership projects:	Some partnerships focus on providing an umbrella organisation for a number of partnerships to flourish, each attending to particular shared goals. These structures tend to have partnership boards and project groups. It can sometimes be confusing for individuals if they don't know the level they are acting at or interacting with, so lines of accountability and levels of responsibility need to be clear.



Recommendation

Look back through the different kinds of focus listed on the previous page with a particular partnership in mind, to see if you can identify what its focus is, and check against the tests given below. Then, perhaps, repeat that for all the partnerships with which you are involved.

Partnerships can also **espouse the virtues of one focus while operating with another**. The following tests give an indication of the focus that is in use: -

Test for information sharing partnership

Papers and non-written information are made available to all partners. Papers are not censored as they are moved from one organisation to another. This information sharing has led to greater awareness but not as far as joint planning.

Test for structural partnership

Structures have been formalised in writing and discussed (often at length). Partnership structures may include partnership board and sub committees, meeting structures, identified roles, pathways for minutes etc. Some information is brought to these structures, however, decisions made have little impact because the most significant issues are not brought, and/or they get lost in the structure.

Test for contractual partnership

There have been discussions about expectations, outcomes and behaviour, and there are regular (not necessarily frequent) reflections on these. Expectations about financial and other resources (including how partners will use their own relevant resources) have been clearly agreed and understood. Things are being done better, but not necessarily radically differently.

Test for resource sharing partnership

There is a pooling of resources of several different kinds, e.g. joint appointments, pooled budgets, people are genuinely working together at levels that matter. There is a willingness to free up existing systems, and collaborative advantage can sometimes trump individual gain.

Test for sponsoring partnership

Other projects or levels of activity are established and operating, and the sponsoring team knows what progress is being made within these.

The **four basic types of partnership** - cooperation, coordination, collaboration and co-evolution – **are most effective with different kinds of focus**, as follows:

Cooperation and **coordination**

While these partnerships need to do more than share information, they can function well even if they focus only on contracts. They may do even better if they look at resources, but the motivation to do so is likely to come from successful operation at the contracts level.

Collaboration and **co-evolution**

These partnerships need to focus on resources and, where appropriate, on sponsoring. If they do not they will not deliver the benefits, and people within them will feel frustrated.

Potential cooperation and **collaboration**

Only one party is likely to put energy into these partnerships. As a result, although they may move into a state in which they focus on resources or sponsoring they are more likely to remain focused on information sharing, or possibly structures or contracts.

Potential co-evolution

There is likely to be little energy for the partnership, it will rely on the good will of individuals. It may move into a state where it focuses on resources or sponsoring. It may well, however, remain focused on information sharing or structures. It is likely then, to be described as a talking shop.

Types of Partners

Partnerships are made up of partners; the partners may be individuals or organisations. Where they are organisations they will be represented by individuals. Individual partners are not all the same; they take up a range of different positions in relation to the partnership and to the forums in which partners come together. In this section we look at the role adopted by different partners, their power, and their orientation to action.

Power and influence

Not all partners are equal in power and influence. Within many partnerships there is one (or more) **managing partner(s)**. This is someone who has a controlling interest or say, which is formally or informally reflected in the distribution of power and authority in the partnership. If there is more than one and they do not agree, or if, despite their power, they are not exercising it, then there may be a range of unhelpful and potentially destructive behaviours exhibited.

There may also be **vetoing** or **sanctioning partners**, who have power over a key resource and use this power to support some decisions and not others. Understanding their interests will be vital.

Another common type is a **sleeping partner**. They have invested in the partnership something that the partnership needs, but are prepared to leave the partnership to get on with things unless they become worried that their investment is at risk, or that the partnership is not using it wisely. It is always important to identify sleeping partners, to avoid two kinds of mistake. The first is to berate them for not being more actively involved in the day-to-day work of the partnership. The second is to ignore their concerns so that they start to worry about their investment and become more active in a way the partnership may not wish.

Other types of partner include the **contributing partners**- those who are actively engaged in a positive promotion of the partnership and achieving its goals – and the **reluctant partners** - those who are there because they have to be and whose main interest may simply be to protect their own position rather than contribute to the partnership as a whole.

Sometimes partners' behaviour is influenced by the **stability** or otherwise of their organisation. If this is facing financial, leadership or other major challenges then, with the best will in the world, they may be unable to deliver their commitments.

The partnership itself can often devise ways of exerting power to encourage certain behaviour in its partners. It can either reward good partnership behaviours perhaps by allocating a resource, or invoke

sanctions, for example, by withholding information or analysis, or both. The means by which it does this will vary according to whether the power resides in the partners as a body or in the hands of one or two.

Leadership

Issues about **leadership** also surface within partnerships. Leadership is often suppressed in partnerships, with parties being unwilling to allow someone to lead or for leadership to be conferred on a representative from one of the partner organisations. We noted that partnerships often struggle with allowing leadership to emerge owing to fears of undue influence or bias. The result is that a leadership vacuum is created and progress is compromised. Our reading suggested that leadership can be either 'distributed' that is, several people are seen as or designated as leaders; or 'focused' - only one. If several are delegated the leadership function the result may be a lack of coherent sense of direction and confusion about the way forward. This is made worse if the roles and inter-relationships are not clearly articulated and understood by all members of the partnership. On the other hand, while focused leadership can provide a greater sense of containment to those within the partnership the leader needs to have the confidence and respect of partnership members.

Ego-states

Different types of partner, can each display a different type of behaviour within the partnership. Some of these behaviours can be understood through the Transactional Analysis concepts of **parent, adult and child ego-states**. This reading helped us identify the 'sulky child' and 'critical parent', often seen in partnership dynamics. The 'sulky child' is seen in a partner not wanting to take personal responsibility and who acts out an attitude of 'it's not fair'. The 'critical parent' carries the judgmental, controlling orientation of wanting to put others down, or show them who has the real power. The 'critical parent' may be the state more often taken up by the partner which is the largest in size or influence, or where there is a performance management relationship with some partners in other settings. Those who feel they are involuntary members of the partnership, and who carry a belief that they were 'made' to be part of it by some external power may take up the 'sulky child' position. Their sulkiness therefore prevents them being active members or taking up responsibility for the choice they have made by becoming a member of the partnership.

The learning set identified the following set of behaviour modes that can be taken on by any type of partner:

Aggressive Partner	Someone who sees the partners as the enemy and is always on the attack.
Discontented Partner	Not as aggressive as above, but clearly discontented, shows that by body language and interventions. Appears not to be pleased by the workings of the partnership; regularly has gripes or complaints.
Defensive Partner	Someone who manages his/her resources in a defensive manner; unwilling to share or be open to different ways of working. May distance him/herself from the partnership and its activities.
Listening partner	Someone who is an observer. Possibly a reflective observer, content with absorbing what is happening and allowing others to exercise decision making on behalf of those interested. May however be discontented, perhaps someone with little power or status but with an informed, clear view who is finding it hard to be heard.
Compliant Partner	Someone who goes along with all the agreements without challenge. They exercise no power even if they could.
Authentic Partner	Someone who is not playing games, who is focusing on the task, and speaking from experience even when that may raise unspoken issues.


For a discussion of how these behaviours can be described through the lens of Transactional Analysis see appendix 1.

In general, partners in **cooperation** and **collaboration** partnership can be less supportive and 'nice' than those in **coordination** and **co-evolution** types. Thus the former can support defensive, discontented and even aggressive partners as long as their behaviour is not so evident that they provoke emotional reactions that inhibit progress. Clearly the more authentic partners there are, and in positions of power, then the

©Beyond Partnership Learning Set Members, including Valerie Iles and Julia Vaughan Smith. March 2006

more successful the partnership is likely to be. Listening partners are a resource that partnerships can often do more to exploit and reflection on the reasons why they have chosen to listen rather than participate more fully can be very useful – these are often to do with status differences within the group.

On the next page, the **Types of Partners and Behaviour Modes** are brought together in a matrix (Table 2).

 You may find it useful to use this matrix to reflect on those who make up your partnership or who will make it up once it gets established. Identify the dominant role and behaviour mode for each partner and put a tick in the appropriate box. Then ask yourself:

- How well balanced are the members in terms of roles and behaviours?
- Can the partnership exert any power or influence to encourage behaviours that will lead to more positive outcomes

Table 2

Type of Partner	Behaviour					
	Aggressive	Discontented	Defensive	Authentic	Compliant	Listening
Managing						
Vetoing or sanctioning						
Sleeping						
Contributing						
Reluctant						
Other						
TOTAL						

Action orientation of the Partners

This learning set used the work of a learning set considering strategy, facilitated by Valerie Iles, and applied it to partnership working. The full paper from the Strategy learning set can be obtained through www.reallylearning.com. It is summarised here so it can be applied to partnerships.

There are three schools of thought about how to decide what to do, and what actions to take. They can be described as the planning school, the emergent school, and the complex systems (or spontaneous) school.

All these three schools have a coherent theory underpinning them, and some evidence of their success, so partnerships need to be *able* to use them all, and to be able to use them all well.

Typically, partnerships (and indeed all management teams) tend to use an amalgam of all three, none of them rigorously. As we shall see below, however, some partnership types require greater emphasis on one school than on others.

It is common for individuals (and the organisations or partnerships in which these individuals are powerful) to have a strong preference for one school, and to undervalue the others. This can lead to conflict about how to decide what to do, how to evaluate progress and how to describe progress to others.

One way of representing how to use all three is the matrix, on the next page (Table 3), in which the three schools form the columns and the rows are three different time periods: *prospective* when the partnership is thinking about what to do; *real time* when the partnership is getting on and doing it; and *retrospective* when it is reflecting on how things have gone and what can be learnt from this for another occasion.

Table 3

APPROACH TO DECIDING WHAT TO DO			
Time	<i>Planned or deliberate (analysis followed by plan and implementation)</i>	<i>Spontaneous (events, actions & behaviour emerges spontaneously from interactions)</i>	<i>Emergent (foster, craft, discover things, detect patterns)</i>
<i>Prospective</i>	<p>Box 1 Undertake a rigorous analysis, that leads to a list of critical issues that need to be addressed, and some form of implementation programme.</p> <p><i>Key skills:</i> analytical and computational</p>	<p>Box 2 Engage with a wide range of people, encouraging them to contribute their perspective and to take responsibility for playing their part in shaping the analysis & the design.</p> <p><i>Key skills:</i> listening, being comfortable with ambiguity</p>	<p>Box 3 Work with the people with 'tacit knowledge', authentic & intuitive understanding of the organisation. Experiment with different ideas & look for patterns in the experience of the organisation.</p> <p><i>Key skills:</i> spotting patterns, identifying authenticity</p>
<i>Real Time</i>	<p>Box 4 Project manage the implementation programme, using sound, proven methods for monitoring progress. Language used: critical path, compliance, milestones, progress reports, contingency plans, performance management.</p>	<p>Box 5 Keep in mind, and voice for others, the spirit of the programme of change, help others also to behave in the spirit of this plan.</p> <p><i>(Note. The more association people have had with the plan - in box 2 - the more their emergent behaviour will be within the spirit of the plan.)</i></p> <p><i>Attributes needed:</i> dynamic poise, attentiveness, flexibility & responsiveness</p>	<p>Box 6 Make all your usual everyday decisions that appear to have little connection with the implementation plan. Take opportunities as they arise, fostering & crafting choices to make the best of each unforeseen situation. Interpret all sorts of knowledge & information, tacit as well as explicit, & bring meaning to events as they unfurl</p>
<i>Retrospective</i>	<p>Box 7 Compare actual events & outcomes with those of the plan, and with the analysis that led to the plan. In practice this can have a developmental intent (enabling better analysis and planning in the future) or a judgmental one (performance management).</p>	<p>Box 8 Try to understand what happened & how, by considering the events, processes, behaviour & relationships that emerged as time went on. This gives a better understanding of the dynamics of the system & enables the design of development programmes that will influence the way people respond in the future.</p> <p><i>Tools used:</i> facilitated reflection, informal reflection, non-blame feedback, systems thinking.</p>	<p>Box 9 Tell stories: help people make sense of what has happened, by selecting some events and decisions and not others.</p> <p><i>(Note: Stories woven here are not accurate pictures of reality but simplified, coherent versions of reality, that can be told to multiple stakeholders).</i></p> <p>This engenders a sense of meaning and of belonging to a longer narrative, which can become part of the history of the service or organisation.</p>

The different types of partnership, see below, require competence in different parts of the above matrix. We have linked these together under the headings of the four types of partnership.

Cooperation

In cooperative partnerships, the planned school may be all that is needed, where:

- accountability is to individual organisations
- individuals can walk away and be replaced by others who are interchangeable
- the goals are readily susceptible to performance management because reliable data can be collected and objectives will be measurable.

These partnerships need to be effective in:

Box 1: Good analytical skills

Box 4: Good project management skills

Box 7: Good systematic review process

Time spent aiming for greater involvement, and more understanding (boxes 2,3,5,6,8.9) may not be a good investment. (But check this out for your own partnership, it will depend on how simple the problems and solutions are.)

Coordination

Here, again the goals of the partnership are likely to be straightforward and susceptible to performance management. They are the same as for co-operation, that is:

Box 1: Good analytical skills

Box 4: Good project management skills

Box 7: Good systematic review process

However, there is the possibility of developing collective goals that are only identified during the course of the partnership, and too close a monitoring of performance against initial objectives can impede the development of new ones. Consequently, these partnerships also need to recognise the need for spontaneous and emergent action orientations (boxes 2,3,5,6,8.9) or their effectiveness is likely to be diminished over time.

Collaboration

Here the outcomes and the means of reaching them are unclear; this is, after all, the difference between collaboration and cooperation. So the linear approach of the planned school is no longer sufficient. It cannot be abandoned completely; a thorough analysis of aims, resources and environment will always be valuable and often enlightening; however, both the emergent and spontaneous schools have much to contribute.

Important boxes are:

Box 2: Engagement with wide range of people

Box 3: Experimenting with ideas; looking for patterns

Box 5: Keeping in mind the spirit of the programme

Box 6: Connecting everyday decisions with the implementation plan

When it comes to reflecting on the partnership experience to ensure maximum learning and more effective working in the future, this will probably be undertaken most valuably within the partner organisations rather than the partnership, as a whole, since they are each pursuing their own goals.

Co-evolution

Again the spontaneous and emergent schools must be actively used across the partnership. This involves the following boxes:

Box 2: Engagement with wide range of people

Box 3: Experimenting with ideas; looking for patterns

Box 4: Good project management skills

Box 5: Keeping in mind the spirit of the programme

Box 6: Connecting everyday decisions with the implementation plan

Box 8: Working with the system, understanding the dynamics

Box 9: Telling stories and giving meaning

Here reflection will take place as the whole partnership, probably on a regular basis, as it continually redefines its goals in the light of emerging understanding.

A co-evolutionary partnership may well spin off cooperative, coordinative and/or collaborative partnerships to work on specific issues once they have been fully articulated. In this way it does not remain as unfocused as those with the linear/planned orientation may fear.

Some practical tips

Finally we also wanted to include a range of practical tips that led to some 'aha' moments on all our parts. These are simple and obvious but, we found, so easy to forget. We therefore suggest that partnerships, of whatever type, are more likely to be successful if members choose to adopt sufficient of the following **behaviour**:

Foundation requirements:

- Turn up
- Read the papers in advance
- Be clear about the primary task of the partnership

Personal preparation/reflection

- Decide what hat you are wearing, and don't change hats mid-negotiation
- If you don't add value, leave the partnership or re-orientate your relationship with the partnership
- Honour your commitments to the partnership
- Be as emotionally intelligent as possible
- Develop trust by being trustworthy
- Stay in positive ego-states (adult, positive child or positive parent)
- Align the interests of the partnership with those of your organisation, service, self
- Behave congruently, that is your action, words and thoughts are in unison with each other.

Inter-personal skills

- Behave openly and transparently
- Ask constructive questions
- Don't blame others when things go wrong
- Listen
- Seek to understand

Group process

- Identify all the people who can add value to the issue being discussed, make sure they (and only they) are there
- Recognise status being used inappropriately and don't collude with this
- Recognise and challenge group-think
- Acknowledge people in their own right
- Keep an open mind and don't close down too early
- Understand how to get things done
- Expose conflict for what it really is, don't leave it masked
- Engage in developmental dialogue
- When starting a partnership, it always feels to everybody like the second meeting, that there has been a first meeting that they have missed. So be explicit in the first meeting that this **is** the first

meeting; that this is an embryonic partnership, and explore what that means for people.

Similarly, our reading on **Game Theory** informed our experience of behaviour (see Appendix 1) and gave some indication of types of behaviour that are more likely to lead to effective partnership working for example:

- Don't take the behaviour of others personally
- Avoid envy, or at least recognise it and don't act on it
- Practise forgiveness (but also be prepared to penalise unhelpful behaviour)
- Don't be too clever (in the sense of foxy)
- Ensure interactions within the partnership are frequent and durable (as that is more likely to promote cooperative behaviour)
- Ensure you can all see into the future and to some greater good that will benefit all parties in the long run.

Appendices

There are three appendices. The first outlines some of the theory the Learning Set considered. The second (page 48) explores how the theory can be related to partnerships and demonstrates that it needs to be applied differently to the four different types of partnership. The third (page 55) lists the texts read by the Set.

Appendix 1: Outlines of some relevant theory

In this appendix we have included brief summaries of some of the theories we explored. The purpose being to support our illustration of how the classification of the four types of partnership can help to interpret and use relevant theory. You will find a list of all the texts we explored in Appendix 3, and if you wish to discuss their relevance to partnership please feel free to contact us.

Game theory

Essence of theory

Game theory describes a decision making process. When the outcome of our own choices depends on others' choices, we need to decide whether to co-operate or act selfishly. Game theory states that we take a self-interest approach to these decisions.

If we analyse the outcomes of a particular course of action for each party and we expect self interested behaviour, in many cases there will be for each player a **dominant strategy** (one which is better for them whatever the action taken by the other party). Similarly, there are many situations when there is a **dominated strategy** (where this gives the worst outcome, regardless of the behaviour of others).

In some circumstances (of which the prisoner's dilemma is the best known example) if each plays the dominant strategy, the outcome is jointly worse than by eliminating a dominated strategy. Here, individuals can choose to cooperate (eliminate the dominated strategy) or to defect (play their dominant strategy).

Game theory explores whether it is possible to embed cooperative strategies in a non-cooperative environment. It suggests that when parties meet in the knowledge that they will meet again in the future, there is more likelihood of cooperation. When there is no chance of repeated interaction, it is almost impossible to develop cooperation.

Even where parties are involved in tit-for-tat defections, it is possible for cooperation to evolve from small clusters of individuals, where there is sufficient interaction with each other.

The strategy that appears to give greatest advantage (for individuals and populations) is **tit-for-tat** (for my first move I cooperate and then I do exactly what you did last time, so if you also cooperated then I will now cooperate, if you defected I will defect), or, even better: **generous tit-for-tat** (where I occasionally forgive a defection on your part and continue to cooperate – just enough to get us out of a cycle of mutual defection, but not enough to be seen as a sucker and have you increase your defection rate).

A **zero-sum** game is when a partner is operating on the basis of winning or losing, and wants to win at all times. This is a position of competition.

A fundamental aspect of game theory involves analysing what value is added to a situation by your participation in it. You can decide to secure a large part of that value for yourself rather than share it with others. It also encourages a clear-sighted analysis of the parties you are engaging with (in a business setting); are they customers or suppliers,

competitors or complementers? Each needs different handling. It is also important to understanding that complementers may well become competitors once a secure market has been built.

Ways of applying in practice

Identify as games, situations where, (a) participants have different interests; (b) have no particular reason to support those of others (other than the fact they will be meeting again); and (c) where the outcomes of your decisions depend on those of the other parties.

- Don't take the behaviour of others personally, expect them to behave self interestedly.
- Start cooperatively, then punish unhelpful behaviour; reward the constructive, but be forgiving occasionally (only occasionally).
- Think clearly about who brings what to the party, and only invite to the party people who have something to bring. Make sure they also know what that is.
- Only accept invitations to parties if you know what you are able to bring, and are confident of delivering it.

Table 4

<i>Questions for self assessment</i>	<i>✓ if applicable</i>
Am I disappointed when organisational partners do not behave in supportive ways?	
If someone behaves in an unhelpful way, do I find a way of punishing them? Or do I continue to behave 'well' myself?	
If I think across the organisational partnerships I am working in now, do I know what I am bringing to the party in all/some/a few of them? Do I know how valuable that is to the partnership?	
Do I know the interests of all the players in the situation? Which of them complement my own interests?, Which of them may I have to compete with?	

Organisational Learning

The Essence of the Theory

Within an organisational context, individuals tend to promote one set of behaviours, and use another. People use *espoused theories* to explain or justify their actions, but in practice use a *theory-in-use* which is at variance with the espoused one.

For much of the time, and almost invariably when we feel embarrassed or threatened, we adopt the behaviour of advocating strongly our own position, while genuflecting to the other person's, but in reality, rejecting it. Where possible, we lay the blame at the door of the third party. We justify this behaviour as holding to our own principles, while saving the other's face. This is a form of behaviour Argyris and Schon³ term **Model I Behaviour**, which is learnt early in life and supported by a set of virtues widely held within society and within organisations. These virtues include:

- *Caring, help and support*: give people approval and praise; tell people what you think will make them feel good about themselves and reduce their feelings of hurt
- *Respect for others*: defer to others when they are talking and do not confront their reasoning
- *Honesty*: tell no lies, and/or tell others all you think and feel
- *Strength*: advocate your own position and hold on to it in the face of attack from others
- *Integrity*: stick to your principles, values and beliefs

Although hidden from us, the disparity between our theories-in-use and our espoused theories tends to be apparent to those we interact with – but do they draw our attention to this? Generally speaking, no, because they, too, have adopted a Model 1 theory-in-use: they, too, wish to avoid hurting our feelings and want us to save face. This pattern of behaviour and the associated by-pass and cover up is called an **organisational defence routine**. This leads to organisational malaise – with symptoms including hopelessness, cynicism, distancing and blaming others. Individuals cannot learn on behalf of their organisations in this pattern of behaviour which is driven by defensive reasoning.

³ Organisational Learning II, Method and Practice, Chris Argyris and Donald Schon, 1996; Overcoming Organisational Defences, Chris Argyris, 1994; On Organisational Learning, Chris Argyris, 1992

To engage in productive reasoning - a way of thinking and talking which enables us to test the validity of our own and others theories - we need to adopt a new theory-in-use; Model II. **Model II behaviour** is more conducive to learning and is supported by a set of virtues including:

- *Help and support*: increasing others capacity to confront their own ideas, to face their unsurfaced assumptions
- *Respect for others*: attribute to other people a high capacity for self-reflection and self-examination
- *Strength*: combine advocacy with inquiry and self reflection
- *Honesty*: encourage self and others to say what they know and yet fear to say
- *Integrity*: advocate principles, values and beliefs in a way that invites inquiry into them and encourages others to do the same

Organisations in which there is a high degree of Model II behaviour is engaging in organisational learning; conversations in which this happens are called learning conversations.

To be able to implement Model II we usually need to slow down our reasoning and increase our capacity for thinking and reflection, otherwise we unwittingly revert to Model I. Model II leads us to be able to reason productively rather than defensively and to:

- Strive to make premises and inferences explicit and clear
- Develop conclusions that are publicly testable
- Test them in ways that are independent of the logic used by the actor involved
- Reflect and be aware of our own thoughts and feelings when taking action
- Be clear about the position we are advocating and about any evaluations or attributions we make of others
- Check constantly for unrecognised gaps or inconsistencies and encourage others to do the same
- Combine taking the initiative with being open to any constructive confrontation of our own views.

Typically, we develop plans that are based on rigorous, causal reasoning. So we plan on the basis that if we do A then B will happen. We make premises and assumptions in our plans (using our espoused theories) and expect that when people come to implement those plans they will use the same logical, rigorous causal reasoning such that when A happens they do B.

However, if the assumptions make people feel threatened or embarrassed, they will carry out defensive reasoning and revert to their theory-in-use. This is unlikely to result in the desired outcome.

If plans require reasoning on the part of others to be implemented, they will also require the organisational defences to be removed or significantly lowered. In such situations, the organisations have to be capable of learning from and with each other (becoming learning organisations) to increase their chances of success.

Ways of Applying in Practice

- We can use the *ladder of inferences* and *voicing the left hand column* tools⁴ to develop our own skills in moving to Model II behaviour
- We can live out model II behaviour with others
- We can reward behaviour akin to Model II, surface Model I behaviour where it occurs and demonstrate the Model II alternative
- We can provide opportunities for learning conversations; set up discussions about issues in such a way that Model II behaviour is encouraged
- We can develop skills in absorbing Model I challenges into Model II approaches, especially with high status challengers.

Self Assessment Questions

- How often do I attribute negative motives or evaluations to others' performance and yet not want to tell them?
- How confident am I that I attribute those negative motives correctly?
- Do I advocate my own position firmly to the exclusion of the other person's?
- Do I tell others that I care about their views, while not truly being open to these?
- Do I find myself blaming or invoking a third party for a decision I am making?
- Do I change my mind about a decision when I discuss it with people?
- Do I come to people's rescue in a debate or discussion?
- When I frame a question for discussion, do I think about how to encourage a constructive exchange of views and further exploration of the topic?
- How good am I at staying calm when faced with strong advocacy from those in an opposing position? Am I able to respond by inviting them to explain their reasoning, being genuinely curious about the assumptions they are making, inviting them to find

⁴ Peter Senge, Fifth Discipline Field Book

faults in their own reasoning, encouraging them to work with me to find a better answer than either of us is proposing?

Group Relations: The work of Wilfred Bion

WB studied processes in small groups in the army during WW2 and then at the Tavistock Clinic. This has led to a framework for analysing some of the more irrational features of unconscious group life. The relationship between the individual and the group is the central theme to Bion's work.

He distinguished between two main aspects to the life of a group:

1. The **work group mentality** – where it is intent on carrying out a specifiable task and assess its effectiveness in achieving it.
2. The **basic assumption mentality** – where behaviour is directed at trying to meet unconscious needs of members to reduce anxiety and internal conflicts.

Much of irrational, apparently chaotic behaviour springs from basic assumptions, common to all their members. There are three basic assumptions, each leading to a particular complex of feelings, thoughts and behaviours.

Basic assumption dependency (baD)

The leader is expected to look after, protect and sustain members of the group and make them feel good, not face them with the demands of the group's real purpose. The leader is the locus for a dysfunctional form of dependency leading to diminished growth and development. The leader can be absent, or even dead as long as the illusion can be sustained that s/he contains the solution. Group debates reflect not so much present difficulties as what the absent leader would have said or thought.

Basic assumption fight-flight (baF)

There's a danger, an enemy, which should be either attacked or fled from, but the group is only prepared to do either indifferently. The members look to the leader to work out appropriate action. Their task is to follow; for example, instead of thinking about how to organise its own work, a team spends most of its time worrying about rumours of organisational change; this leads to a spurious sense of togetherness, while avoiding facing the difficulties of the work itself. Alternatively, the group may protest angrily, but not plan any specific action to deal with a perceived threat.

Basic assumption pairing (baP)

A collective unconscious belief that, whatever the actual problems and needs of the group, a future event will solve them. That is, a pairing or coupling between two members in the group, or between the leader and some external person, will lead to salvation. The focus is on the future,

but as a defence against difficulties of the present. For example, improved premises will provide the answer to the group's problems, or an awayday, or..... so the group doesn't work towards this happening but sustains a vague hope that it will. Decisions are either not taken or are left vague. After the event there is disappointment and failure, and then high hopes of the next...

Recognising basic assumption activity.

When under the sway of a basic assumption, a group appears to be meeting as if for some hard-to-specify purpose upon which members seem intently set. Members lose their critical faculties and individual abilities and the group appears to be passionately involved in something ill-defined. Trivial matters are discussed as if they were of life and death (and they may feel like that to members whose underlying anxieties are about psychological survival). The group loses awareness of time passing, and there is little capacity to bear frustration so quick solutions are favoured. Members lose touch with reality and its demands. Instead of seeking information, the group closes off and retreats into paranoia. A questioning attitude is impossible – those who dare are seen to be foolish/mad/heretical. A new idea or way forward is felt to be terrifying because it involves questioning cherished assumptions and losing the familiar. Because adaptive processes and development and effective work all involve tolerating frustration, facing reality, recognising differences among group members, and learning from experiences, all of these will be seriously impeded.

Leadership and followership in ba groups

True leadership involves identification of a problem requiring attention and action, and the promotion of activities to produce a solution. But in ba mentality there's a collusive interdependence between the leader and the led, and the leader is only followed if s/he fulfils the ba task of the group.

In **baD** the leader only provides for members needs to be cared for. In **baF** the leader must identify an enemy outside the group and lead the attack or flight. In **baP** the leader fosters hope in a better future while preventing actual change from taking place.

If the leader does not behave in these ways, the group will turn to an alternative leader. So the leader is a puppet of the group and manipulated to fulfil its wishes, and evade difficult realities. The leader being pulled into **ba** leadership feels in ways related to the **ba**:

baD: heaviness and resistance to change, preoccupation with status and hierarchy as a basis for decisions;

baF: aggression, suspicion, preoccupation with fine details of rule and procedures;

baP preoccupation with alternative futures.

In doing this the group members are relieved of anxiety and responsibility. But they are unhappy because their skills, individuality, capacity for rational thought are sacrificed. So are the satisfactions of working effectively – so they are constantly thinking of leaving.

In work group mentality, members mobilise their capacity for cooperation, and value the different contributions each can make. They choose to follow a leader to achieve the group's task rather than in an automatic way, determined by personal needs.

Group Relations: Unconscious processes

While group members might not be caught up in a basic assumption process, the dynamics may still include the engagement of some in the partners in fantasies (implied or spoken as if fact) that:

- X organisation or person could solve the problem if only Y was different or not involved
- The group can't be effective or do good work because X and Y aren't at the meeting. This gives the power to those who are not present and in so doing avoids getting on with the work needed to achieve the primary task (and experiencing the anxiety produced by so doing)
- An external body (e.g. NHS or Government) exists whose function it is to provide security or to have the 'big plan'. The group can therefore talk about being let down by 'them' and until 'they' have sorted things out the group is important.

These are all social defences, about which people may have no conscious awareness, against taking responsibility for the task and the possible anxieties that might be provoked by that.

These unconscious processes are more likely to have greater impact where **trust** hasn't been developed and where there is lack of clarity about task and the nature of the shared, and individual, responsibilities. Partnership is about behaviour that is driven by thoughts (attitudes, perceptions, beliefs) and feelings (anxiety, fear, shame, envy, guilt). Relationships are also based on trust and the extent to which parties are experienced in acting in a trustworthy manner. Trust develops when there is congruence between espoused and enacted values. Trust also develops as the relationships develop; relationships develop through meeting and interacting regularly.

Social defences are also developed, unconsciously, to avoid the anxiety provoked by the nature of the work being carried out. The work of Menzies in the 1960s about nursing identified the extent of those social defences, particularly in work which involved intimate contact with people, and with people with ill-health, disability or who faced death.

These social defences result in organisational systems and 'ways of doing

things' which enable staff to avoid the depth of the anxieties and shame that can be provoked by the nature of the work.

Authority, power and leadership: contributions from group relations training

Authority: the right to make an ultimate decision and, in an organisation, the right to make decisions that are binding on others.

Authority from above: delegated within a hierarchy.

Authority from below: people joining an organisation sanction the system and delegate some of their personal authority.

Full authority is a myth. What is needed might be called 'full-enough' authority (derived from Winnicott's concept of 'good enough' mothering 1971). This is a state of authority in which there is ongoing acknowledgement by persons in authority (in own minds, not necessarily publicly) not only of their authority but also and equally of the limitations of authority. This leads to ongoing monitoring of authority-enhancing and authority-sapping processes within an organisation.

Authority from within: This is just as important and depends largely on the nature of individuals relationship with figures in their inner world, especially past authority figures. Barracking by inner world figures is the key element in the process of self-doubt and is likely to prevent external authorisation in the first place. Inner figures can also give an inflated picture of self.

Authoritative v authoritarian. The first is the depressive state of mind, the second is the paranoid schizoid state (as defined by Melanie Klein).

Good enough authority is the state of mind arising from a continuous mix of authorisation from the organisation's structures and sanctioning, and connection with inner-world authority figures.

Power is the ability to act upon others and upon an organisation's structure. Unlike authority, it is an attribute of persons not of roles. It can arise from internal and external sources:

External - the things the individual controls, money, privileges, job references, promotion;

Internal - knowledge and experience, strength of personality, state of mind regarding role; how powerful people feel and how they present themselves to others.

Perceived power and powerlessness counts more than the actual – so the inner-world connectedness is important. Projections are relevant here, too.

Leaders need power and authority, and there must be a match between the power, the authority and the responsibility. Time spent assessing and clarifying the nature and source of power and authority, and the titles given to roles that reflect the combination of these with responsibility, is well spent.

Leadership & Management

Leadership implies follower-ship, *management* less so.

Leadership is future oriented, *management* less so.

Constructive follower-ship is very different from **baD** or **baF** (see Bion's basic assumption groups).

Rivalry, jealousy, and envy often interfere with the process of taking up the leadership or follower-ship role.

Envy in institutional processes is one of the key destructive phenomena; it is often seen in a destructive attack on a person in authority and a spoiling of the work under their aegis. This tends to be led by the staff member with the highest naturally occurring amount of rivalry and envy. They are set up unconsciously by projective identification to express their own and others' envy. The dynamic which results is the leader plus attacker become locked in a fight, with the rest as distressed and helpless onlookers.

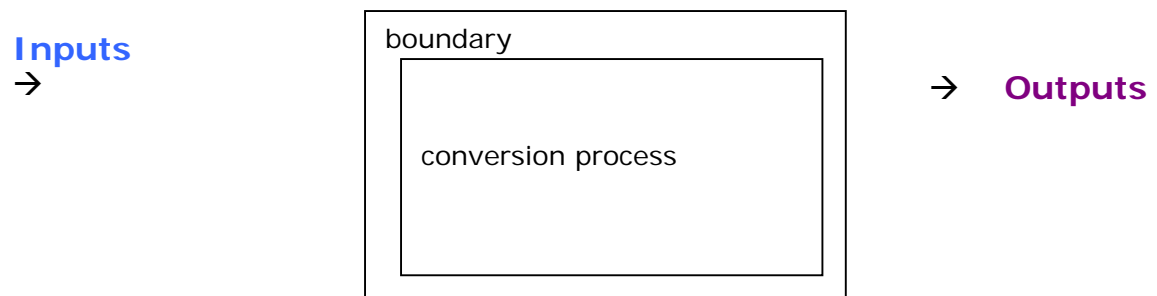
Contributions from open systems theory

The theory talks of Open v Closed systems.

Work of Kurt Lewin (1947) in applying these ideas to human (social) systems was taken forward at the Tavistock institute (by Rice and Miller 1967)

The work of any organisation can be thought of as a conversion of inputs to outputs:

Figure 2



The throughput (inputs, outputs, conversion processes) defines the task.

There are many subsystems, sometimes competing, so how all these resources and priorities are allocated depends on the **primary task** of an organisation; i.e. the task it must perform if it is to survive. (*We would probably think of this nowadays as the mission*).

However, the definition of the primary task can vary from group to group, especially in organisations that aim to help or change people where there are multiple tasks, all of which are important (e.g. working with patients, teaching medical students, and doing research). There are often conflicting assumptions about which is the most important.

Understanding what people see as the primary task can explain some of the dynamics in organisations.

People pursue different kinds of primary task:

- normative - formal, official, defined by chief stakeholders
- existential - what people in it believe they are carrying out
- phenomenal - task that can be inferred from people's behaviour, they may not consciously be aware of.

Analysis of these three helps highlight discrepancies.

If a group doesn't seek or know its primary task it can either lead to dismemberment of the group or to the emergence of another primary task. This 'anti task' is typical of groups under the sway of basic assumptions.

This can result from:

- Vague task definition: e.g. here to help
- Defining methods instead of aims
- Avoiding conflict over priorities (defines task in a way that fails to give priority to one system of activities over another)
- Failing to change primary task as the environment changes.

Management is needed at the **boundary**.

Management of boundaries is crucial to effective organisational functioning. Boundaries must separate, and relate to what is inside and outside. Open systems theory locates managers not above those they manage, but at the boundary of the systems they manage. For this, they need to:

- be clear about the primary task
- attend to flow of information across the boundary
- ensure the system has the resources it needs to perform the task
- monitor that the task relates to the requirements of the wider system and to its external environments.

So: key management/ leadership activities include:

- a) Defining the primary task.
- b) Then asking, "How does our way of working relate to this task?"
- c) If it doesn't, ask, "What are we behaving as if we were here to do?"
This will give clues about underlying anxieties, defences, conflicts;
and identify dysfunctional task definition and dysfunctional boundaries.

Transactional Analysis: Ego-States

Transactional Analysis provides us with the concept of ego-states; they are the ego-states of parent, adult and child that we call carry within us.

In our discussion of the types of partner on page 21 we identified different partner behaviours. Here we link them to the TA egostates. Authentic behaviour is associated with the adult ego-state, which is one of direct transaction and the exchange of information, without emotional game playing.

Aggressive behaviour can be that of the negative parent ego-state (the critical 'parent') or the negative child ego-state (the sulky, difficult 'child').

Compliance is also linked with the negative child ego state, but the 'child' who doesn't want to upset the 'parents'; who wants to fit in and be accepted.

Defensive behaviour can be from all three ego-states and is part of an ego defence process, seeking to protect ourselves from unpleasant or unwanted outcomes or to keep ourselves 'hidden' from others (the opposite of being open and sharing).

Discontented behaviour can similarly be from all three ego-states. How people express their defences or discontent, however, is associated with an ego state. Someone choosing to express their discontent through a negative child ego-state would sound 'whiny and sulky' and may say things like, "It's not fair'." Someone expressing a defensive position from adult ego-state may say, "I am aware that I do not wish to go down this route." Someone expressing a defensive or discontented position from negative parent ego-state may say, "This is totally wrong, I can't go along with his as the data is completely distorted. This is another example of how poor the systems are." If you feel criticised, it is likely the other person is communicating in a negative parent style OR you are listening through a negative child ego-state.

There are positive parent and positive child ego-states. The positive parent is the nurturing ego-state, the one that seeks to care for others. There is a place for this within partnerships, particularly those in the public sector where the primary task is likely to be concerned with improving the life of service users. It can become unhelpful if someone can only operate from this ego-state, as it can be experienced as over-nurturing and is aimed at keeping other people in 'child'.

The positive child ego-state is where creativity and play is expressed. Partnerships need creativity and to be able to play with ideas. The

positive child ego-state needs to be facilitated through appropriate working processes; it rarely finds an opening in tight business meetings and is in turn often discouraged in those settings. Those who can only operate from their positive child ego-state, are unable to take up responsibility for enactment of plans so can be seen as unhelpful to moving the primary task forward. Effective interactions need sufficient adult to adult transactions; that is, clear and direct transactions based on fact or evidence or clear statements of intent or need, transactions that are not manipulative or implied commands.

Partnerships also need to have sufficient 'natural child' and the creativity that comes from that ego-state. To access this they need to have time for sharing and developing ideas and possibilities; time that is not structured by an agenda or business.

Thinking about your partnership, in what proportion are the ego-states most prominently displayed (rate each so that the total across all is 100%)? Fill in the column (see example below)


Table 5

Example

100%					
90%					
80%					
70%					
60%					
50%					
40%					
30%					
20%					
10%					
	Negative Parent	Positive Parent	Adult	Negative Child	Positive Child

To change the combinations, you have to reduce the expression of some ego states in order to increase the presence of others. In this example the partnership would feel uncomfortable, with a lot of critical comments

(discontented, aggressive and defensive behaviours) and a lot of compliance or sulky behaviours. Those wishing to express more positive child would be unable to find a place to do so. In this ego-gram, development work would be needed to reduce the negative parent and negative child ego-state behaviours, to have more positive child and more adult. It might be that the positive parent needs increasing too, so that the partnership can really care about services.

 **Fill in your own**

What do you notice about the ego-gram you have created, based on your experience of the Partnership? What would you want to see reduced and increased for more effective partnership working?

Table 6

100%					
90%					
80%					
70%					
60%					
50%					
40%					
30%					
20%					
10%					
	Negative Parent	Positive Parent	Adult	Negative Child	Positive Child

Appendix 2 : Relating the theory to the four types

Making each of the four types work

The Beyond Partnership Learning Set considered several schools of thinking we believed would be relevant to partnership working (the bibliography gives a list of the texts we digested). We also reflected on members' experiences in a range of different kinds of partnership. As we did so we discovered that using the four types of partnership, described earlier in this text, enabled us to make better use of these concepts and experience, because we could see that some related to only one or two of the types, while others are relevant for all of them.

In this section we illustrate this by looking briefly at the relevance of a few of those strands of theory to the behaviour we can predict for partners in each of the four types of partnership. The areas we have chosen to explore here are aspects of:

- Game theory
- Organisational Development and Learning
- Group Relations including the role of the unconscious
- Open systems and complexity theories
- Transactional Analysis Ego-states

Please see Appendix 1 for a summary of these areas.

Type of partnership based on main purpose	Application of key theories that relate to this type of partnership – see Appendix 1 for further information and detail
<p><u>Cooperation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are problems that we can solve if we work in partnership • We already have an idea of how to solve these problems (which are probably caused by duplication, gaps, conflicting goals or counter production⁵). • The problems are experienced by both/all of us • Each of us is primarily interested in meeting our own goals, these goals are known to us (individually) already, and we are monitoring progress towards them. 	<p><i>Game theory</i> Expect your partners to calculate the value to you of their involvement in the partnership, and to extract this level of value from you. You will do the same. Expect partners to operate from self-interest. Encourage co-operative behaviour with your partners by operating a strategy of generous tit-for-tat, that is, with 'give and take' and enough forgiveness if a partner acts in a self-interested way.</p> <p><i>Group relations</i> Is there sufficient structure in terms of goals, tasks, processes and leadership to hold partners together around the task? If not, the group may fall into one of the basic assumptions defined by Bion, which will mean that no real work will be produced, and no benefits felt by partners.</p> <p><i>Unconscious processes</i> Working in partnerships can give rise to anxiety, often unconsciously stimulated, and with the subsequent development or enhancement of social defences. These can serve to distort the partnership's effectiveness.</p> <p><i>Organisational development and learning</i> Don't bother 'discussing the undiscussable' unless it's getting in the way.</p>

⁵ Counter production occurs where the activities of one party actively undermine the activities of another. Huxham C, see Bibliography

Type of partnership based on main purpose	Application of key theories that relate to this type of partnership – see Appendix 1 for further information and detail
<p><u>Coordination</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are problems that we can solve if we work in partnership • We already have an idea of how to solve these problems (which, again, are probably caused by duplication, gaps, conflicting goals or counter production) • The problems are experienced by both/all of us. Both/all of us want to achieve collective goals • That means that we want to help each other achieve our own goals and we will measure the success of the partnership by monitoring progress towards these goal • However, we may also be open to seeing if there are other goals that we haven't yet fully specified that can be addressed in this way, and if there are, we will performance manage progress towards these in the same way <p>The difference between this type and cooperation is that here, partners want to work towards collective goals, or at least towards each other's goals as well as their own.</p>	<p><i>Game theory</i> Are all relevant parties at the table? Assess this by identifying all the inter-dependencies. Remember that complementers (or collaborators) can turn into competitors. If the shared goals lead to development of a larger product or market, anticipate that there may have to be a fight for a fair share of it.</p> <p><i>Group relations</i> Is the primary task clear? Are all partners clear what it is they are seeking to achieve together? If the partnership is caught up in one of the basic assumptions described by Bion, try to shift it into workgroup mode through focusing on goals, tasks and processes. If you can't shift the partnership into work group mode, we recommend you seriously think about leaving.</p> <p><i>Organisational development and learning</i> A shared vision relating to these goals will either emerge or needs to be prompted. Tools for encouraging shared vision will be helpful. Do people involved have enough power and authority to be able to deliver on the any agreements? They won't need the same level of power/authority as is needed for co-evolution or collaboration but will need sufficient to take decisions together and forward. Differences between espoused values and values in action can usefully be highlighted. Encourage Model 2 behaviour [ability to confront assumptions positively, self-examination, say the difficult things to say, invite enquiry and reflection] and discourage Model 1 [giving praise, avoiding challenge, being 'nice' – not saying the difficult things], where inappropriate.</p> <p><i>Open systems theory</i> Agreement on shared vision will be aided by an understanding of where the issue, problem or opportunity, fits with the primary task of each organisation.</p>

Type of partnership based on main purpose	Application of key theories that relate to this type of partnership – see Appendix 1 for further information and detail
<p><u>Potential cooperation or coordination</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are problems that we can solve if we work in partnership • We already have an idea of how to solve these problems (which are probably caused by duplication, gaps, conflicting goals or counter production) • Only one party experiences these problems. 	<p><i>Game theory</i> Only one party is likely to put energy into this partnership – that is, experiencing the problems or benefiting from the opportunities. There are two ways of boosting the motivation of the non-benefiting partners: to identify and then sell to them a goal that will benefit them directly; or to embarrass them by selling them your problem, and if that fails selling this to other parties who may be able to increase their embarrassment. If it is an opportunity rather than a problem, then you may need to find ways of rewarding them for their cooperation.</p> <p><i>Transactional analysis</i> It can be the case that instead of adult to adult transactions the prompter (the organisation with the problem) may be perceived by the other as in ‘critical parent’ ego-state, and their response is from ‘sulky child’. Where the prompt is an opportunity rather than a problem the prompter can be seen as an over enthusiastic child ego-state, responded to by an ego-state of ‘an officious critical parent.’</p>

Type of partnership based on main purpose	Application of key theories that relate to this type of partnership – see Appendix 1 for further information and detail
<p><u>Collaboration</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are issues that we can each address if we work in partnership • The issues are complex and we don't know what the solutions might be • The issues are experienced by both/all of us • Each of us wants to meet our own goals, most of which are known to us already, although if we discover others along the way we will want to pursue those as well. 	<p><i>Game theory</i> Generous tit-for-tat will be the best strategy, as both partners have an interest in the other not defecting. Calculate the value to your partner of your involvement and make sure you extract at least this much from them. Have all the interdependences been identified? Are all the players at the table? (If not, is the partnership really about something else?)</p> <p><i>Open Systems theory</i> Be clear about the primary task of both organisations and where the problems or opportunities you are addressing in the partnership fit with these.</p> <p><i>Learning organisation</i> Use tools for developing shared vision, but keep the vision tightly to existing goals.</p> <p><i>Organisational development and learning</i> Discuss the undiscussable only if it is endangering the achievement of your goals. Encourage single and double loop learning within the partnership, with the deeper learning taken into your own organisation.</p> <p><i>Group Relations</i> Ensure the partnership is clear what the primary task is. Recognise the anxiety that the partnership may be seen as resolving, and deal with that within your own organisation. Assess for good enough authority – will your partner be able to deliver on agreements? Is either party gripped by Bion's basic assumption mentalities? If so, can you shift this into work group mentality? If not, expect this to fail amid acrimony.</p>

Type of partnership based on main purpose	Application of key theories that relate to this type of partnership – see Appendix 1 for further information and detail
<p><u>Co-evolution</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are mutual problems that we can solve, and/or opportunities we can exploit (or perhaps knowledge we can develop), if we explore these by working in partnership • These areas are complex and we don't know what the outcomes might be • The problems, opportunities or lack of knowledge are experienced by both/all of us • Both/all of us want to develop and achieve collective goals that we cannot wholly envisage at the moment, in addition to goals of our own. 	<p><i>Game theory</i> Generous tit-for-tat is again most likely to encourage good behaviour from your partners. It is worth remembering that 'complementers can become competitors' – so do not expect that even good collaborative partners will continue to work to partnership ideals once it is again in their interests to compete with you, and vice versa. In other words at a point, co-evolution may change to collaboration.</p> <p><i>Open Systems Theory</i> Understanding of each organisation's primary task will be essential, and an understanding of any difference between normative, existential and phenomenal. It will be important to develop a primary task for the partnership itself. If it doesn't do this it will remain a talking shop.</p> <p><i>Organisational learning</i> As this is a partnership that will only deliver if there is genuine openness between partners, it is worth watching out for the 'values in use' by all the partners, and observing whether these are in harmony or at variance with their espoused values. Any disparity between the two should somehow be made discussable. Again, because it is worth investing this time and level of understanding it will be worth ensuring that there is relevant learning at all of the three levels (single, double and triple loop).</p> <p><i>Transactional analysis</i> Adult to adult stimuli on your part will be the most productive, over enthusiasm may be interpreted as parental or child like and yield the complementary responses.</p>

Type of partnership based on main purpose	Application of key theories that relate to this type of partnership – see Appendix 1 for further information and detail
<p><u>Potential co-evolution 1</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working in partnership will be a good thing in itself and may lead us to identifying problems we can solve or opportunities we can exploit • ‘We don’t know what they’ll be, but we’ll develop goals as we go along.’ <p>While many Boards espouse this type of partnership, their success depends on the enthusiasm of individuals, as there is little energy that will push towards real joint working.</p>	<p><i>The role of the unconscious</i> Identifying sources of power of individuals delegated to work on the partnership will indicate the significance attached to it by the organisation. Similarly, whether the level of authority of those involved is ‘good enough’. Could partnership be being used as a way of dealing with anxieties?</p> <p><i>Group Relations</i> If partnership is an idea being seized upon by a group in ‘basic assumption mentality’, then it is doomed to fail unless the group can be transformed into ‘working group mentality’.</p>
<p><u>Potential collaboration</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are problems that we can solve if we work in partnership • The problems are complex and we don’t know what the solutions might be • Only one party experiences the problems. 	<p><i>Game theory</i> It is unlikely that more than one party will put any energy into this partnership, unless others can be persuaded to do so. Others may calculate the value of their participation to the partner with the problem and seek to extract outcomes of similar value to them. This should not be taken personally.</p> <p><i>Transactional analysis</i> Adult to adult stimuli on your part will be the most productive. Over enthusiasm may be interpreted as parental or child-like and yield the complementary responses.</p>

Appendix 3 : Reading Lists/Bibliography

Game theory reading list

Axelrod, R. *Evolution of Cooperation*

Poundstone, W. *Prisoner's Dilemma/John Von Neumann, Game Theory and the Puzzle of the Bomb*

Poundstone, W. *Labyrinths of Reason : Paradox, Puzzles, and the Frailty of Knowledge*

Binmore, K., *Fun and Games: A Text on Game Theory*

Dixit, A.K., Nalebuff, B.J. *Thinking Strategically: The Competitive Edge in Business, Politics, and Everyday Life*

Brandenburger, A.M., Nalebuff, B.J. *Co-Opetition : A Revolution Mindset That Combines Competition and Cooperation : The Game Theory Strategy That's Changing the Game of Business*

Davics, M.D. *Game Theory: A Nontechnical Introduction*

Mero, L. *Moral Calculations : Game Theory, Logic and Human Frailty*

Ridley, M. *The Origins of Virtue: Human Instincts and the Evolution of Cooperation*

Berne, E. *Games People Play*

Stewart, I., Joines, V. *TA Today: A New Introduction to Transactional Analysis*

Psychodynamic and psycho-social reading list

Hinshelwood R.D., Chiesa, M. [2002] *Organisations, Anxieties and Defences*. Whurr Publishers UK

Hinshelwood, R., Skogstad, W. (eds) [2000] *Observing Organisations*. Routledge

Obholzer, A., Roberts, V. Z. (eds) [1994] *The unconscious at work*. Routledge

Campbell D, Coldicott, T., Kinsella, K. [1994] *Systemic work with organisations*. Karnac Books

Huffington C, Armstrong D, Halton W, Hoyle L, Pooley J [2004] *Working below the surface- the emotional life of contemporary organisations*. Karnac Books

Gould, L., Stapley, L., Stein, M. [2004] *Experiential learning in organisations* Karnac

Talamo, P.B., Borgogno, F., Merciai, S. [1998] *Bion's legacy to groups*. Karnac Books

Bion, W [1961] *Experiences in Groups*. Tavistock/Routledge (possibly out of print)

Bridges W [1992] *The Character of Organisations*. Davies-Black publications

Baron R S & Kerr N L [1992] *Group Process, Group Decision, Group Action*. Open University Press 1992

Lago C [1996] *Race, Culture and Counselling*. Open University Press

Davies Celia [1995] *Gender and the professional predicament in nursing*. Open University Press

Strategy and Complexity Reading List

Daellenbach, H. *Systems and Decision Making: A Management Science Approach*.

Gleick, J. *'Chaos: Making a New Science*

Stacey, R. *Managing Chaos*

Stacey, R. *Complexity and Management: Fad or radical change?*

Lewin, R., Birute, R. *The Soul at Work*

Mintzberg, H. *Mintzberg on Management*

Mintzberg, H and others *The Strategy Process*

Mintzberg, H: *The Strategy Safari*.

Mintzberg, H: *Strategy Bites Back*

Ghoshal, S. *The Individualised Corporation*

Ansoff, I. [1969] *Business Strategy*

Hame,G., Prahalad,C.K., *Competing for the Future*

Porter, M. [2004] *Competitive Advantage*. Free Press

Organisational Development: Organisational Behaviour and Organisational Learning

Argyris, C., [1996] *Organisational Learning II. Theory, Method and Practice*, Addison Wesley OD Series

Argyris, C. [1990] *Overcoming Organisational Defences; Facilitating Organisational Learning*. Prentice Hall

Schon, D. [1991] *The Reflective Practitioner*

Senge, P. [1990] *The Fifth Discipline*. Century Books

Senge, P. *Fifth Discipline Field Book*

Pedlar, M., Burgoyne, J., Boydell, T. *The Learning Company*.

Pearn, M., Roderick, C., Mulrooney,C. *Learning Organisations in Practice*

Hackman, R., Lawler, E., Porter, L. *Perspectives on Behaviour in organisations*

Schein, E. H. *Process Consultation vols 1 and 2*

Schein, E. H. *Organisational Culture and Leadership*

Beckhard, R., Harris, R.[1987] *Organisational transitions: Managing complex change*.

Bate, P. *Strategies for cultural change Organisational Change, and Developing Change Management Skills*.

Please contact us with your responses to this paper and if you would like to know more about our work or other publications.

Julia Vaughan Smith jvs@anaptys.co.uk

Valerie Iles iles@reallylearning.com