



Partnerships and twinning

UK local government is engaged in a wide range of partnerships with counterparts overseas. For most councils, in addition to trading links, the first significant form of international partnership came about through the twinning movement. Widely promoted at the end of the Second World War to contribute to peace and reconciliation, twinning has evolved to meet the needs of contemporary life styles in the twenty first century. With origins firmly rooted in friendship and culture, the UK's 2000 or so twinning links now include a wide range of themes and activities.

Although twinning requires the endorsement of the local council, it is very much a grass roots movement, often led by a community based association. In addition to involvement in these formal partnerships, councils are also developing international networks and contacts through technical projects focusing on a specific area; EU funded multi-lateral projects; informal, friendship links; and development cooperation linked to the UN's Millennium Development Goals. There are a vast number of benefits and opportunities to be derived from all forms of partnerships.

The following information aims to provide guidance on how to maximise the benefits on a number of levels. Although aimed primarily at councils, much of this guidance can relate to any type of partnership.

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Current requests

Partnerships give towns the opportunity to work together on a variety of local issues exchanging best practice and expertise, providing cultural and educational exchanges and assisting technical development.

If your local authority/community is interested in developing a partnership or finding out more about any of the communities listed on this page, please contact James Beadle at the LGA (james.beadle@lga.gov.uk). Alternatively, you can complete our [link request form](#) (word).

The following overseas communities are registered with the LGA as seeking a permanent and wide ranging partnership with a UK community/local authority:

Albania

Prrenjas, Elbasani

Population: 8,500

Prrenjas is located 105Km away from the country's capital, Tirana. Prrenjas is situated in a beautiful natural area and is looking for a partner to engage in a range of projects at the community level.

Argentina

Mar del Plata, Buenos Aires province

Population: 541,733

Largest seaside resort & 7th largest city in Argentina, 400km south of Buenos Aires. Good education and cultural facilities. Many existing international links, looking to involve UK.

Esquel, Chubut, Patagonia

Population: 35,000

www.esquel.gov.ar

Esquel is a large city in the Andes region of Welsh Patagonia. It is a tourism town, specialising in adventure activities such as skiing & rafting. It also has a large agricultural centre and a university. A all-round link is envisaged with a Welsh town.

Belgium

Chiny, Guame

Population: 5,072

www.chiny.be

Chiny is a a widespread rural community including 14 villages, located near the French border. Chiny is looking to develop cultural and tourist links as well as language exchanges.

La Hulpe

Population: 7,300

<http://www.lahulpe.be>

La Hulpe is located in the south of Brussels and its main economic activities are in the service sector. They are looking for a cultural link with a similar city.

Bulgaria

Popovo, Tagoviste

Population: 36,000

NE region of the country. The municipality contains many historical attractions from the Thracians, Romans, Byzantines & Turks. General link requested, some focus on technical and professional; EU projects for future accession.

Razlog, Blagoevgrad

Population: 23,000

www.razlogbg.com

In SW, near Macedonian & Greek borders. Mixed economy with growing tourism. Famous for preserved Thracian monuments & as setting for folklore events. Looking for general link under EU town twinning.

Cameroon

Fundong

Population: 61,300

Fundong is located in the northwest province of Cameroon and is 60 km from Bamenda. Its main economic activities are agricultural. They are looking for an all-purpose link with an emphasis on assistance in the infrastructural domain.

China

Anhui Province

Population: 6,400,000

www.ahie.gov.cn

Administrative division of Eastern China, incorporating 17 cities & 56 counties. The provincial capital is Hefei. Area is known for manufacturing, tourism & science & education. Proposing general link for local government inc. economic & cultural exchange

Nanchang

Population: 4,600,000

Nanchang is the capital of Jiangxi province in the SW, approx. 800km from Shanghai. They are looking for an all-round link, but especially one that will build on current economic successes.

Czech Republic

Brezineves

Population: 750

www.brezineves.cz

Village on northern outskirts of Prague. Residential area looking for a link particularly for cooperation in culture and sport.

Frydek-Mistek

Population: 60,000

www.frydek-mistek.cz/eng/

Modern city in mountainous area bordering Slovakia and Poland. Rich history with many attractions including a castle. Tourism is a growing sector. Looking for a link to exchange experience of town development.

Suchdol

Population: 5,000

www.praha-suchdol.cz

Suburb in NW of Prague including Agricultural University & Academy of Science. Suchdol was first recorded in the 10th century as having the first Christian church in Bohemia. Looking for to exchange information, experience and visits.

Denmark

Egedal, Copenhagen region

Population: 40,000

www.egedalkommune.dk

Egedal dates back thousands of years according to archaeological records. Mainly a rural area, more recently, proximity to Copenhagen has built up the area. The kommune are keen for cultural & social visits and especially school & youth links.

Ethiopia

Tigri, Mekelle

Population: 200,000

Tigri has a large university campus where the main economic activity is agriculture based. Tigri is looking for a link with schools as well as local services and technical cooperation.

France

Aubevoye, Eure

Population: 4,400

50km from Rouen & 80km from Paris, Aubevoye is also only 1 hour from the Normandy beaches. Looking for a partnership for cultural exchange.

Canejan, Aquitaine

Population: 5,121

www.canejan.fr

Canejan is located 15km from Bordeaux in the South-West of France. Canejan engages in many sporting activities and events, including large cycle trails in the nearby countryside.

Cheronnac, Haute-Vienne

Population: 400

www.ville-rochechouart.fr/english

Main focus on cultural and social exchange, preferably with similarly agricultural area.

Ludon-Medoc, Aquitaine

Population: 3,500

15kms from Bordeaux, 40kms from coast in vineyard area of Medoc. Cultural and social visits envisaged for young community.

Nanteuil-les-Meaux, Ile-de-France

Population: 5,000

www.nanteuil-les-meaux.fr

Located just 40 minutes from Paris, Nanteuil-les-Meaux is a small town located near to the countryside. Interested in school and youth exchanges as well as cultural and social visits.

Neufchatel-Hardelot

Population: 3,657

www.ville-neufchatel-hardelot.fr

Neufchatel-Hardelot is within easy reach of the UK and boasts numerous sporting facilities, including two 18-hole golf courses and a large empty sandy beach where important sand-yachting events are staged. Looking for a link to support their strong historical and cultural links with the UK.

Ploumilliau

Population: 2,488

www.mairie-ploumilliau.fr

Ploumilliau is located in the Brittany region, and is looking for a partner to engage in cultural, economic and social initiatives. The link would engage a range of local businesses, schools and organisations.

Germany

Hagen, Nordrhein-Wesfalen

Population: 196,000

www.hagen.de

Hagen lies between on edge of the Ruhr area. A previous steel producer, Hagen now focuses on the educational and cultural sectors with many small and medium sized companies located in the city. Hagen is looking for a partner to assist in a range of activities including, transport and community based projects.

Rethem, Niedersachsen

Population: 2,500

www.rethem.de

Located between Bremen and Hanover, Rethem is well connected. A British partner is sought for cultural events, school and youth exchanges, music and singing festivals. Ideally would like to welcome a new partner at anniversary celebrations in 2008.

Gmund am Tegernsee, Bavaria

Population: 6,000

www.rathaus-gmund.de

This lake side community is in a rural area where farming is common, but has an increasing tourist trade. They are looking for a link based on cultural and social visits, particularly involving youth.

Ghana

Etordome, Volta Region

Population: 400

www.bridgingdevelopment.org

Etordome is around 25km from the principal town of Volta Region, Ho. Those living there belong to the Botoku people of Ewe tribe and are mostly engaged in farming, with some craft for extra income. A link is sought for economic & education in particular.

Twifo Hemang Lower Denkyira District

Population: 129,000

www.ghanadistricts.com

Twifo Hemang Lower Denkyira is one of the thirteen districts located in central Ghana. The district's principle economic activities

are palm oil and cocoa production. They are looking to link with a rural community who are also heavily involved in agricultural activities.

Hungary

Pilisjázfalu, Pest

Population: 1,350

www.pilisjazfalu.hu

This municipality in the central region of Hungary is looking for a link to boost community spirit through cultural events, creating education links and making mutual bids on EU tenders.

India

Sadhana Villages, Maharashtra

Population: 3,000

www.sadhana-village.org

Kolwan Valley, 100km east of Mumbai has 19 villages at the foot of the hills. Links are sought for individual villages or as a collective, for a multi-level partnership inc. education, social & economic co-operation, with a modernisation theme.

Italy

Chiari, Lombardy

Population: 18,000

Chiari is located about 60km from Milan and is a small industrial town in a rural setting. Its main industries are metal, textile and woodwork.

Morazzone, Varese

Population: 4,193

www.comune.morazzone.va.it

55km NW of Milan this hilly region centres on its historical centre. Some prehistoric findings & continuous historical records. Undergone economic change from agriculture to post-industrial. Interested in twinning inc. whole town with similar background.

Mugnano del Cardinale, Campania

Population: 5,302

www.mugnanodelcardinale.asmenet.it

Mugnano is c.30km from Naples. It is in a rural area and has a number of small enterprises. It is also a historic city with Roman ruins. Looking for general linking with technical, economic and cultural links, inc youth and social visits.

Sant'Andrea Apostolo dello Jonio, Calabria

Population: 2,500

Small city in the South of Italy looking for link involving youth, cultural & social visits. Hoping to bid for 'Town Twinning' fund from EC.

Santa Luce, Tuscany

Population: 1,600

www.comune.santaluce.pi.it

Santa Luce is a rural community where the main activity is agriculture. Santa Luce is looking for a partnership based on either; cultural, agriculture or youth exchange.

Maniace, Catania

Population: 3,600

www.comune.maniace.ct.it

Situated between the north-western slopes of Mount Etna and the Southern Slopes of Nebrodi, Maniace is looking for a partner to engage in a range of cultural activities.

San Michele, Salentino

Population: 6,300

www.comune.sanmichelesal.br.it

San Michele is located 15km from the Adriatic coast and its main economic activities are agriculture (olive oil, almonds, and figs) and agro-tourism. Interested in a link for cultural and youth exchanges.

Kenya

Pokot, West Pokot

Population: 500,000

Located in the NW of the Rift Valley province, along the border with Uganda. Pokot are looking for an all-round link including technical, economic, youth and cultural visits.

Korea

Paju, Gyeonggi

Population: 295,877

www.pajuro.net

Paju is 30Km north of Seoul and is predominantly an industrial city. Paju is located 1 hour away from the international airport and is looking for mutual exchange visits.

Macedonia

Probistip

Population: 16,193

www.probistip.gov.mk

NE of the country, 110km from capital. Economic & historic base in mining, now also trade & industry. Looking for all round link under EU town twinning.

Aerodrom, Skopje

Population: 80,000

www.aerodrom.gov.mk

A municipality in the centre of Skopje, the capital. A manufacturing & trading centre, also benefits from the cultural activities of the capital. Interested in EU programs, especially projects for local integration, economic & social development.

Mali

Toumboun, Kayes

Population: 2,000

This traditional village is in the SW of Mali. Its main activities are agriculture, craft and commerce. It has a primary school, mosque & church. Looking for a cultural & social link with a coastal or rural area.

Namibia

Ruacana

Population: 5,000

Ruacana is located in the Omusati region (northwest part of Namibia). They are looking for an economic link with a coastal or rural community.

Poland

Michalowice, Malopolska

Population: 7,500

www.michalowice.malopolska.pl

Located in south of Poland, 10km from both city & airport of Cracow. Dating back to the 12th century, Michalowice was predominantly an agricultural village, but services & tourism are increasingly important to the economy. Looking for wide cooperation.

Ledzin, Bieru

Population: 16,000 pop

www.ledziny.pl

Ledziny seeks partner to engage in Youth and cultural activities. Also looking to share ideas and experiences around the implementation of the Handicapped Children Integration Programme currently underway in the town.

Portugal

Valenca, Viana do Castelo

Population: 15,000

www.cm-valenca.pt

In north of country, capital of Minho Valley area. Important European fortress and historical centre of heritage buildings. Would like twinning to promote cooperation in the fields of culture, education, tourism, economy and local administration.

Russia

Luberetskyi, Moscow

Population: 260,000

www.lubreg.ru

5km SW of Moscow, this popular area is mainly known for its industry. Established since 1621, it achieved city status in 1925. Looking for friendly & strong links incorporating administration, industry and culture.

Spain

Alcobendas, Madrid

Population: 105,000

www.alcobendas.org

Economic activities mainly industrial & service led, with some new technology bases. Looking for link for language, culture & sport.

San Fulgencio, Alicante

Population: 10,000

www.ayto-sanfulgencio.es

30k from Alicante & 5k from coast. Traditional agricultural links with more recent tourism development. Looking for mainly social & cultural link, with possible school exchanges; economic & technical links also possible.

Benitachell, Alicante

Population: 5,000

Benitachell lies on the Costa Blanca, between the cities of Alicante and Valencia and is looking for a partner to engage in youth and cultural visits. They are interested in twinning with a community in the South West of England due to the similarities with the region.

Meco, Madrid

Population: 13,000

www.ayto-meco.es

Meco is one of the youngest communities in the province of Madrid and is about 40km from the capital. From agricultural beginnings, recent economic growth has provided more work. Looking to hold cultural, educational and social exchanges.

Tunisia

Chihia, Sfax

Population: 23,625

Chihia is a calm and beautiful area which is fast developing as a place for people to come and live. Chihia is known for its small businesses, oil factories and the development of private industry.

Turkey

Kartal, Istanbul

Population: 500,000

www.kartal.bel.tr

Kartal is located in a district of Istanbul. Kartal places great importance on its industry and service sector and is interested in links for both business and cultural benefits.

Uskudar, Istanbul

Population: 495,000

www.uskudar.bel.tr

At the intersection of Marmara Sea & the Bosphorus, Uskudar is now mainly a residential area. Historically it was strategically important to Byzantines & Ottomans. Looking for a general link, with strong social components, making use of EU funding.

Uganda

Bushenyi-Ishaka

Population: 40,000

www.bushenyi.go.ug

A trading town in merchandise, fruit and vegetable and livestock is located South West of Kampala. Ishaka is surrounded by beautiful countryside and is seeking a partner to engage in health based projects.

Kakooge

Population: 12,000

Kakooge is located 87 kilometers from Kampala, the capital city of Uganda. They are looking to establish economic links with a rural community.



Establishing a link

There are many different types of partnership. Some are formal agreements or twinning links, involving the signing of a document, charter or memorandum of understanding, some involve time limited projects and some are informal links with no kind of written agreement or protocol.

However, whatever the nature of the link, it is important to consider the following principles:

- there should be common understanding between the partners;
- there should be effective communication;
- the aims and objectives of the partnership need to be clear and transparent; and
- mechanisms need to be in place to involve the wider community, if appropriate.

STEP ONE: Finding a partner

Finding the right partner and developing a successful link requires time and patience to get right. The LGA can help by providing a partner search service, working closely with counterpart organisations in the rest of Europe and the world. Applications may be made by local authorities or by community groups that have the approval of their local authority.

A simple questionnaire must be completed providing factual information about the applicant community and details of the type of partnership sought. This information is then compared with the list of applications from overseas communities seeking UK partners and, once a match has been made, communities are put in contact with each other.

STEP TWO: Exploratory visits

Potential partners should make contact with each other to check areas of common interest. Exploratory visits are a useful way to discuss individual aims and objectives for a partnership and to ensure there is consensus on the way forward. Before a visit, both sides should draw up a list of key questions and queries and undertake some basic research on each other's culture. It is also important to decide whether partners can work with the individuals concerned on a detailed project. By tactfully asking searching questions and taking notes and visual reminders of the area, the two sides should be able to decide whether they can work together.

STEP THREE: Formalise the relationship

Formalising a link is generally subject to the decision-making processes within a local authority and needs to be formally ratified. It is customary for twinned communities to have some sort of written agreement or charter, drawn up by both partners and signed by senior elected representatives from the two communities. The text of the charter may be in two languages, and each community should retain a copy. The document is not legally binding but should describe the rationale for setting up the link and reflect the interests and aspirations of both communities.

Agreements should cover a wide range of issues, in line with the philosophy that twinning should involve as many sections of the local community as possible and should not be restrictive. An agreement that relates solely to the development of educational or economic links would not be considered to be a twinning partnership.

As charters are intended to stand the test of time, they should be vague in content, rather than relate to specific projects, and should be personalised to reflect the nature of the two communities. In a formal sense, twinning links are indefinite and not bound by time. Any charter should be as relevant in 20 years' time as it is on the day it is agreed.

It is customary for charters to be formally signed at official ceremonies in both communities. While this procedure is important, in order to maximise the benefits of a visit to the partner community, the ceremony can be organised as part of a much wider programme, with a number of other activities, including future planning.

Charters may also be developed to reflect different types of links, such as informal, time limited or project specific. These are often referred to in a memorandum of understanding or cooperation.

STEP FOUR: Strategic Planning

To get the best from a partnership, it is important to make it accessible to all. A strategic approach should be adopted to ensure this happens.

A strategic plan should consist of three sections:

- the aims and objectives of the partnership, encompassing all aspects of the local organisation and community;
- a methodology, explaining how the aims and objectives will be achieved; and
- a list of desired outcomes and benefits, providing a starting point for the projects's review and evaluation. This will enable partners to include a wide range of services and people.

STEP FIVE: Follow up

Monitor activities, review procedures and improve as necessary. Continue to communicate aims, objectives and achievements to the wider community.

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European organisations

The following European organisations are currently involved in town twinning initiatives:

Twinning Network

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) is the European equivalent of the Local Government Association. It has long been a staunch advocate of twinning. The LGIB represents UK local authorities on the CEMR's Europe-wide Twinning Network, made up of representatives of the national local authority associations. The network meets to discuss aspects of twinning, such as trends in activities and European Commission grant criteria. Its main purpose is to develop a united voice on behalf of European twinning.

Further information about the network is available online at: www.ccre.org

European Parliament

Most Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) appreciate the important role of twinning in European integration and place significance on people to people contact in strengthening the EU. In recent years, MEPs have demonstrated their support by reversing European Commission plans to reduce the twinning budget.

MEPs should be invited to take part in events, providing an expert view on a particular subject. Developing links with MEPs can help raise interest in overseas partnerships and sustain links. For example, organising a programme of visits by a MEP to schools and colleges, community groups and business group meetings can generate interest in twinning activities.

Additionally, MEPs are good networkers, as they meet counterparts from other countries on a regular basis. Their contacts can help generate interest in a partnership or twinning link.

European Commission

In addition to the financial backing provided by the European Commission, which is covered in the next chapter, the Commission also awards Golden Stars for outstanding twinning projects.

Council of Europe

The Council of Europe offers an award system to local and regional authorities for actively promoting the European ideal through twinning links, exchange visits or events.

There are four separate ascending awards: the first step is the European Diploma with 30 awards each year, the second is the Flag of Honour and the third is the Plaque of Honour. The highest award is the Europe Prize which recognises what it calls 'outstanding efforts to promote European unity'.

Applications may be made by representatives of local or regional authorities in any of the Council of Europe's 44 Member States by 31 December each year, and full details are available from:

The Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly
Council of Europe
67075 Strasbourg Cedex
France
Tel 00 33 3 88 41 21 08



Finding the funding

Financial and staff resources are important components to maintaining successful twinning links. Where there is no dedicated twinning budget available, local authorities and community groups need to be creative and innovative in finding the resources to support an international partnership.

With pressures on local government budgets, twinning activities must be able to demonstrate clear benefits, for example, linking to statutory services such as social services or education.

Resources can be found in a variety of ways.

Legal limits

In relation to overall local authority expenditure, most international projects are low cost activities. However, it is important to be aware of the legal guidelines relating to expenditure. The Local Government (Overseas Assistance) Act 1993 sets out the maximum an authority can spend. For town twinning activities, the limit is set at twice the amount spent, or budgeted for, in the previous financial year.

European Commission funding programme: Europe for Citizens

The main source of funding for town twinning is the European Commission twinning programme, established in 1989. In 2007, a radical change has resulted in the grant becoming part of a wider funding programme entitled Europe for Citizens.

Contributions in kind

Although a blank cheque is helpful in funding activities, contributions in kind should not be underestimated and may be easier to obtain than hard cash. They can include the use of premises and venues; administrative help, including photocopying and postal services; refreshments; transport; speakers; tours of local businesses; reduced entrance to museums and entertainment venues; and discounts in restaurants and shops.

Sponsorship

For many businesses, small and large, contributing to the local community is important and some businesses already have their own community strategy. To attract sponsorship for a twinning link, it is necessary to provide information about activities in a clear, concise format. Promotional material shouldn't be too long and it should be eye catching and interesting. The aims and objectives of the project should be explained and the benefits and beneficiaries detailed.

Businesses need to understand what they may gain by providing sponsorship. This may include increased publicity through the use of the corporate logo on the twinning association's printed materials, sports shirts, banners etc or the opportunity to publicise this support in promotional materials, in-house magazines and the local press.

Fundraising

Although fundraising requires imagination and effort, the rewards can more than outweigh the input. In addition to providing financial resources, activities can promote the partnership, helping to attract more participants. Events can also increase knowledge about overseas partners and bring different groups of people within a community closer together. Popular fundraising activities include wine tasting, themed dinners, quizzes, language classes and selling related produce.



Managing twinning

Establishing a twinning association

In the UK , twinning is generally managed in one of three ways:

- by the local authority;
- by an independent twinning association, comprising voluntary members of the community;
- or by a combination of the two.

Coordination

Twinning Associations can draw on the expertise of the community at large, but whether an international partnership is being coordinated by the local authority or a community twinning group, there are many functions that need to be addressed.

- Coordination and liaison: including the first point of contact for the overseas partner.
- Strategy: planning a schedule of activities, including programmes for individual exchanges and events.
- Public relations: keeping everyone informed, promoting and publicising the link through newsletters, websites, exhibitions etc and handling the media.
- Financial management.
- Funding: raising funds, securing sponsorship and making grant applications.
- Travel: coordinating transport, visas etc.
- Membership: managing existing new members and extending community involvement.
- Youth: coordinating school and youth activities.
- Accommodation: organising accommodation and liaising with host families.

Conduct

It is vital that all officers, members and others funded from the public purse who take part in international partnerships and twinning link activities abide by high standards of conduct at all times.

Members and local authority employees are subject to individual local authority codes of conduct, which form part of their terms and conditions. These apply whenever the individual is undertaking official duties.

Financial accountability

Local authorities should ensure that there is a procedure in place to demonstrate that careful consideration has been given to every financial transaction, particularly in the case of expenditure relating to travel and accommodation. For officer and member participation, there should be a process to explain the reasons for the visit/meeting and the benefits to be gained.

Travel costs

Local authorities need to decide their policy for expenditure relating to overseas partnerships and twinning links. For example, whether all travel should be economy class, or whether business class travel is acceptable and, if so, subject to what rules. Local authorities need to set and follow rules and be willing to justify expenditure.

Hotel costs

Where it is necessary to use hotels, local authorities need to have a policy on the type and price range to be used. Within Europe , there is usually a reasonable choice of mid-range hotels, but in some developing countries the only realistic option may be a relatively expensive 'western style' hotel. The authority also needs to be clear about what, if any, incidental expenditure on hotel bills will be met.

Occasionally, the issue arises about a member on official duty wishing to be accompanied by spouse or partner who has no formal role. In this case, the councillor should be responsible for all the additional costs that arise, however minor.

Meals and subsistence

Local authorities may pay an agreed sum for subsistence where this is not covered by the host authority, or reimburse expenditure for meals and refreshments. It may be useful to give general guidance on the financial limits, though costs do vary greatly between towns and countries.

Hospitality

In any formal visit to another country, there is usually some hospitality, in the form of receptions, meals etc. If this is given by a public sector body, no difficulties arise. However, if given by a private company, this may need to be declared in the authority's register of hospitality. If in doubt, seek guidance from the authority's Chief Executive or Solicitor.

Gifts

In many cultures, giving or exchanging gifts is not only normal but required. Whilst gifts of purely nominal value may be kept by the recipient, any more substantial or valuable ones should, on return, be given to the authority. All gifts should be recorded in the authority's register of gifts and hospitality.

You should consider, before any visit, whether to take gifts to the key people, especially at any main formal reception. Once the authority's code of conduct has been agreed, the values above which gifts should be registered or given to the authority will be specified.

Grants for external groups

If local authorities wish to make grants either to individual projects or exchanges, or to twinning associations, there should be a form of accountability throughout the process, from the initial application stage to monitoring activities and outcomes. Successful organisation can be asked to provide a regular report on how the finances have been used and how they have benefited the community.



Revitalising a twinning

Twinning has continued to flourish throughout the last 50 years but in some areas, interest is declining, and the number of members taking part in twinning events falling.

Although there are more than 1,500 links between the UK and France and the UK and Germany, not all of these are still active. For those established more than a decade ago, particularly those set up in the years immediately after World War II, the people responsible for setting up the link may no longer be able to drive the link and create new interest. Encouraging young people to involve themselves in twinning is also a challenge.

The experiences of some local authorities suggest a number of ways of revitalising an old link.

Re-educating the masses

For some people, the concept of twinning is either unknown or completely misunderstood. To increase interest, it is necessary to explain exactly what the twinning link is about. Actively promoting its dynamic and wide ranging aspects will help. Organisers should use every opportunity available to stage exhibitions that may be seen by members of the community, community groups, schools, colleges, religious institutions and business groups. It is vital that it is clear that anyone can get involved.

Making it relevant

Activities need to be relevant. Most twinning links were formed on the basis of friendship and culture and, while these values should underpin all twinning links, times have moved on and twinning, like all other aspects of society, must reflect current trends and priorities.

Giving people what they want

Consulting within the community and inviting suggestions for activities can only help make a link more appealing to local people. Involving a wide range of members of the local population directly in designing and running projects can make a difference to how people feel about a link.

Giving young people a voice

To get young people involved, a link should include activities that interest them. Computer projects such as cyber cafés and website creation are popular. Sporting and musical events tend to attract young people, as do certain work experience and training related activities. Young people should have a say in what activities will be part of a link's programme of events and should be involved at every step.

Targeting new members

If particular groups within a community are not represented in twinning activities, they can be targeted directly. Information about the link should be publicised as widely as possible, in leisure centres, libraries, community halls and local authority buildings.

Marketing and rebranding links

In an age when manufacturers are happy to jettison familiar product names for younger, slicker or more international names, twinning organisers needn't be afraid to do the same with a link. Although twinning is an accepted moniker for international links, some people may be confused by it or think of it negatively. Renaming or rebranding a link to make its aims and objectives easier to understand can help overcome this.

New partnerships overseas

It is worth considering setting up a link with a developing country or one of the EU's new Member States from Central and Eastern Europe. Alternatively, a three way partnership with an existing partner and another country may prove attractive, especially if the two overseas countries have traditionally been at odds with each other and the partnership can help improve their understanding of each other.

New partnerships at home

As part of the re-energising process, organisers can use the opportunity to look for new partners or sponsors within the local community, such as large businesses or academic institutions. This is an ideal opportunity to make new alliances at home.



The steps of twinning

The following are the key stages in setting up a partnership:

Step one: Find a partner

Ensure compatibility by making an exploratory visit. Check that you have enough in common to sustain a relationship. Decide on the type of relationship you seek: formal/informal/time limited/focused on one issue. Set out the initial possibilities for joint activities.

Step two: Formalise the relationship

Make the relationship official through a charter or agreement. Agree a strategy or work plan for your activities and projects with your partner, together with funding possibilities and a flexible timetable. Communicate your aims and objectives to secure support and involvement by politicians, council officers and the wider community and invite input.

The strategic plan should consist of three sections:

1. the aims and objectives of the partnership, encompassing all components of the organisation and community;
2. a methodology, explaining how the aims and objectives will be achieved; and
3. a list of desired outcomes and benefits, providing a starting point for reviewing and evaluating the project.

The plan should be accompanied by a flexible timetable, with deadlines for activities and a list of both the resources available and those required.

It is possible that each partner could have different aims for a link, but as long as there were broad agreement, it should be possible for both sets of objectives and projects to be undertaken. A strategic plan will not only ensure that participants have a clear idea about the purpose of the partnership, but would also serve to inform other people about the partnership for the purposes of transparency and bring new participants on board.

Step three: Augment the partnership

Set a schedule for activities. Assign responsibilities for each function. Plan, consult and inform.

Step four: Follow up

Monitor activities, review procedures and improve as necessary. Continue to communicate aims, objectives and achievements to the wider community.

Example: Link with France

Aims

1. To forge educational links, relating to the teaching of modern foreign languages and the authority's objective to introduce French to primary schools.
2. To promote cooperation between small businesses.

Methodology

1. Organise a seminar for teachers on funding opportunities from the British Council.
2. Include teaching staff on next exchange visit to France.
3. Organise a programme of visits to local schools by next incoming French delegation.

Outcomes

1. To develop ten friendship links by the end of year.
2. To develop four EU funded projects for schools, under the Comenius programme.

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Twinning and young people

Overseas partnerships and twinning links within a community are good ways of broadening the minds of young people. They can either take place through formal institutions, such as schools and colleges, through voluntary social groups, such as youth clubs and scout groups, or through local youth councils.

Although some schools and colleges take part in successful exchanges outside of twinning links, there are many additional benefits to be gained by developing a partnership within an existing local authority link. The range of contacts can be extensive and diverse, involving a broad representation of the community at all levels. This provides enormous scope for different projects. A twinning link is also timeless and is not dependent upon one person. Some school links have faltered after the staff member responsible for an exchange has left.

Participating in an exchange can contribute directly to many subjects within the national curriculum, making learning more fun and relevant. Living in a different country can also increase self-confidence and practical skills, through experiences such as using new forms of transport and visiting shops and restaurants where a different language is spoken.

Exchange visits can increase young people's awareness of citizenship by giving first hand experience of the way in which other societies function. Through direct contact with young people from other countries, national stereotyping can be overcome and replaced by tolerance and respect for other cultures.

Finally, young people need to develop the skills required in later life to compete with their counterparts from across the globe for jobs in other countries or with organisations that are owned or managed by people from different cultures.

Safety issues

The safety of young people on an exchange visit is of paramount importance. Parents or guardians on both sides must give their written consent for all children taking part. This is important not only for particular activities such as work experience or sports, but also for times when the young people are travelling or are unsupervised and for outside normal school hours.

The safety of young people is a complex issue and there are many sources of advice on this subject, ranging from Social Services Child Protection Units and the police, to local education authorities, school governing bodies and voluntary organisations such as the Guide Association. When children and young people are involved in international activities, there must be an agreed policy, and advice must be taken from the appropriate bodies.

The level and nature of a local authority's relationship with the education sector will vary depending on whether it has direct responsibility for education and is therefore able to influence the way in which the European and international dimension is covered in schools.

Youth democracy

Local democracy is not just about getting involved in what's happening on people's own doorsteps. Most local issues have a global dimension and young people have a lot to say about how the world is run, although they are increasingly uninterested in taking part in mainstream politics.

Taking part in local authority partnerships and twinning links is an excellent way of raising the issue of local democracy and providing more information to young people. For more information on young people and local democracy, visit:

[Making Your Global Mark](#)

Useful links

- [The British Council's Education and Training Section](#)
- [Connect Youth International](#)
- [The Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council](#)
- [Development Education Association](#)



Visits and exchanges

General advice for travelling overseas and for preparing for exchange visits can be found from the following sources.

Foreign Office Travel Advice

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) produce [travel advice bulletins](#) relating to political risks and health requirements for individual countries. It is advisable to check the travel advice each time travel is planned.

Foreign Embassies and High Commissions

Most countries are represented in the UK by [Foreign Embassies and High Commissions](#) (for Commonwealth countries). They are useful contacts for specific information on the country in question and also provide the necessary visas for entry into the country.

UK Representation Overseas

UK Embassies and High Commissions are often interested in local authority or community links and may appreciate receiving information about any visits. Click here to locate [UK representation overseas](#).

Department for International Development

The Department for International Development (DfID) produces [country strategy papers](#) for the developing countries in which they run programmes, setting out the DfID priorities for the country. These are particularly useful for local authorities engaging in technical project work.

Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform

The Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) produces informative [country guides for businesses](#) that are hoping to trade or invest overseas. To find out if there is a guide available for the country that you are linked with contact the BERR enquiry point and ask to speak to the country desk.

National Tourism Offices

Many countries have national tourism offices, usually based in London, who will, on request, be able to provide general information about the country or even the specific area to be visited.

Medical Advice

It is recommended that medical advice is sought from your GP in advance of travelling. If GPs do not administer the specific vaccinations needed it may be necessary to visit a Travel Clinic for help and advice.

Insurance

Insurance cover should be obtained in all cases and for all activities.

Local authorities should inform their legal and/or insurance sections of all international link and twinning activities both at home and overseas, to ensure that adequate cover exists to include travelling, all activities and events and public liability insurance. This applies to all categories of personnel - officers, elected members and school children.

Twinning associations should also seek professional advice about all forms of insurance cover. Additional insurance cover is often required for countries where the FCO has issued travel warnings (see above).

Health and safety

Local authorities may also wish to consult with Health and Safety Officers on various aspects of local activities and events.

When children and young people are involved in transnational and twinning activities, there should be an agreed policy, and advice should always be taken from the appropriate bodies.



LGA Database of twinning towns

The database of twinning towns is currently being re-developed. In the meantime you can download a complete up-to-date list of towns below.

[Twinning links table - July 2008 \(PDF, 71 pages, 644KB\)](#)

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