

Partnership Agreements in Britain 1990-2007

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What are partnership agreements?

- Partnership Agreements – formal and authoritative written agreements between employers and unions with unions accepting changes in return for enhanced union input into decision-making and mutual gains
- Widely assumed few partnership agreements will be adopted
- Most agreements will fail



Outline

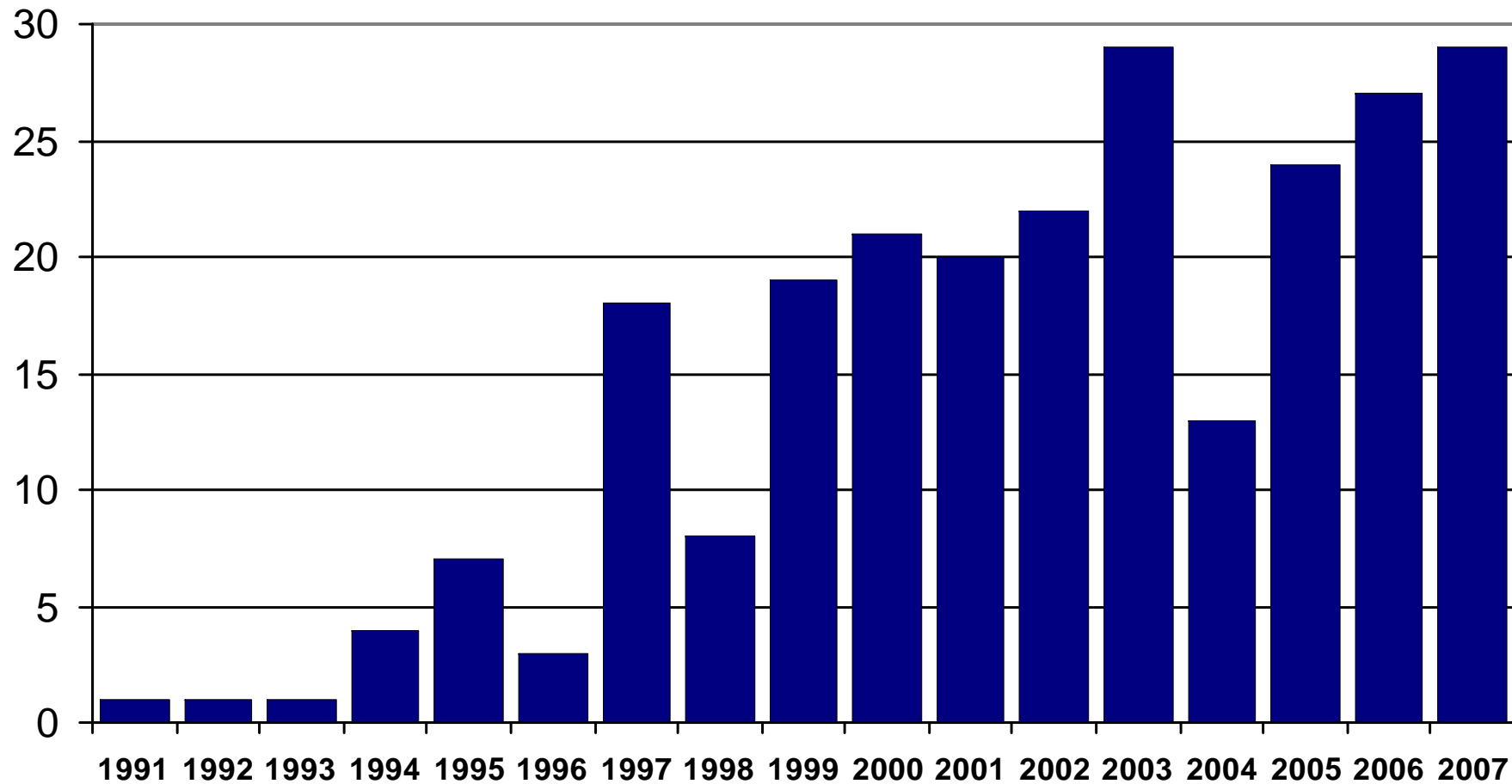
- How many agreements have been adopted in Britain?
- Do they survive?
- What do partnership agreements contain?
- Key issues

Partnership Agreements 1990-2007

- c.400 potential 'partnerships' in Britain
- 248 actual partnership agreements signed 1990-2007
 - Cover one-in-ten British employees by 2007
 - Cover one-in-three public sector employees

Adoption: by year

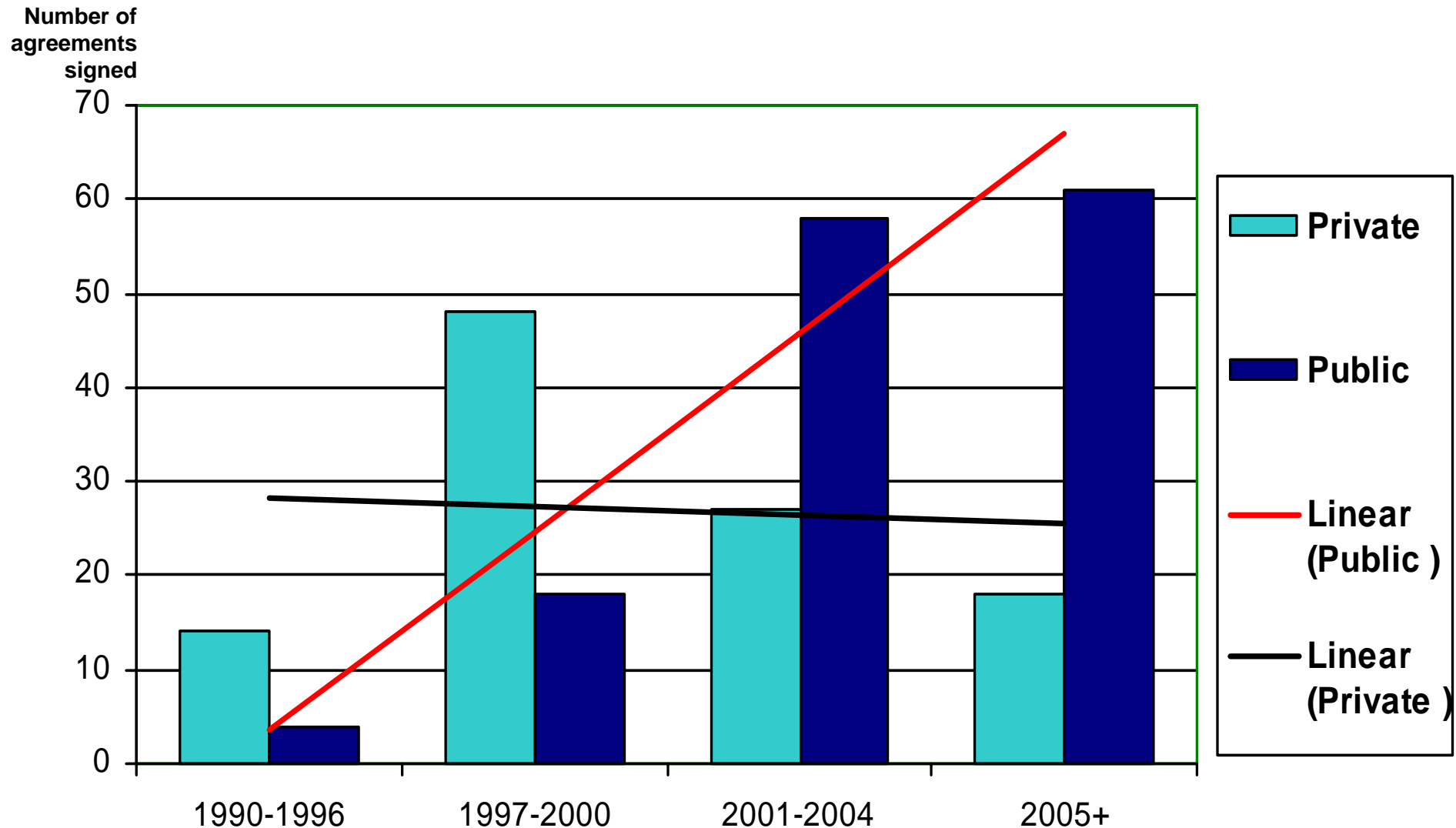
Number of
Signings



Adoption: by Government term

Pre-New Labour (1990-1996)	18
First Term (1997-2000)	66
Second Term (2001-2004)	85
Third Term (2005-ongoing)	79
Total	248

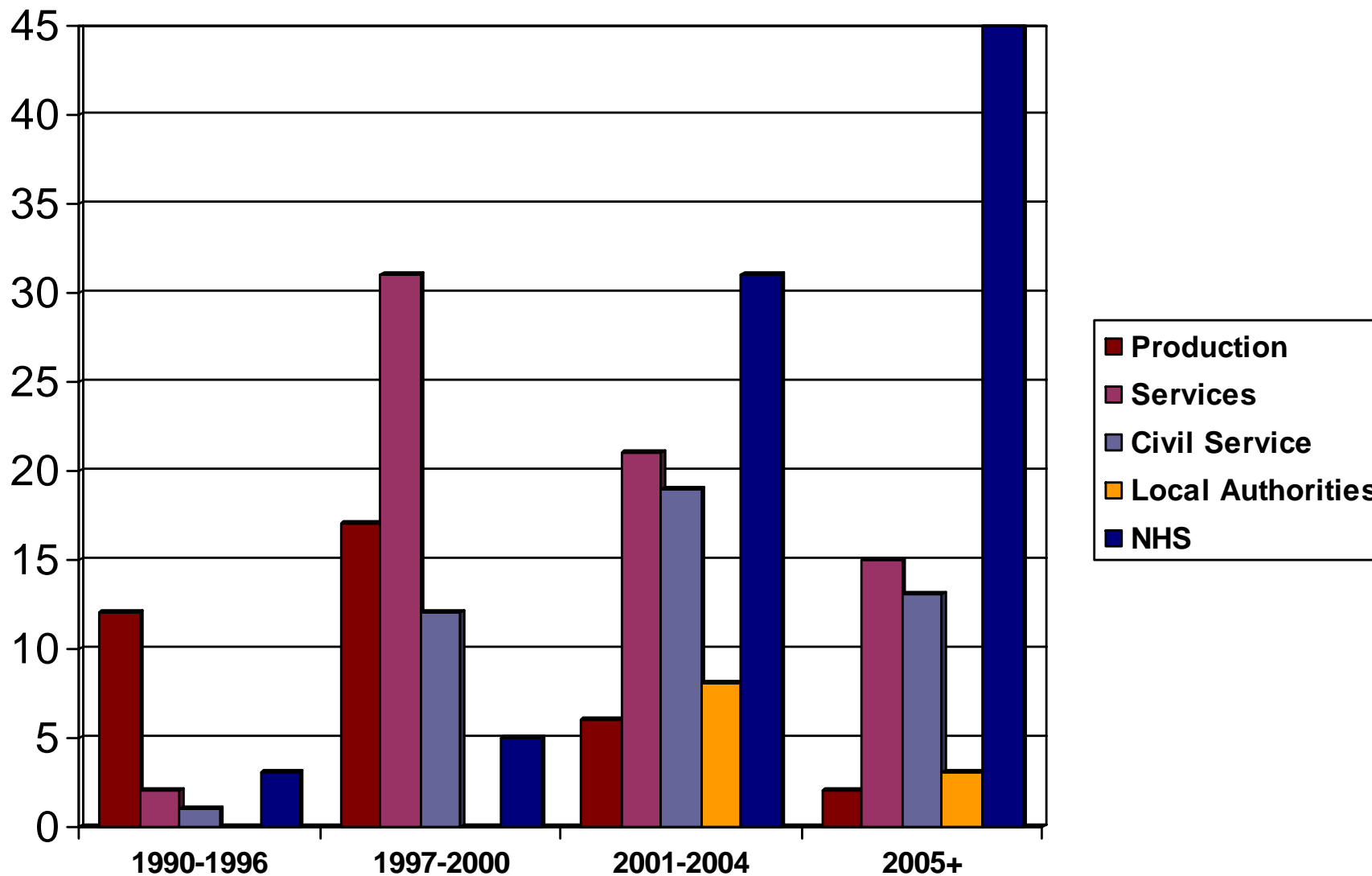
Public and private sectors





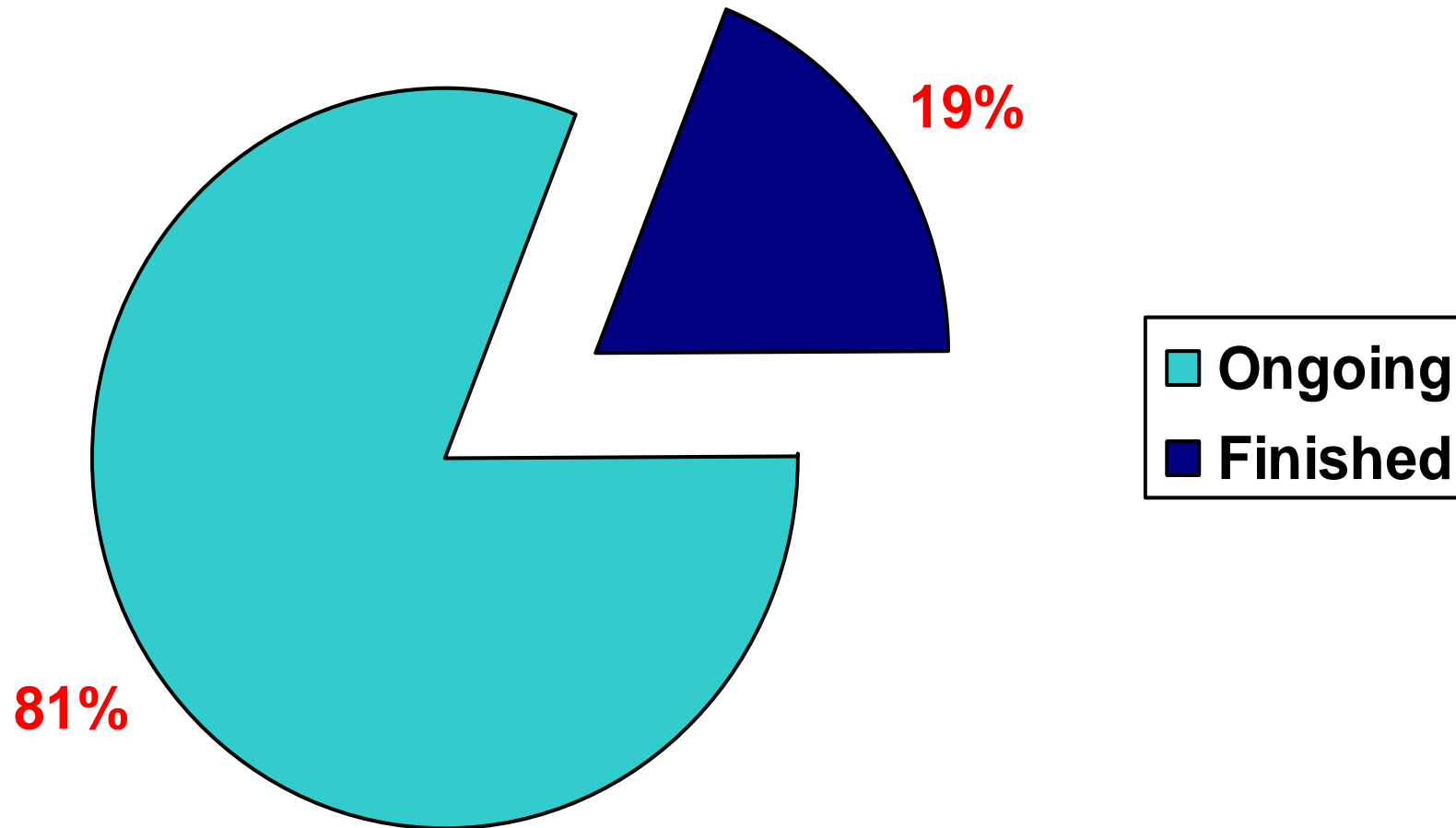
Increase in NHS partnership agreements

Number of Signings





Partnership Agreement Survival 1990-2007



Reasons Agreements Finish

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Restructuring completed	12
Takeover/merger	9
Employer defection	8
Closure	7
Union defection	3
Jointly abandoned	3
New Agreement	4
Contract lost	1



Public sector agreements survive

	Private	Public
<i>Ongoing</i>	71	130
<i>Finished</i>	36	11
<i>Total</i>	107	141



Summary

- Growth in public sector agreements
- Agreements survive and are here to stay - mortality highest in “exposed” industries
- Threats from restructuring, takeover/merger and closure
- But what do these agreements contain?

Principles in 127 agreements

TUC & IPA Principles

%

Commitment to success of organisation **91**

Building trust through greater staff involvement **56**

Recognition and respect for legitimate role of employer and unions **52**

Commitment to employment security **21**

Focus on quality of working life **16**

Sharing financial success with employees **11**

Exchanging flexibly working for job security **11**

Content of agreements

- Few partnership agreements reflect most TUC or IPA principles
- Few agreements provide job security or share gains
- Many agreements are substantively hollow
- Union security agreements?

Most are procedural agreements

- Nearly all (90%) contain procedural clauses:
 - 91% contain cooperative statements of intent
 - 82% accord unions right to input into management decisions (joint consultation at an early stage)
 - 68% formally establish consultation machinery
 - 61% accord unions' bargaining rights
 - Majority specify employers facilities available to unions
 - Few specify disputes procedures - only five no-strike deals
- Most agreements *procedurally biased* –
- More signed and more survive than expected because they contain relatively little change

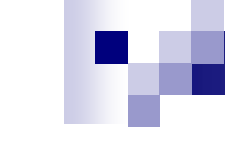
Summary

- Partnership agreements increasingly a public sector phenomena
- Most survive
- Few agreements match TUC or IPA principles with a strong procedural bias
- Substantive outcomes (job security, pay and conditions) unlikely to differ from non-partnership organisations



Key tensions

- Can partnership agreements help modernise public service delivery without substantive commitments?
- Most NHS agreements are procedural and lack union commitment to specific changes or employer promises to share gains in return.
- Do managers and unions trust each other to deliver such commitments?

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- Political changes alter the balance of power in public sector partnership agreements. Managers feel unions go direct to the Labour Party. Unions feel managers hide behind 'Trust freedoms'.
 - What is done in partnership and what involves partnership 'being done to us'?
 - Are the key decisions made in partnership forums or outside these forums?
 - How does local partnership integrate with national-level partnership?