

## 2.10 Ending a Link

### In this Chapter:

- Six reasons for Link inactivity (and how these can be avoided)
- Ending a Link (but maintaining a good relationship)

**The enthusiasm with which a Link starts may not last throughout its lifetime. Changes in circumstances or a long period of inactivity may lead one or both partners to consider ending the Link.**

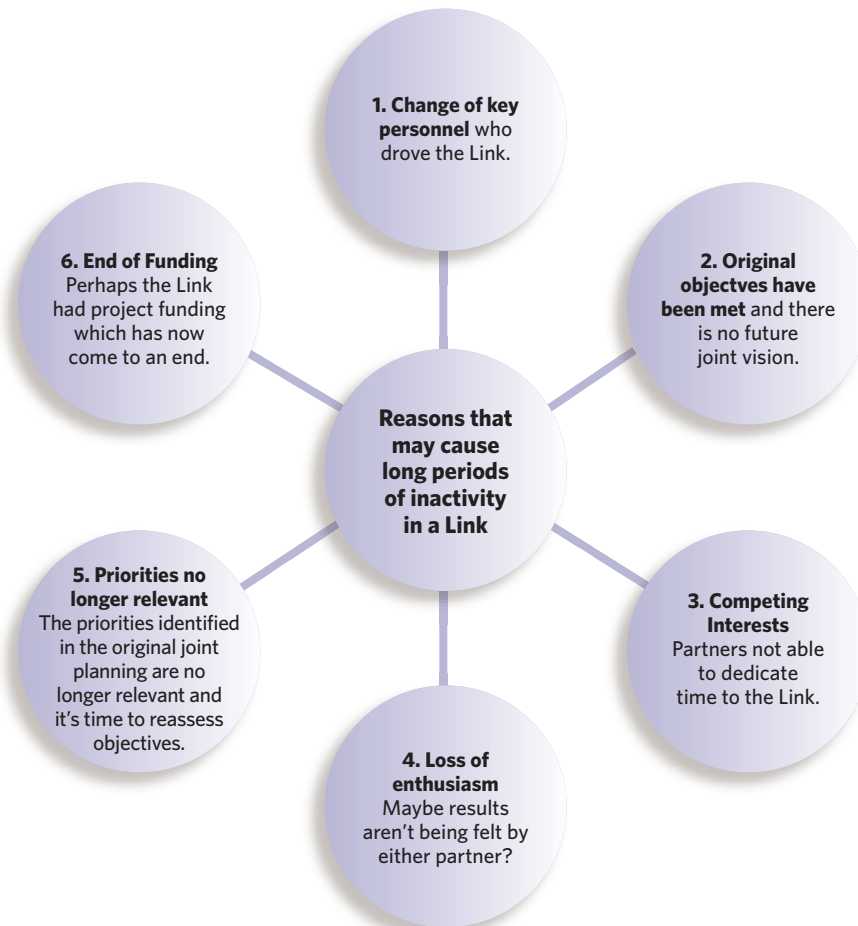
**This Chapter looks at some of the reasons why a Link may become defunct and how these situations could be avoided. Perhaps the Link was established with set objectives or timeframes in mind which are then achieved. If you do decide that it is right to end your Link, this Chapter suggests some good practice for how this can be done.**

## 2.10 Ending a Link

### Six reasons for Link inactivity (and how these can be avoided)

It is easy to be enthusiastic at the start of a Link. As the DC partner, this might signify opportunities for staff development, changes at your place of work and benefits to patients. As a UK partner you may feel that this is your opportunity to make a difference and be involved in exciting work with colleagues overseas.

Sometimes this enthusiasm does not last. This does not necessarily mean that you should end the Link - in fact some of the longest running Links have had long periods of inactivity or lapses in communication. Do not become despondent too soon. However, it is useful to identify some of the reasons which may lead one or both partners to think about ending the Link and look at how these situations can be avoided in the first place:



## 2.10 Ending a Link



### REMEMBER!

A lack of communication between partners is the main factor that can strain the Link relationship. Each partner's perceptions of the cause of the silence may be different. The DC partner may be waiting for a response on an issue from the UK partner, who may in turn be waiting for a communication from the DC partner.

While the distance between you may be large, it is very easy to get in contact if you establish the best methods of communication (see section on communication in p52). If you allow communication to stop, the Link will be in peril. It is best to make a phone call if there has been a lack of communication.

REASON FOR CHANGE IN CIRCUMSTANCES	HOW COULD THIS HAVE BEEN AVOIDED?
<p>Change in key personnel</p>	<p>Ensure that several people are involved in the Link at both ends and people with specific responsibilities work in teams rather than individually. The loss of a very active and motivated person will be felt, but this will be reduced if their work can easily be taken up by someone else.</p> <p>The more established the Link is, the more it is embedded in the work of the organisation and the less likely a change of personnel will affect it. Formal agreement of a Trust Board or Governors will help ensure a Link continues to be supported when key senior managers move on.</p> <p>Changes at a management level from someone who has been very supportive of the Link to someone who is not, will have a greater impact.</p>
<p>Achieved original objectives or priorities</p>	<p>If the Link was set up to achieve specific outcomes which have now been achieved, and little follow-up planning has taken place, the Link may find itself without a clear vision.</p> <p>It is time to carry out a review and see what has gone well and start planning afresh for the future. Alternatively, perhaps the Link has done its work and is no longer needed. If so, end it well with a celebration of achievements for both parties.</p>
<p>Competing interests</p>	<p>Maybe your organisation has another Link which is achieving more, or takes up more time. Perhaps management has decided that other priorities mean the Link cannot continue. When engaging in a Link ensure that it has a purpose and objectives of its own so that its outcomes will be equally important.</p>
<p>Loss of enthusiasm</p>	<p>Not meeting expectations or not being able to see the impact the Link is having are the most common ways for one or both parties to lose interest in the Link. Make sure objectives are SMART (see Chapter 2.2) and do not be too over-ambitious at the start of the Link. Manage the expectations of your partners (this applies both to UK and DC partners) and remember that it is always better to under-promise and over-deliver than to overpromise and lose enthusiasm.</p>
<p>Priorities no longer relevant</p>	<p>Perhaps the priorities identified during the initial planning are no longer relevant or there has been a change in the national health policy. This may require another joint planning session to update plans and priorities.</p>
<p>End of funding</p>	<p>If the Link has project funding, make plans for when this will end so that the end of this funding does not mean the end of the Link. Continue with fundraising activities even while the Link is financially secure.</p>

## 2.10 Ending a Link

### Ending a Link (but maintaining a good relationship)

If a Link has been inactive for a long period of time, and no joint vision or action has emerged even through communication, there are two choices: to resolve it or to end it.

If one or both partners decide they want to end the relationship, what is the most responsible way of doing it?

- **Communicate** with your partners and discuss the reasons for wanting to end the Link.
- **Reflect on the achievements** of the Link and any other aims that partners had hoped to achieve but have not done so.
- If the DC partner still has needs that can be addressed by a Link, but not by the current partner, these should be discussed. The UK partner may be able to broker a new Link with a relevant UK organisation, and share documents and experience to ensure a smoother transition. Consider whether the UK partner also wants to make a new Link.
- Inform any third parties who have been involved so they are aware that the Link has come to an end.
- If you had a Memorandum of Understanding, make an addendum to it which highlights the termination of your relationship.



#### REMEMBER!

An inactive Link does not necessarily mean that it needs to be ended. Some of the longest running or most successful Links have had periods of inactivity. A Link should be able to respond to the needs of the DC partner, and if no joint vision exists at that time, the Link may lie dormant until the need arises. As long as the communication channels remain open between partners, this is not a problem.



#### CHAPTER CHECKLIST

- ✓ Consider some of the risks your Link may face and take measures to avoid them.
- ✓ Periods of inactivity do not mean that the Link needs to be ended, but make sure that the communication channels remain open.
- ✓ Communication is the key to good Link relationships. Ensure that there are no communication bottlenecks holding up your work.
- ✓ End a Link responsibly: discuss future needs with partners and inform relevant parties.
- ✓ The UK partner should discuss the needs of the DC partner and help them to broker a new Link with another organisation if appropriate.