



The key to effective partnerships

echelon operates as a trusted independent critical friend in its role as partnering advisor organisations across the housing sector. Our mission is to help mobilise and improve the relationship between client and contractor partners.

Why is a partnering advisor important? A partnering advisor is there to offer impartial advice to both parties while bringing in valuable external input. Intervention during dispute is an element of the role but ideally a partnering advisor will facilitate the relationship in a way that avoids dispute at the outset by promoting collaborative working and identifying mutual objectives.



At echelon, we complete a 360 review of the partner relationships and what emerges from that forms the challenge around improvement: what is working, what's not, what can be improved.



We use a common-sense approach based on the results of the 360 review – this is where an impartial, independent standpoint is invaluable. Anonymous feedback is brought to the table to be discussed sensitively and so any mismatch in perception can be addressed.

The impartiality of the partnering advisor role takes the emotion out of discussions. Even without any issues, a housing organisation with a social agenda and a contractor with a commercial agenda may need someone to speak a common language and echelon is able to sit between the two parties, review the facts impartially and use its industry knowledge to help both parties reach a fair and practical solution. Rather than dictating a solution we prefer to help the two parties to work together as this will stand them in good stead in terms of their future relationship.

Fundamentally, the central tenet of the partnering advisor role is to safeguard contractual governance and ensure that KPI and commercial performance are in order. The social

housing white paper's new guidance on landlords being held accountable for the performance of their contractors, for example, emphasises the importance to every organisation of this scrutineering aspect of the partnering advisor role. Many of our clients also report that simply having access to general help and independent guidance at the end of a phone is equally as important.

We have many long-term relationships with clients in our role as partnering advisor. We work with Origin Housing across a suite of contracts, we have advised Basildon, Croydon and Brentwood Councils for some years on partnerships that we helped them procure and Stonewater is a very new client which is already seeing the benefits of our approach.

To find out more contact us at
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"echelon has worked with us through the whole life cycle of this contract, from scoping requirements and facilitating the procurement process through to mobilising the new contract and supporting its ongoing success. So, they really understand both the 'hard' requirements of the contract and commercials but have also worked with us to develop a positive three-way relationship with Basildon BC and its partner contractor, built on mutual respect and trust."

**Peter Long, Property Services Delivery Manager,
Basildon Borough Council**

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