

# Different approaches to being a Big Local partnership

## Introduction

A Big Local partnership is a group of at least eight people who guide the overall direction of Big Local in your area, most of whom (at least 51%) live within your Big Local area. The partnership is responsible for:

- agreeing a shared vision
- creating the Big Local plan
- overseeing its delivery
- collecting evidence to show how the plan is progressing
- reviewing the plan and the partnership.

Each Big Local area partnership has its own way of working. Some partnerships provide overall guidance and recommendations, covering all the responsibilities listed above. Others do all those things, and also plan and run community events. And others do all that and more - they become their own locally trusted organisation and have a funding agreement with Local Trust.

Whichever approach you decide on, you will need to meet our criteria, as set out in our guidance on [Big Local partnerships](#). We hope these notes also help you identify the best one for your area.

## Which approach is best for you?

### 1. Partnerships that provide overall guidance and recommendations

Partnerships work with and through locally trusted organisation(s). These organisations put in place funding agreements (grants, loans or contracts) with other organisations, groups and individuals to deliver projects, activities or services on behalf of the partnership. We do not expect members of the partnership to carry out delivery. But they might be involved with the organisations, groups or individuals that do carry out this work.

#### Advantages:

- Roles and responsibilities are clear.
- Members of the partnership are not personally liable.
- Demands on the partnership are manageable, and members are less likely to burn out.
- There is a clear separation between guidance/leadership and delivery.
- It is easier to know whether something is working (or not), as the partnership is separate from delivery.
- There are fewer conflicts of interest.

#### Disadvantages:

- Control and oversight may be difficult if you (the partnership) are not involved in day-to-day decisions.
- Organisations, groups and individuals might not be clear about what is required if they do not have direct contact with the partnership, or fully understand Big Local.
- There may be fewer opportunities for volunteering.
- The partnership is not directly involved in delivering what the community wants.
- More reliance on paid workers and professionals can mean less skills-development for residents.
- It is more difficult for the Big Local partnership to become a visible presence in the area, as other organisations are delivering services under their own name.

#### Things to consider if your Big Local partnership takes this approach:

- How does the partnership make sure it has an appropriate overview of the delivery of projects, activities and services?
- What information does the partnership need from the locally trusted organisation(s) to make informed decisions?
- How does the partnership ensure that it is connected to and grounded in the community?
- How does the partnership retain overall control of Big Local when others are doing delivery?

## 2. Partnerships do some delivery (such as planning and running community events)

In this approach, the partnership still meets its responsibilities as described earlier, but members of the partnership are also involved in delivering some of the projects, activities and services. This might include: planning and running community events; carrying out research and engagement with people in the area; leading an allotment project; or running tendering processes with the locally trusted organisation to decide who delivers projects, activities and services. The partnership might also become a constituted community group or unincorporated organisation (for guidance on this, please see: <https://www.gov.uk/business-legal-structures/unincorporatedassociation>).

#### Advantages:

- The partnership has control over some Big Local activities.
- Appropriate insurance is in place to protect partnership members.
- Organisations, groups and individuals are clear on what is required, as the partnership is directly involved.

- There are opportunities to build people's skills and confidence.
- Big Local is visible in the community, as events have Big Local branding.
- There is still some separation between governance and delivery.

#### Disadvantages:

- There are liability implications for the projects, activities and services led by members of the partnership (which is why insurance is needed).
- Lines of responsibility can become blurred if the partnership becomes directly involved in delivery.
- Members of the partnership might take on more than they can cope with.
- Individuals may become the face of Big Local.
- There is greater distance from the delivery of Big Local activities.

#### Things to consider if your partnership takes this approach:

- How do you ensure that people have the appropriate level of support, insurance cover and protection? What is the role of your locally trusted organisation in providing this or do you have to do it yourselves?
- How might your partnership be perceived locally?
- How will you manage conflicts of interest?
- Is the work shared fairly across the partnership?
- How can you involve others in the community?

### 3. Partnerships become their own locally trusted organisation

If you take this approach, your partnership will need to become a legal entity as a locally trusted organisation, have a funding agreement with Local Trust, and manage, monitor and report on the funding in line with your Big Local plan. As a locally trusted organisation, you will put funding agreements in place with other organisations, groups and individuals to deliver projects, activities and services. The organisation (also the partnership), might do some delivery in one of two roles: as a member of the partnership; and in a voluntary capacity, in which it might organise coach trips, lead community clean-up days, support art projects or review community-chest applications. In addition to fulfilling its other requirements, the partnership will:

- be a legal entity and the act of being a locally trusted organisation fits within its objects
  - we ask for the organisation's governing documents
- have the experience and the capability to administer and account for the funding
- have the capacity to support Big Local delivery in its role as a locally trusted organisation
- have a bank account in the name of the organisation, with at least two signatories who are not related to one another or reside at the same address.

Depending on the type of legal entity you become, your organisation will need to comply with Charity Commission rules and/or Companies House rules. You can find guidance online as follows:

- on setting up a charity: <https://www.gov.uk/how-to-set-up-a-charity-cc21a>
- on setting up a social enterprise: <https://www.gov.uk/set-up-a-social-enterprise>
- on setting up a business company: <https://www.gov.uk/limited-company-formation>.

You can find more guidance on the responsibilities for locally trusted organisations [here](#).

#### Advantages:

- It offers protection to members of the partnership, as they are covered by the organisation's policies, procedures and insurance.
- The partnership and organisation are a visible focal point for Big Local.
- The newly established organisation is the legacy of Big Local (if future funding is sought and received)
- Partnership members become trustees/directors (or similar) of the organisation.
- Partnerships can enter into agreements and leases, and own buildings.
- There are clear roles and responsibilities.
- The Big Local partnership has full control.
- There may be more opportunities to generate funding.
- Being involved in establishing the organisation increases people's skills and confidence.

#### Disadvantages:

- It may lead to a focus on delivery at the expense of other aspects of Big Local.
- It could lead to Big Local partnerships/organisations avoiding risk, as their primary concern becomes the organisation and not the wider Big Local programme outcomes.
- Power might become concentrated in the hands of a few people.
- People might not want to become a trustee/director of an organisation and may be less likely to get involved as a member of the Big Local partnership.
- It could stifle creativity, because the partnership as an organisation cannot respond to changing needs without changing the organisation.
- It may not be sustainable once the Big Local money has been spent.
- Partnership members might find it too time-consuming, or feel the responsibility is too great.
- Big Local takes longer to deliver, as a new organisation first needs to be set up.
- The costs of setting up the organisation and insurance, auditors and other services come out of the £1m, instead of that funding being used on other things (though there is a contribution of 5% towards grant and partnership administration).

#### Things to consider if your partnership takes this approach:

- Do you have the right mix of skills around the table? How do you ensure that?
- What specialist support and advice will you need?
- How do you involve other people in Big Local?
- How do you ensure that you have the right procedures and processes in place? This includes financial processes, reporting to Local Trust, complaints procedure, staffing.
- Is there any distinction between the partnership and the locally trusted organisation?
- How can people within the Big Local area have oversight of the organisation and the partnership?

## In summary

You can decide how your Big Local partnership will work, and it is important to discuss and agree your approach. Take account of what it is you want to achieve in your community and how best to do that. Whatever you do, make sure that you have the right level of protection (insurance) and support (from your locally trusted organisation and others). And try to keep Big Local flexible, so you can make the most of opportunities as they arise, now and in future.

This document will be developed over time with input from the people using this material.

If you have thoughts on how this document can be made more useful for you, particularly if you live in one of the Big Local areas, please let us know.

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**If you need this document in other formats or a community language please get in touch with Local Trust and we will help you.**

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