

Multiagency Working:
what is it and how do we make it work in
the context of *For Scotland's Children*?

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Acknowledgements and Forward

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“The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”

Confucius

I'm not conversant enough with ancient Chinese philosophy in order to pass comment whether or not Confucius, or was it really Chairman Mao, when uttering the above was speaking in metaphor. I can however assure you the reader that this PDP Group took many a step intellectually, organisationally and geographically. The latter is with special reference to the number of miles covered by the group, especially the two members who came from the South and North of Scotland. Hopefully you will also accept that in their investigation of working together this group also travelled well overtime by taking account of the routes to and through collaborative working within a Scottish based framework.

In the beginning when the group assembled at Pitlochry in May 2003 we heard from Bill Alexander, Head of Service - Children, Young People and Families, N.H.S. Highland and Highland Council. Bill explained how through a three service appointment, Health, Social Work and Education had developed their model of working together and how it was financed and delivered to local communities in the Highlands.

The presentation by Bill Alexander, on “Joining Up Services For Highland Children,” was given to the entire audience assembled for the PDP Start-up Conference, not just the Multiagency Working Group and was inspirational and of great interest. He laid out the way in which his home area had combined the support budgets of 3 agencies - Health, Social Work and Education, and placed them under his stewardship. This in turn was worked up into a mechanism that delivered services via a chain of area and local groupings of nominated professionals and voluntary agencies who worked collaboratively in trying to meet the needs of young people in the Highlands. The needs of these young people could be addressed individually or collectively. Inspired by this presentation the Multiagency Working Group set forth on journey of discovery. But who are these intrepid adventurers? The eight group members came from the length and possibly the breadth of Scotland; - Bernadette Cairns, Highland Council, Frank Savage, Perth and Kinross Council; Grethe Thompson, City of Dundee Council; Shona Munro, Fife Council; Nick Balchin, Falkirk Council; Peter Moore, initially with Glasgow now with South Ayrshire Council; Brian Steele, North Lanarkshire Council, and finally, Linda Biggar from Dumfries And Galloway.

Over the period of the Start-up Conference the group borrowing from the principles of a Solution Focused approach set out a number of key issues they wished to address, in areas such as:

- the background to the collaborative approach and a rationale for its study
- what are the theoretical considerations in collaborative working
- set out some practical examples of collaborative work in operation
- establish what the views of the professionals working collaboratively are
- produce a possible model to assist in the development of collaborative practice
- pilot this model

Though set out in the order addressed in the article that follows anyone involved in action research that has to take place within a restricted time frame will be aware there was much discussion and pulling together of emerging headings in order to arrive at the action plan for the group.

The PDP Group in this paper set out their thoughts embedded in the history of working together in Scotland. They understandably take account of The Kilbrandon Report, (1964), a document acknowledged for its clear presentation and influence on support given to children and young people in Scotland. This report though written 30 years ago has been reprinted twice, and can be found on the Scottish Executive's website. The group also kept to the fore the brief they were given that needed to set out their work within the context of For Scotland's Children, and the subsequent action plan published in 2001. There was also examination and note taken of the research and academic literature on collaborative, multi-agency working. The published contributions of Kathryn Tomlinson, and Mary Atkinson et al plus that of plus Prof. Huxham, Chair of the MBA programme at The University of Strathclyde were found to be of particular help in framing the group's thoughts. This was especially the case in establishing key elements and themes which needed further examination with managers and practitioners involved in drawing up policy and implementing working together on the ground.

In collecting the data for this project group members interviewed the senior officer or officers in their home authority with responsibility for Children Services Planning and interviewed them using a structured questionnaire. There was particular reference to how "For Scotland's Children" has been developed and implemented in their area, in order to determine what this group perceived were the key factors in collaborative working, and to determine if common themes existed or not. Two of the group gave themselves a very long, but useful day by flying to and from London to attend a conference being run by The Tavistock Institute with the title

of *The Ties That Bind*. This day's programme explored how there could be effective inter-organisational and cross boundary working. The Multiagency Group also through planning ahead was able to present at the annual conference for Educational Psychologists in Scotland in Sept 2003 at The Heriot Watt University. Via this presentation they were able to obtain the views of a group of practicing educational psychologists in what was seen to be the elements that helped develop collaborative work or acted as barriers. The research team also established links with a sizeable group of professional and voluntary agencies working together within a local authority in Scotland. This group were most helpful in sharing with the team their views on how to work together. Towards the end of the study this group of professional and voluntary agency representatives, now augmented by parental representatives, helped the research team in the piloting of the model set out in this paper.

The group also drew up a model that would also provide any agency, not just those from an educational background, a tool to use as part of a preparation programme to assist the development of collaborative working.

As is often the case, as anyone who has taken part in research will know, protocol demands that some sources have to remain anonymous. Although they remain unnamed the group and myself give our sincere thanks and fully appreciate the time given by all the individuals contacted in the collection of data and formulation of this paper. Although it is not possible to mention them individually by name it would be derelict of me not to thank especially on behalf of the group the individuals who formed what became their multiagency focus group. This thanks is sent especially to those individuals who worked with the group over both sessions. The information given was of key importance in the collection of data on how to make collaborative practice work. As this group consisted of professionals from many disciplines and agencies plus voluntary groups and parental representation the group are able to state that they worked collaboratively. The information given by the senior officers in local authorities who were interviewed by group members is also acknowledged. It is always of interest to have the view from the bridge. Thanks is also given to Jim Kane, Senior Educational Psychologist, Highland Council for his unique contribution to the project, acting as facilitator during a session when the group was working with their multiagency focus group. The willingness also of the Principal Psychologists in the councils represented in this study to release members of their staff is also appreciated.

Though a paraphrase from another context, the key message for me as an interested observer of the groups work can be summarised — once the finances are sorted out the multidisciplinary team that trains together will work together.

Appendices 6 and 7 are included on the CD-ROM which accompanies the Yellow Folder containing this booklet. Appendix 7 is in the form of a PowerPoint presentation entitled *Dancing in the Dark*. This material can be freely adapted and edited to meet specific training needs.

A list of participants with contact details is provided at the end of this booklet. If further information is required, the relevant participant(s) should be contacted directly.

1. Introduction

The starting point for this study was 'For Scotland's Children' (FSC), (2001) a report commissioned by the Scottish Executive in its drive to improve services for children, especially those who are most disadvantaged. The premise of the Report is that outcomes for children will be better if all agencies concerned work together to integrate services. FSC calls on 'universal' services, such as health and education directed at all of the population, along with targeted services, such as social work and voluntary agencies serving selected groups, to jointly address the extent of children's needs detailed within the Report (FSC, 2001).

1.1 Background

Over the past two decades there has been a growing impetus for interagency working, with recent legislation and policy initiatives encouraging and directing agencies to work together in the interests of children and their families. In some situations, this has added to the complexity of interagency working.

The history of the drive towards working together goes back to the late 1950s and early 1960s. The 'Kilbrandon Committee Report' (Scottish Office, 1964) considered the relationship between social work and education and suggested the formation of social education departments to manage social work and education services in an integrated fashion.

While this was never implemented, interagency youth strategies emerged in the 1980s, for example Strathclyde Region's, 'Young People In Trouble' (Strathclyde Regional Council, 1988).

'Young People in Trouble' aimed to:

- promote collaboration between agencies
- encourage professionals to work together
- develop use of local school and community resources
- emphasise the value of positive aims and attitudes
- highlight preventative aspects of intervention
- ensure early identification but avoid escalation into more intrusive interventions
- create a continuum of appropriate provision

This approach consisted of providing in-service to schools, including an element of appreciating the roles of other agencies, and dealing with stereotypical views of other agencies. It also recommended that schools develop links with relevant social work teams, put in place strategies for achieving joint assessment of needs, and mount joint training

activities. Several of these aspects feature in current strategies and are included in legislation such as the Children (Scotland) Act (1995).

The 'Young People in Trouble' report noted that simply bringing people together in a group for training is not sufficient. There is also a need for shared expectation, avoidance of status issues, good chairing of meetings, and awareness of group processes and dynamics.

With regard to current Scottish Executive legislation related to children, Tomlinson (2003) traces recent developments stemming from a philosophy drawn from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This was ratified in the UK in 1991. Tomlinson (2003) advises (p3) that the White Paper 'Scotland's Children' (Scottish Office, 1994) based several of its principles on these rights and quotes one with particular relevance for the approach of agencies in supporting children:

Any intervention in the life of a child, including the provision of supportive services should be based on collaboration between relevant agencies.

(Scottish Office, 1994)

This was taken forward in the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 which required councils to put in place Children's Services Plans. These were designed to encourage co-operation between local authorities and other statutory and voluntary organisations involved in identifying and meeting children's needs. The Act also gave young people the right to express their views on matters which affect them, and there is a duty on agencies to take account of those views. Consultation with children as part of policy formulation has subsequently been very much on the political agenda.

FSC describes further steps in the process of developing collaboration between services. These include the establishment of a Children's Issues Unit in 1997 (FSC, p44) by the Scottish Office prior to Devolution, and the formation of a Children's and Young Person's Group emphasising joint working and better integration of policy across the executive.

In addition a Child Strategy Statement (FSC, pp44, 51) was introduced to ensure that the interests of children are taken into account throughout the activities of the Executive. The Scottish Executive Policy Unit publication, 'Making a Difference: Effective Implementation of Cross-cutting Policy' (2000), (FSC pp50, 67) encouraged joined-up government in terms of consultation with service providers before policies are enacted, as well as the working together of services once policy is in place.

The emphasis in FSC on integrated working from the earliest stages of a child's life is illustrated in the introduction of 'Making it Work Together – A Programme for Government':
Getting it right in the early years lays the foundation for the whole life of the child.

(FSC, p49)

Two recent Scottish Executive reports have looked at different initiatives with a multi-agency component and have highlighted the complex nature of the tasks of integrated working, and some key common themes which will be explored later.

1. New Community Schools Pilot Programme in Scotland (Scottish Executive Education Department, Insight 7, 2003)
2. Sure Start Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2003).

In addition to existing legislation which supports multi-agency working, the Additional Support for Learning (Scotland) Bill which was introduced to the Scottish Parliament in 2003, places great emphasis on integrated services. Under the proposed legislation, education authorities must seek and take account of the involvement of other agencies such as health and social work services. This information may be incorporated into a co-ordinated support plan which would facilitate all appropriate services working together with the young person and his/her family to prepare, deliver and review the plan and, in time, to consider post-school transition.

The legislation, policies and statements from Government and Executive indicating the preferred direction of services for children provide a strong thrust towards agencies working in a more integrated fashion on behalf of children from the earliest stages of life. Within these documents there is justification on moral, philosophical and economic grounds, and on the basis that it will lead to a positive impact on the lives of *all* children, but particularly the most needy.

With the weight of UK and Scottish legislation, together with the sense that it is a positive approach, the requirement for effective multi-agency working in the future delivery of children's services is now explicit. The challenge is to be aware of the potential difficulties associated with this approach, to identify ways in which these difficulties can be overcome, and to promote successful practice that results in better outcomes.

1.2 The 'For Scotland's Children' Report

The Report suggests that children's services should be so arranged as to reduce inequalities, both for those in a disadvantaged position from birth, and those who become disadvantaged as they grow into adulthood (p16).

In addition to the legislation and reports previously cited, the impetus towards integrated working as outlined in FSC, has a number of sources and follows on logically from the outcomes of previous initiatives such as:

- Sure Start Scotland
- New Community Schools
- Social Inclusion Partnerships
- organisational change within local authorities
- Best Value Reviews that require agencies to work together to address common issues
- legislation regarding rights of the child, and the general drive for service improvement.

A major concern regarding service delivery comes from the findings of consultations with service users. While they would appreciate early information sharing and communication between agencies, service users reported that on occasion some agencies appear unaware of the actions of others and that they experienced services pulling in different directions (p22). There is criticism of agencies for failing to be responsive, or to work together at an early stage to help prevent subsequent crises (pp45, 99, 100). A main reason given for this is that currently, services are often chaotic and close to crisis themselves, a circumstance which in itself requires change (p105).

Other barriers to effective intervention are described as lack of coherent policy development, lack of availability of reliable information on need, insufficient resources and various short-term funding streams, fragmentation of services due to constant changes, and failure to work in partnership (p32).

There is also criticism (pp40, 41) regarding the failure to intervene effectively to prevent the cycles of inequality identified in research as far back as the early 1970s (Wedge and Prosser, 1973).

FSC also stresses the need for children and families to be central to planning and processes, for the actions of one agency to be considered in terms of the effects on other agencies, and on the relationships between agencies, as well as on the clients. It requires that services,

which at first sight may not be directed at children and families, should include an analysis of the impact their policies will have on children.

While advocating joined-up working, 'For Scotland's Children' also argues that to make a real difference for children, adequate resources, training, and changes in practice will be required.

'For Scotland's Children' recognises that children have a number of human rights developed formally through the United Nations' Convention (pp19, 43). These are rights to participation, protection, prevention of harm, and provision of services. It suggests that these Rights should be the key to encouraging children and families to have a more optimistic view of the world and of the possibility of influencing positive change and improving their circumstances (p42). Children should be seen as active agents and their empowerment should be viewed as a means to change or recovery in their life situation. We are reminded also that each child is an individual and that his/her life requires to be seen in a holistic manner.

An Action Plan is proposed (pp74-103) with the child and family at the centre of a single Children's Services System providing straightforward access to the appropriate supports. There is an expectation that Children's Services Plans would be established to promote this system at operational and strategic levels and to ensure that services are responsive to need, are readily available, and track children's progress as they grow up. However the Report does not state that creating a Children's Services system always requires a restructuring to merge appropriate departments. The purpose is to create the experience of a comprehensive service while recognising that geographical, contextual and other factors may mean different local solutions (p74).

The voluntary and independent sectors are also seen as important providers (p35). Planners need to take this into account and ensure access routes are clear.

There is a clear expectation that all agencies providing services to children should be working more closely together. The current challenge in implementation is in bringing together different service providers with diverse organisational structures, working practices, communications systems, data management systems, cultures and aims, into a coherent cooperative framework.

1.3 Terminology

A number of labels have been applied to the process of different professionals doing some kind of common work including:

- collaborative working
- joint working
- inter-agency working
- intra-agency working
- trans-agency working
- trans-disciplinary working
- multi-disciplinary working
- partnership working

Some of the above terms are discussed in (Atkinson et al, 2003), with a concluding comment that “there might be a value in refining descriptors and vocabulary associated with inter-agency activity, to advance general awareness and understanding of its processes and outcomes”.

With such a profusion of terms, each with rather different meanings or a different emphasis, it is important to establish a common understanding of what is meant by multi-agency working.

Although the title provided for this study included the term, ‘multi-agency working’, it is noted that ‘For Scotland’s Children’ itself makes much greater use of the term, ‘integrated approach’. This implies more than working together at operational levels through occasional meetings about particular children, but a deeper relationship and common or shared aims. The use of the term ‘integrated approach’ allows the inclusion of children and families, voluntary organisations, community groups etc, as part of the joint working process, which cannot simply be the domain of ‘agencies’ or ‘services’.

1.4 Current issues and rationale for study

The current investigation was designed to explore the key factors which contribute to successful outcomes and those which are seen as impediments to success. These will be considered in relation to the wider literature, practical examples and the perceptions of a range of stakeholders.

The aim of the study was to create a model that would make explicit the complexity of working this way and to encourage practitioner reflection as a means of identifying ways of improving outcomes for children and their families.

Within the current study, 'multi-agency working' is defined as being three or more agencies working together, having shared aims in securing defined outcomes for children. It means that whole agencies are involved in this, not just individual representatives from these agencies. Senior management and support staff, as well as those with direct contact with children and families, will have their working practices affected by the multi-agency requirement. It follows then that multi-agency working needs to be considered both at strategic and operational levels. Joint funding and shared budget responsibilities, joint workforce planning, information sharing and service delivery responsibilities are all involved in this approach.

This view of multi-agency working implies a holistic approach to children where the effect of the intervention of one agency should be considered in relation to the work of other agencies.

2. Some Theoretical Considerations

2.1 Collaboration

Huxham proposes the concept of *collaborative advantage* and defines it thus:

Collaborative advantage will be achieved when something unusually creative is produced – perhaps an objective is met – that no organisation could have produced on its own and when each organisation, through collaboration, is able to achieve its own objectives better than it could alone. In some cases, it should also be possible to achieve some higher-level objectives for society as a whole rather than just for the participating organisations.

Huxham (1996)

The essential element of this definition is its focus on the *outputs* of collaboration which are only achievable through collaboration.

In contrast, Huxham defines *collaborative inertia* as:

..... a situation when the apparent rate of work output from a collaboration is slowed down considerably compared to what a casual observer might expect it to be.

Huxham (1996)

Among the difficulties which can lead to collaborative inertia are:

- differences in aims, language, procedures, culture and perceived power
- the tension between differing levels of autonomy, accountability and authority structures among participant organisations
- the resources required to manage the logistics of collaboration.

Not every collaboration needs to manifest collaborative advantage (in terms of outputs) since there are often other advantages (as detailed in the consideration of the dimensions of collaboration in a subsequent section). Evidence of collaborative advantage demonstrates a high value and ambitious form of collaboration and can be seen as something which each collaboration should attempt to achieve. Evidence of collaborative inertia, on the other hand, should raise the question of the advisability of pursuing such collaboration (in the absence of some other benefit which might arise incidentally).

2.1.1 Why examine collaboration?

A primary reason for examining collaboration is the reality that it is often required as a core function of organisations. There can be an assumption that it is worthwhile in its own right. However, it is often undertaken with limited success. Studying and understanding the issues within collaboration such as *collaborative advantage* and *collaborative inertia* can assist in making existing collaboration more effective and productive. An example of this is Huxham's description of two motives for collaboration (1996a). The first is that organisations act out of *self-interest* e.g. where the activity enables an organisation to fulfil a function that it could not do on its own, or where it benefits the organisation directly. The second is the *moral imperative*, where collaboration is seen as the only practical way to tackle a major societal issue. Further detail on the complexities of collaboration can be found in Appendix 1.

2.1.2 Factors and dimensions

Throughout the literature, there are a number of terms used to describe important influences on multi-agency working. Some researchers use the term 'factor' (Mostert, 1998, Welch and Tulbert, 2000), whereas others use the term 'dimensions' (e.g. Huxham, 1996a, 2000). This raises the question of whether these refer to two distinct types of construct or whether there is confusion over the terminology. With different authors there may be a degree of conceptual overlap between what constitutes a factor and a dimension. However, terms do not refer to empirically derived differences in constructs.

Huxham puts forward a model with three principal dimensions: organisational form, structural form and rationale for collaboration. Within this latter dimension there are eight inter-related dimensions that form a framework (Huxham, 1996a, p8). These have emerged from the literature and practice in the field of promoting collaboration. There is a discrepancy however between their description and how they relate to practice.

One criticism of Huxham's model is that it provides an overly complex picture of an already complex phenomenon and that presents problems in two ways. The first is that it is not useful, even as a metaphor, to aid understanding of the complex practice, and the second is that it could not be tested as an empirical model. As dimensions, it is impossible to verify their validity, and their relative importance to each other cannot be determined.

There have in fact been few empirical studies that attempt to identify key factors in the area of joint working and there are methodological problems for the few that have identified a limited number of factors (e.g. Balchin, 2002, Welch and Tulbert, 2000). Frequently, factors are identified from common sense or experience (e.g. Mostert 1998, Snell and Janney,

2000). That does not mean they are not important factors, but as hypothetical constructs their validity is questionable in the same way that the validity of Huxham's dimensions is under question. There is no easy solution to this problem without conducting large-scale research in an applied setting, with the inherent difficulties of producing clear data and the problems of using hypothesis-testing methodology.

One approach that might be considered is a factor analysis. Factor analysis as a statistical technique for identifying patterns in correlations in data sets is useful, although not without its limitations. In this technique, a factor is a hypothetical construct consisting of variables that correlate. Where more than one factor is identified, the parameters can be set such that the factors are independent of each other and they form dimensions. Factor scores can be computed for each subject or unit of analysis. Although a factor can have a dimensional nature or relationship with other factors, the term dimension should perhaps be reserved for hypothetical constructs that transcend factors and help to clarify relationships between them. In Section 6, a description of a model that uses both factors and dimensions is proposed.

2.1.3 Process for creating better collaboration

It is the intention of this study to produce a method for promoting more effective collaboration. This is not a unique enterprise. However, an examination of the literature indicates that there are problems in previously devised methods. Such methods appear to have little or no empirical basis, and/or be overly complex. For example, Himmelman reports one method for creating collaborative advantage. This involves 20 steps (Himmelman, 1996). However, there is no evidence of this process being used, or evidence of whether it is effective or not. In addition, the steps amount to little more than a set of useful questions.

Eden (1996) describes a method used for a workshop in the Northern Ireland Prison Service. This method involved a framework for thinking about stakeholders in which organisational and strategic issues were identified, followed by a workshop for participants facilitated by an external expert. While the author describes the process as a positive experience, there is no evidence that it made a significant impact to practice in either the short or the longer term.

Schuman (1996) discusses the implications of using a facilitator, and indeed uses a tool with eight dimensions (that differ from Huxham's) to establish whether a facilitator should be used. While in principal this is a reasonable idea, there is no empirical evidence to suggest either that the tool works or that using a facilitator is better. Notionally, a facilitator is seen as useful where there exists a high level of distrust, intimidation, rivalry and cost (op cit p132-133).

Huxham (1996b) describes an approach with two principal components: 1) Group Decision Support (GDS) and 2) Process, Content, Substance model of consultancy (PCS model). This combination of methods is one that would apply to facilitator-led efforts to promote greater collaboration. While there certainly seems merit in this approach, again there is lack of evidence regarding effectiveness.

While the empirical studies may be lacking, the complexity of these models, both for analysing and for promoting more effective collaboration, is also a significant drawback to using these methods. The lessons that can be learned from these methods include the following.

- there is no certain answer to promoting collaborative advantage
- the participants need to be involved and own their decisions
- this process needs to be reflective and to involve some analysis of collaboration as well as of the subject of the collaboration
- contexts vary significantly and the key factors may be different within each
- helpful questions can be asked of participants
- a 'gentle' facilitator may be useful although not necessary
- any model or process for enhancing effective joint working needs to be simple to use and demonstrate its effectiveness empirically.

The task for this study was to take what can be learned from these studies and apply them to a simple model for promoting effective collaboration and multi-agency working.

2.2 Outcomes for children and families

In an evaluation of the views of service users involved in a joint education/social work community project, Finlayson (2001) concluded that pupils' views of the service they received indicated they valued the empowering type of relationship with the workers and the practical help and advice they were given whether through group or individual work. Pupils indicated that they felt they were less likely to get into trouble in school and that they found they were getting on better with others (peers, teachers, parents) while parents also noticed improvements in behaviour and in their own relationships with school, developed via Project workers.

Townsley, Abbott and Watson (2003) looked at the impact of multi-agency working on children with disabilities and complex health care needs, their families and the professionals who supported them. The findings suggested that on the positive side, multi-agency working

assisted inclusion of this group of young people into local educational provision, it helped improve professionals' relationships with families and other professionals, and it made a difference to the quality of life for a majority of the families. However, many of the children were still experiencing multiple barriers, including communication difficulties, minimal independence, and poor access to leisure facilities and to friendships. In setting up the multi-agency working, more attention had been paid to structures than outcomes for children and their families.

Additionally, difficulties existed in incompatible IT systems and lack of commitment from some agencies and individuals. Scarce resources hindered relationships between professionals and families. Services were very much focussed on the child rather than the family as a whole. Families also experienced emotional pressures, some of which were directly related to a lack of co-ordinated and flexible support. Where there was a key-worker, there was a lack of clarity regarding the role of this person, and multiple assessments and reviews were still occurring.

2.3 Information sharing

One particular difficulty encountered by those working in multi-agency contexts is the sharing of information to avoid multiple assessments which can involve conflicting appointments and families passing on the same history to several agencies. The issue of confidentiality and data-protection needs to be overcome but in addition, the use of different information storage systems presents an extra barrier to well integrated working practice.

The role of IT in assisting with the achievement of organisational integration is explored by Tony Bovaird (2003). He argues that there are three main effects of ITC:

- allowing better use of data-bases
- supporting better communication
- supporting improved decision making.

It is suggested that information flow is faster, more reliable and relevant, and decisions are more co-ordinated. Bovaird sees ITC development enabling a more holistic needs assessment, as well as providing opportunities to respond to changing public expectations with regard to service quality, and allowing new methods of staff working, including breaking down of professional boundaries.

This requires integrated planning and design of data-bases, protocols for sharing of or privileged access to, information, and a commitment from organisations and individuals to

keep data-bases up to date. While in theory this appears a straightforward if complex task, it is perhaps too early to be able to comment on effectiveness. The difficulties of system overload, confidentiality, user access and what constitutes key information still require to be overcome.

2.4 Common themes

One trend which may be partly a result of the drive towards integrated practice but may also help promote a more coherent approach is the practice within local government towards fewer service departments with combinations of, for example, social work and housing, or education and leisure. While these developments in council structures may be influenced by the need to effect cost cutting in administrative and central support functions, the drive towards integrated working may make such moves logical and supportable.

From the literature surveyed, there are a number of recurring factors that would appear to have a significant influence on the success or otherwise of multi-agency working. These can be divided into factors which assist or have a facilitating effect on multi-agency working, and those which set up barriers to effective working. Often barriers to effective working may be seen as the absence of necessary conditions for positive working.

The following section explores those factors which emerge as important for effective integrated working and which can be seen to be operating at different stages and at different levels of practice. Requirements may vary according to whether strategic or operational levels of organisations are being considered and according to whether an undertaking is at an initial or an established stage.

2.4.1 Common aims

The establishment of common aims and objectives will assist in ensuring that agencies are working towards the same purposes, rather than cutting across each other with conflicting agendas. Having clear outcomes and priorities also aids the identification of tasks and assists in the establishment of credibility. Knowing what is to be achieved can also focus policy development.

2.4.2 Accommodation

Relocation of agencies to one site can benefit the development of informal communications systems in addition to more formal structures. It can also benefit clients to have a single location for contact with services. Allocation of appropriate space however, can become an issue.

2.4.3 Finance

Challenges arise from budgetary issues - lack of funding, uncertain future funding arrangements or short-term ventures, and ultimately which agency has control of spending. There may also be fiscal conflicts between or within agencies - a particular agency may not agree to specific joint proposals or finds that multi-agency working has a negative impact on its own budget with resources diverted from 'core activities'. One way forward is pooled budgets and joint funding with each agency retaining control over an aspect.

The identification or use of alternative resources or income to enhance multi-agency working can be helpful as seen in some New Community Schools projects.

Where projects have short-term funding, the question mark over the sustainability of the projects limits effectiveness. Mainstream, guaranteed finance was seen as an essential element in developing long term strategies in New Community Schools projects (Insight 7, 2003).

2.4.4 Communication

Multi-agency working requires good information sharing between and within agencies. A barrier to this can be the perceived and actual restrictions on free flow of information, either through data-protection requirements, or lack of appropriate protocols for sharing information. Professionals may be unwilling to divulge information they may regard as confidential, but which is important for services to be aware of in order to provide appropriate supports to children and families.

Opportunities for dialogue between agencies are needed and also full involvement of the child and family. Skills of listening and negotiating need to be developed, as do procedures and protocols to appropriately share information at a systems and a human level. Communication is necessary between agencies at both strategic and operational levels, which may have implications for planning regular meetings to promote the two-way flow of information.

2.4.5 Organisational

The development of interagency protocols helps ensure consistency of decision making and growth of trust between agencies. Adjustment and development of current provision may be required to take into account new ventures. Within organisations, both top-down and bottom-up, flows of information are needed to communicate policies effectively and to make strategic decisions based on experiences at operational level.

2.4.6 Cultures

Different agencies will have developed different cultures and values, or have a different ethos and operational practices, depending to some extent on their purpose and the nature of their contact with clients. For effective integrated working, it is important to be aware of these differences, to acknowledge that they exist and to respect them. It is also important to recognise that different professionals within the same agency or organisation may have dissimilar value systems.

2.4.7 Personal relationships

Good personal and working relationships can be a significant factor in promoting positive multi-agency working. It is essential to create trust with others, to manage differences and to encourage personal growth.

2.4.8 Time and effort

Studies of multi-agency working (Atkinson et al, 2002; Insight 7, 2003) suggest that it takes up significant amounts of time, with increased frequency of meetings. Doing the tasks allocated to meet deadlines, preparing effectively for meetings, and also demonstrating commitment and willingness, are all necessary elements of effective practice. It follows therefore that other pressures of work and competing demands will present barriers to effective working.

2.4.9 Roles

An initial task for any joint working venture includes understanding the roles of other participants, both as individuals and as members of their own organisation. A possible barrier is the potential conflict of roles or responsibilities that an individual may have in relation to the multi-agency task as compared to the agency being represented. There may also be conflicts over areas of responsibilities between agencies.

Different roles also carry different levels of power and decision-making authority, and it is important that a representative has sufficient scope to make required decisions on behalf of

his/her organisation. The involvement of personnel at the appropriate level of strategic responsibility facilitates the authorisation of resources to operational tasks.

The need to move beyond existing roles has been raised in various studies (Booker, 2000; Chapman and Ware, 1999; Doyle, 1998) with more flexibility and less protectiveness seen as desirable. However, this creates the potential for conflict over roles and disputes over professional boundaries.

2.4.10 Data collection

This is important for review and development, to keep track of children and families, to assist in evaluating whether stated aims and desired outcomes are being achieved and for making strategic decisions regarding allocation of resources. Appropriate systems therefore require to be in place to enable this function to be carried out. An absence of appropriate data will obviously hinder the evaluation and development of multi-agency service delivery. Sharing data between agencies to avoid multiple assessments may conflict with protection of confidentiality but does provide benefits overall to the children and families who are the focus of the joint venture.

2.4.11 Training

Staff training to improve multi-agency working often focuses on understanding each other's roles and on specific topics such as Child Protection. Responses from interviews with senior members of Children Service Plan development teams (see appendix 1) suggested that training was an area where there has been little development and which happened in a rather ad hoc fashion. A key difficulty is that CPD for the various services involved in working together is arranged in different ways and with competing priorities. Varying working hours and commitments make it additionally difficult to bring services together at the same time for training. Other authors (Atkinson et al 2002; Insight 7, 2003; Tomlinson, 2003) indicate that although training for multi-agency work has the potential for improving effectiveness, there can be substantial costs associated with this in terms of time, venue, facilitator and staff cover.

2.4.12 Stability

This can apply to the people working together, as well as the contexts of the wider organisations and local and national government. Effective working is disrupted by changes in personnel, which require new relationships to be established, ways of working to be negotiated, and familiarity with systems and histories to be learned. Should a key member of a team be unable to attend a particular meeting, or a replacement attends without the

detailed background knowledge, efforts to move business along can become frustrated. Staffing turnover, shortages and fragmentation can all present major challenges.

2.4.13 Leadership

Leadership tasks and qualities include organisation, diplomacy, facilitation, consultation, pushing through, pulling together and problem solving. A leader is required to maintain the focus of work but also recognise and reflect the contribution of all agencies, and to develop a balance of top-down and bottom-up management. Desired qualities include vision and tenacity and encouraging risk taking, but also transparency, and a degree of trust and confidence in other members of the team so that the joint working venture does not simply become the vehicle for the 'leader' to carry through or legitimise his/her own agenda.

3. Practical Examples

The present study recognises that translating theory into practice is complex and can be problematic. However, there are many examples of multi-agency working at various levels which illustrate this complexity as providing information about the key success factors and challenges faced by those involved. A small sample are included here for illustration, two established at National level, two at Council level and two established within the local community and involving community groups.

3.1 Sure Start Scotland – a national initiative

This example is part of a broader programme of action to promote social inclusion through a positive start to children's lives. The programme, which started in 1999, has four objectives:

- to improve children's social and emotional development
- to improve children's health
- to improve children's ability to learn
- to strengthen families and communities

It is focussed on "integrated support, on directing support to more deprived groups in a non-stigmatising way and on meeting needs identified by parents". (Scottish Executive, 2003, p1).

As Sure Start Scotland evolved differently across the country, a Report was undertaken in order to describe the range of work involved and it made a number of observations of relevance to multi-agency working. Integrated services were seen by many involved as offering the potential for best practice, involving team working, and one-contact-access to all services.

Factors that were seen as helpful in developing integrated services included being able to build on pre-existing structures and relationships, including planning processes and models of inter-agency co-operation. Commitment to aims at all organisational levels, access to a dedicated Sure Start Scotland Officer, together with established skilled staffing and existing appropriate accommodation were positive factors. Additionally, local control of finances and decision-making assisted the development of appropriate services.

Obstacles to progress as described in the document could generally be seen as the lack of factors which helped promote services, with a less established base of multi-agency working on which to build, together with insecure funding of services.

The positive effects of Sure Start Scotland were that the initiatives encouraged those delivering the services and the people in the local communities, giving them that sense of optimism seen as necessary in 'For Scotland's Children'.

At an operational level it is reported to have led to an improvement in the deployment of services and the approach taken to their delivery. The latter was achieved by altering the focus of work with children, to seeing them in the wider context of the family and community setting, rather than just the child in isolation.

At a strategic level, it brought a co-ordinated approach to services and has encouraged tailored and integrated care plans for individual children and their families to be put in place more systematically.

Weaknesses included minimal evaluation of services, tensions between developing universal provision against targeting a specific group, and continuing difficulties in how to make effective contact with hard to reach groups who tend not to present to services.

Other weaknesses identified were ineffective joint planning and joint working and low levels of involvement of voluntary sector and parents in the planning process. It was also noted that few projects were aimed at men and that structural inequalities, one of the concerns of 'For Scotland's Children', were not seriously challenged.

3.2 Integrated Community Schools – a national initiative

This initiative was seen as an integral part of the Scottish Executive's social inclusion strategy (Scottish Executive Education Department, 2003). In recognising the link between educational achievement, health and socio-economic factors, an aim of the New Community School was to assist in integrating the range of services offered to young people in disadvantaged areas.

Desired outcomes included:

- raised attainments in an effort to overcome cycles of underachievement
- early intervention to address barriers to learning
- meeting the needs of every child
- involving parents and raising their expectations

Multi-agency provision was one of the themes to this research, along with leadership and management, pupil experience and attainment, family and community engagement. Facilitators of, and barriers to success were investigated.

Conclusions drawn from this study were that it is advisable to plan properly, to take time to prepare and not to take on goals that are too ambitious. As local initiatives may not translate

into transferable packs for wider adoption, it is evident that initiatives also have to take into account the local circumstances. An identified need was to encourage monitoring and evaluation.

Multi-agency working benefits were seen as an increased range of services and activities, new school based developments outside the usual curriculum framework and health promoting effects.

3.3 Strategic framework for children's services – a local council initiative

The plan for Services for Children and Families in one local authority in Scotland is built around several fundamental principles, including a commitment to agencies working in partnership with parents and carers. In addition, services are being jointly commissioned and delivered to meet priority needs within an ethos of promoting inclusion.

The integrated structure for planning and delivering children's services operates at three levels, each with an emphasis on community partnership and multi-agency co-operation and flexibility:

- At Council level, a Joint Committee on Children and Young People co-ordinates policy, service development and delivery across Council Services and NHS partners. It also includes other key partners, including the voluntary sector. Working across service boundaries to this committee is the Head of Service (Children, Young People and Families), who enables joint working and breaks down many of the barriers at senior management level that otherwise may exist.

- At a more local level, services come together in Area Children's Services Forums (ACSF). These Forums bring together Area Managers from Education, Culture and Sport and Social Work, and Service Managers from the local Health Care Co-operatives. In addition, the ACSFs include membership from voluntary organisations, community groups and other key local services. The functions of the Forums are to:
 - o establish appropriate assessment, planning and resourcing networks within a specific geographic area
 - o identify children with complex needs and link this with planning and allocation of resources within the Area
 - o consider issues of policy and practice in consultation with members and senior officers

A decision has been taken to devolve budgets to ACSFs and to key individual schools in targeted Areas. This allows individual support packages to be resourced without delay wherever possible and acknowledges the validity of local decision making and the need for individual solutions to meet individual need.

- School Liaison Groups (SLGs) operate within the Areas co-ordinated by the ACSFs, around each individual school or associated school group. These involve school staff, educational psychologists, community medical practitioners, social work staff and others, working in partnership with parents and pupils in a solution focused approached to:
 - o co-ordinate early intervention to individual pupils and families
 - o engage in multi-disciplinary assessment and planning
 - o identify resource issues and unmet need within specific schools
 - o plan individual casework.

The key principles emerging from this in regard to effective multi-agency working, are devolving responsibility and power to local level, the inclusion of all partners in equal decision making at all levels, a flexibility of approach, and a willingness to cross boundaries while retaining professional identities.

3.4 Reintegrating young people from residential schools - a local council initiative

A recent initiative in the development of an operational team undertaken by one Scottish Local Authority gives a clear example of some important issues in multi-agency working in the context of a successful venture.

In 2001, a project was established to reintegrate young people aged between 14 and 16 years, from residential schools where they had been placed by Children's Panels. The project was evaluated in December 2003 and by that date fourteen young people had been returned to their local communities. The programme was considered to have been generally successful and indeed substantially exceeded expectations in terms of the number of people it has been able to support.

It had necessitated the development of complex and novel working relationships between professional groups, services and agencies. However, because the project did not fit neatly into existing organisational and management arrangements, there had been some difficulty in resolving tensions which had arisen concerning professional roles and the allocation of appropriate resources. For example, the health authority had not been recruited as a key

partner at the outset of the project and it became clear that medical resources to address both physical and emotional welfare issues were lacking in the project. It also became clear that the role of the multi-agency steering group required to be developed and strengthened. This was required to ensure that the project could be appropriately supported and developed within a context of joint-agency agreement over issues such as resourcing, policy and practice.

It is suggested that many of the challenges faced by the project could have been anticipated and resolved at an earlier stage if there had been a more complete understanding of the issues involved in designing a multi-disciplinary and multi-agency operational team. In this way substantive and sustainable change could be more confidently predicted.

3.5 Motivating vulnerable children – a community based initiative

This project is a collaboration between a local authority's education and social work services, voluntary organisations, a local police service and a local football club. The project staff work with some of the most needy and vulnerable people across a major city who are involved or at risk of becoming involved in illegal drugs misuse and offending.

3.5.1 Project aims

Using football as a vehicle, the main aims of the project are:

- to support children and young people who are involved or are 'at risk' of involvement with illegal drugs misuse
- to work with children and young people who are 'at risk' of offending
- to encourage full-time attendance at school by linking attendance and the value of life-long learning to the activities of the project
- to improve the awareness of the needs of such vulnerable pupils and promote social inclusion.

The project consists of four, ten-week cycles involving football coaching and social education inputs. Each cycle consists of ten weeks (20 sessions) requiring an average of four hours per week out of school. Priority is given to children who are Looked After and Accommodated and therefore a high proportion of participants are Looked After and Accommodated.

3.5.2 Social education inputs

Educational inputs are a compulsory part of the project and take place one evening per week from 5.30pm to 7.00pm. A maximum of ten children/young people attend and are supported

by two peer supporters, a drug support worker, a project trainee and the project co-ordinator. These sessions focus on issues such as drugs and alcohol, decision-making, communication skills, confidence and self-esteem and positive adult role models.

3.5.3 Football skills development

Coaching sessions consist of football skills development, fitness programmes, healthy living and the development of teamwork.

3.5.4 New developments - Community Learning Centre

The project won Social Inclusion Partnership funding because of its success. This part of the project is designed to use the interest and motivation generated by football to promote literacy, community learning and employment. New IT equipment has been installed in a purpose built location within the football club and a teacher has been appointed to this post in the hope of engaging young people from 10-18 years who are experiencing social, emotional and behavioural problems.

3.5.5 Outcomes

The project has gained a high profile and is highly thought of and well supported by the local community. An earlier evaluation report indicated that: an average school attendance rate of 90% was attained by the young people while attending the project; the number of recorded offences dropped from 19 to zero during the ten week period; and gains were recorded in terms of attainment of school work. An updated report is in process and will be available later in 2004.

A key strength of the project is the highly motivated and dedicated staff. Although the project is successful in terms of direct work with young people, issues relating to priorities and how to keep all agencies actively involved remain. The project has won the Scottish Education Award 2004 – Closing the Gap, and has been a model for the creation of similar projects in Glasgow, Fife and Liverpool.

3.6 Joint education / social work project – a community based initiative

This project was set up in the late 1980s, in order to address the high number of young people excluded from or not attending school, and who were also coming into the Children's Hearing system with other concerns such as offending behaviour and family issues.

The aim was to maintain the young people in a mainstream education setting and reduce the demands for residential provision, through closer working relationships between the two local secondary schools, psychologists and social work services, and by providing more integrated and coherent supports to pupils and families within the school setting.

The project team has consisted of a senior psychologist as project leader, and two principal teachers, one in each school, from Education Services, along with two group workers and a clerical worker from Social Work, which also provided a budget for running costs. The project was funded from Urban Aid for the first few years, but later 'mainstreamed' and funded jointly by Social Work and Education. The project was school-based with a management committee made up of the two head teachers, social work area services manager and principal psychologist. The project leader had overall responsibility for the direction of the project and allocation of work, and line management/supervision was carried out by the relevant service managers.

The positive outcomes of the project over the years have included an improved relationship between schools and social work largely due to the presence of the group workers in the schools, and a much reduced number of young people moving outwith the local school provision. Early and less formal intervention by group workers, involving families as well as young people, has prevented crises from developing, and reduced the need for referrals to the Reporter's Administration. The area now has a much smaller number of pupils in residential settings than any other comparable socio-economic area of the authority.

The project also linked in with the local Social Inclusion Partnership, becoming involved in strategic planning and attracting funding for resources to meet identified gaps in provision. The project work carried on in the schools via pupil support bases, provided teachers not only with support but also assisted their development of behaviour management strategies which have been incorporated into whole-school policies.

Difficulties have been experienced at times when project aims have conflicted with school needs, and also when there have been changes in personnel either in the project itself which has altered its style of service delivery, or in managers of the services. The 'dual management' aspect of the project, while satisfactory when work is proceeding smoothly, has been an area of potential weakness at times of change in personnel or when difficult decisions have had to be made as it has allowed tensions to arise and responsibility for certain aspects of the management of project to be ambiguous.

Other difficulties have been experienced in uncertainties over budgets, with no guarantee that one year's allocation would be continued into the next financial year. Further uncertainties have been created over the duration of the project despite its 'mainstream' status, as devolved school budgets and New Community School developments have had implications for the position of the project in the authority's planning. Funding for different posts within the project has been given different timescales creating a sense of uncertainty and hindering long-term planning. In addition, restructuring of Social Work Services has made the position of the group workers uncertain.

Overall, this had been a very successful example of inter-agency working but one which demonstrates a need for continuing review and negotiation between partners and longer term strategic management.

3.7 Common Themes from these Initiatives

Key Factors for Success from initiatives	Barriers to Success from initiatives
Building on pre-existing structures and relationships	Tension between universal and targeted services
Commitment to common aims at all levels	Concern about sustainability of initiative
Skilled and trained staff	Establishing 'new' multi-agency teams
Appropriate accommodation if co-locating	Lack of evaluation
Local control of finances	Insecure funding of services
Seeing child / family in a holistic way	Difficulties contacting hard to reach people
Coordinated and strategic approach to service delivery	Voluntary organisations and parents not central to the planning process
Coordinated and systematic planning	Lack of pooling of resources
Specific, dedicated management of the project	Complex management arrangements and structures
Management effecting positive changes	Limited or thinly spread resources
Additional resources and finances	Inconsistent staffing
Clear, streamlined and strategic management structures	Tension among partners relating to aims, values and approaches
Simplification of approaches	Poor accommodation if co-locating
Strong leadership	Lack of appropriate procedures
Support in agencies at senior management level	Different practice arrangements eg. Working hours, pay structures, funding etc
Co-location of services	Difficulty scheduling meetings
Joint agency staff training	Lack of joint ownership
Willingness to learn from one another	Unable to mainstream projects
Making time to meet	Power struggle between individuals/agencies
Devolving responsibility and power to grass roots level	Keeping partners involved over a period of time
Flexible in approach	Time not given to evaluate/follow-up
Willingness to cross professional boundaries while maintaining individual identity	
Successful projects being embedded into universal services	
Voluntary organisations and parents central to the planning process	
Having clarity of purpose	

4. Partners' Perspectives

With the intention of gathering perspectives, three separate studies were undertaken with a range of stakeholders. The three studies acknowledged the importance of the strategic and operational issues as well as across service and within service issues. Interviews were conducted with managers, educational psychologists and multi-agency partners.

4.1 Interviews with children's services planners

In order to gain the perspective of those responsible for articulating 'For Scotland's Children' across the country, a total of twelve individuals were interviewed across seven council areas, with a mixture of rural and urban areas being represented. The interviewees all held some responsibility for Children's Services Planning.

A schedule of prepared questions was used in each interview (see appendix 2). The responses were collated to identify key themes thought to be necessary for effective multi-agency working (see appendix 2).

The emerging themes suggested that the following are areas for development:

- the need for better transfer of strategy into practice
- the need to monitor implementation of plans
- the need to realign budgets to provide interconnected tasks and financial flexibility
- the need to build evaluation into multi-agency working
- the need to recognise that experiences of service users will be an essential performance indicator
- the need for a shared knowledge of roles/ core values and beliefs.

One particular theme emerged from all of the interviews. In all of the council areas there was a feeling that there is currently very little evidence of any training in the *processes* of multi-agency working.

4.2 The views of educational psychologists

In order to gain the specific perspective of educational psychologists, a workshop was held at the Educational Psychologists' Annual Conference in September 2004.

Six educational psychologists, all from different authorities, attended the workshop. A list of prompt questions was piloted to provide structure to the discussion (see appendix 3). The participants were asked to consider the definition of multi-agency working, the educational psychologist's contribution to that working, factors and barriers for success, outcome and

evaluation measures, and training and preparation. A summary of the full discussion is provided in appendix 3.

It was highlighted in the discussion that the issues apparent in multi-agency meetings are the same as in any partnership of two people working together, even if they belong to the same profession. It should also be recognised that people within one agency may have different approaches and therefore cannot necessarily be assumed to subscribe to the same values and practices.

The workshop produced feedback at two levels. The information provided by the educational psychologists illustrated their current experiences of multi-agency working. Additionally, the workshop confirmed that the pilot list of prompt questions was useful in generating discussion.

In order to explore multi-agency working more fully it was important to follow up the workshop by expanding the discussion to include other agencies and parents.

4.3 The Views of Multi-Agency Partners

Following the workshop at the Annual Conference for Educational Psychologists, a whole morning event was arranged with representatives from education, health, social work, voluntary agencies and parents from within one local council area. Participants were invited to meet to discuss their experiences of multi-agency working. Pupils were also invited but were not able to attend. Appendix 4 contains a full list of agencies present.

It was a key factor that all of the attendees had the experience of working within the same council area and, thus, within the same tactical, strategic and operational frameworks. Many of those present had worked together previously.

Discussion took place within small groups, planned to ensure a spread of backgrounds and experiences. Each discussion was facilitated using a list of prompt questions (see appendix 4) based on the pilot questions. Feedback was encouraged under five headings. A full list of responses is provided in appendix 4.

The following factors were given by participants and highlighted as being particularly significant within each section:

Section 1 - Key success factors

- clarity of purpose for the partnership
- the central role of head teachers

Section 2 - Barriers

- too much time spent on paperwork limits the time spent with people
- decisions may be delayed if resources cannot be accessed quickly

Section 3 - Preparation for joint working

- professionals need to understand each other's roles and constraints
- parents need to be supported in having realistic expectations
- everyone should feel ownership of the process

Section 4 - Multi-agency meetings

- should be part of the intervention and change process and not just further assessment
- need to be prioritised by all team members

Section 5 - Evaluation

- should be unbureaucratic and straightforward
- should be built into the process from the start

Participants were all very positive about the potential benefits of multi-agency working, but were also aware of the frequency with which such joint ventures were not as successful as they would have hoped. They were keen to be further involved with the current study and to look at how they could enhance the effectiveness of multi-agency working within the contexts of their own working relationships. The study group was therefore able to work with these participants at a later date to pilot the approaches detailed later in this report

5. Developing a Model of Practice

From a theoretical perspective and also from the personal contacts made during the course of this study, it would appear that there is almost universal acceptance amongst agencies and professionals of the benefits of better joined up working. However, universal satisfaction with what has been achieved is much harder to win. Undoubtedly there are many examples of good practice in a variety of areas of work but it has never been a simple matter to replicate these models in new contexts or to generalise them to different tasks. As the complexities involved in achieving better integrated working become understood, so does the fact that there are no simple, quick solutions available to prepare individuals or services to create effective and consistent joined up services.

This complexity has lead some researchers (Huxham and Vangen, 2000) to caution against workers assuming that collaboration for it's own sake is always worth the effort. If outcomes can be achieved without collaboration then this is often the preferred and easier option. Evidence for the growing awareness of the complexity of joint working has emerged in recent years from a number of sources. In particular a comprehensive study of multi-agency working involving professionals from education, social services and health in local authorities (Atkinson et al, 2002) makes it clear that success is dependent on the interaction of a number of factors, of varying significance, at a variety of systemic levels. It is therefore difficult to be prescriptive in devising a model of successful practice for any particular multi-agency initiative.

A conference held by the Tavistock Institute, 'The Ties that Bind – Partnership and Collaboration' (October 2003), considered the political encouragement from central government to establish joint working and partnerships between and among private and public bodies.

The complexity of working in partnership was explained by considering the number of system boundaries to be managed and the complex interactions which must exist between:

- representatives of the same organisations working within the partnership
- individual members and their parent services
- interactions among and between members of the partnership itself.

5.1 Practical Issues

Any approach to make multi-agency work more effective needs to be straightforward and useful. It should involve meaningful and purposeful reflection on practice, whether as an organisation, service or individual, so that those involved can use it to make a difference. There are a vast number of factors that can promote or inhibit the effectiveness of such work which are expanded in the following sections (Moster, 1998; Snell and Janney, 2000; Gill and Pickles, 1989; Welch and Tulbert, 2000).

5.2 Developing a Framework

In one study using eight factors, three were highlighted for their importance (Balchin, 2002).

- *interpersonal skill* was rated as the most effective of these factors in practice
- *evaluating the outcomes of work* was rated as the least effective
- *action-plan implementation* had the highest correlation with the perceived effectiveness of multi-agency work.

This study illustrated the key factors within one particular context but had limitations, for example, it only considered eight factors in total. Key factors are highly context specific but here, a number of relevant factors were omitted from the choice list. This wider range of factors available however was described as forming two interacting dimensions. These dimensions are *the level at which change is possible* and *the stage of work*. In developing integrated systems of working, there are implications for the individual professionals involved, the group that has to work together and the organisation which they represent (i.e. the level at which change is possible). At all levels these implications concern issues of readiness, the process of service delivery, and the evaluation of joint systems (i.e. the stage of work). These two dimensions interact to form a matrix (Balchin, 2002) which has been further developed here (see figure 1).

The purpose of the matrix is two-fold:

1. to describe multi-agency work more effectively
2. to use it in a reflective approach to foster more effective multi-agency work.

5.3 The Dimensions

The first dimension to consider is the level at which practice is to be reflected upon.

The three levels are:

- the individual practitioner
- the multi-agency group that work together

- the service or organisation that the individual is a member of.

These same descriptions could also apply to parents and children who become members of the multi-agency team although the *organisation* level would not be relevant unless they represent the body of parents/children through being members of specific organisations such as voluntary interest groups, PTA, school governors, pupil council.

The three levels are important to consider, as there are factors that are not directly within the control of the individual, group or organisation which can promote or inhibit more effective multi-agency work. If these are identified, each individual then has personal responsibility to raise with the group or their own service, the concerns about factors that are inhibiting effectiveness. This is true for all issues but particularly in the area of child protection, where legislation has made it an imperative for all personnel involved to undertake key responsibilities and act on them (Children Act, (Scotland) 1995). Indeed, the findings of recent case investigations in child protection have reiterated individual worker responsibilities.

The second dimension is the stage of work to be analysed.

From systems theory there are three facets to a system: the input, the output and the process in which it engages (Harrison, 1994; Handy, 1993; Handy and Aitken, 1986). This concept is used here with more user-friendly and meaningful terminology – *readiness, process, outcomes*.

5.3.1 Readiness

This cluster of factors is associated with what can be done prior to engaging in multi-agency work. For example the skills and experience a practitioner may require to be able to engage in a piece of work. Where the practitioner is inexperienced, training or shadowing may be appropriate prior to the start.

5.3.2 Process

This cluster of factors is associated with both the immediate process, as in a meeting, as well as the ongoing process of engaging with several agencies. It could include the actual model of the meeting that is used e.g. general information sharing, or reaching a decision by consensus/voting as part of a solution. Examples of this include a decision by consensus/voting or a solution-focused meeting. What is examined and reflected upon is the work: how it is done and how this could be improved.

5.3.3 Outcome

This cluster of factors includes evaluation of the piece of work, reflection and feeding back into the next stage of the cycle. This would generally involve outcome measures e.g. personal satisfaction, attainment levels, or other success criteria, as well as the evaluation of the process as a whole, i.e. was it efficient or did it add value?

5.4 The Matrix

The two dimensions considered above are interacting dimensions. The readiness, process and outcomes are important clusters at each level of work. There are therefore nine clusters of factors or cells (Figure 1).

Figure 1

	Readiness	Process	Outcomes
Individual			
Group			
Organisation			

Within each of these nine cells there are a number of factors that contribute to the effectiveness of multi-agency work. Figure 2 details one example of an important factor in each cell.

Figure 2

	Readiness	Process	Outcomes
Individual	Expertise	Interpersonal	Satisfaction
Group	Purpose	Group Dynamic	Meets Goals
Organisation	Practice	Empowerment	Meets Objectives

To illustrate this model, multi-agency work around a child protection issue is considered:

5.4.1 Individual level

For the individual we would want to be assured that they had enough expertise in the area to be able to contribute effectively. This could involve training or shadowing prior to beginning the work (individual readiness). When engaging in the work they will also need to exercise considerable interpersonal skills to be able to communicate effectively around highly charged issues (individual process). As an outcome the individuals should be able to know for

themselves that the method of work was satisfying i.e. did it allow them to do their job better than if they had not engaged in multi-agency work? (individual outcomes)

5.4.2 Group level

For the members of the group, there should be a clearly recognised and explicitly stated rationale or purpose for them to be working together. An example of the purpose could be to protect the safety and well being of this child or to make a decision on whether this child is to be returned home. This should be apparent and shared by all members of the group prior to beginning the work and the following check questions asked:

- are the necessary professions invited to contribute to meet that purpose?
- who present can influence the group dynamics?
- are there too many professionals? (group readiness)

For example, it is recognised that large numbers of professionals makes it difficult for a parent or certain staff to contribute effectively.

Other influences in group dynamics include:

- adopting clear roles within a meeting, (e.g. chair and minute taker)
- the status, charisma or power of individuals
- the influence from information.

These group dynamics can be accounted for and made more purposeful by having an explicit meeting process. In some cases all professionals might be asked for their assessment before a decision by the chair; in another it may be more beneficial to have a group discussion about the range of alternatives (group process).

The outcomes to be considered are whether the decision was reached efficiently (i.e. was the work completed effectively), and whether this outcome met the interests of the child. There may be a range of informal and formal measures, which are appropriate for these purposes (group outcomes).

5.4.3 Organisation level

At the organisation level, each participating organisation should consider if their general practices facilitate their staff engaging in multi-agency work of this nature. Is time available? Are they easily contactable to make arrangements? Perhaps some agencies who are regularly involved in working with the child but rarely get involved in child protection issues will not have considered the implications e.g. is the employee appropriately prepared for disclosure? (organisational readiness).

In the actual process it is important for the individual representative to know what decision-making capacity they have been given. There is a natural tension here with managers of services perhaps unwilling to delegate this level of responsibility e.g. on budgetary or other resourcing issues. The degree of empowerment the individual has from their own organisation should be explicit and/or transparent (organisation process).

The outcomes that are important to the organisation are possibly general objectives, such as reducing the number of children who are taken into foster care while maintaining their welfare, or that the responsibilities of staff were discharged with a minimum of disruption and stress to them and the service. The value of the outcome measures for the organisation will be strengthened if they are collated across several discrete pieces of multi-agency work (organisation outcome).

5.5 Taking Account of Degree of Service Integration

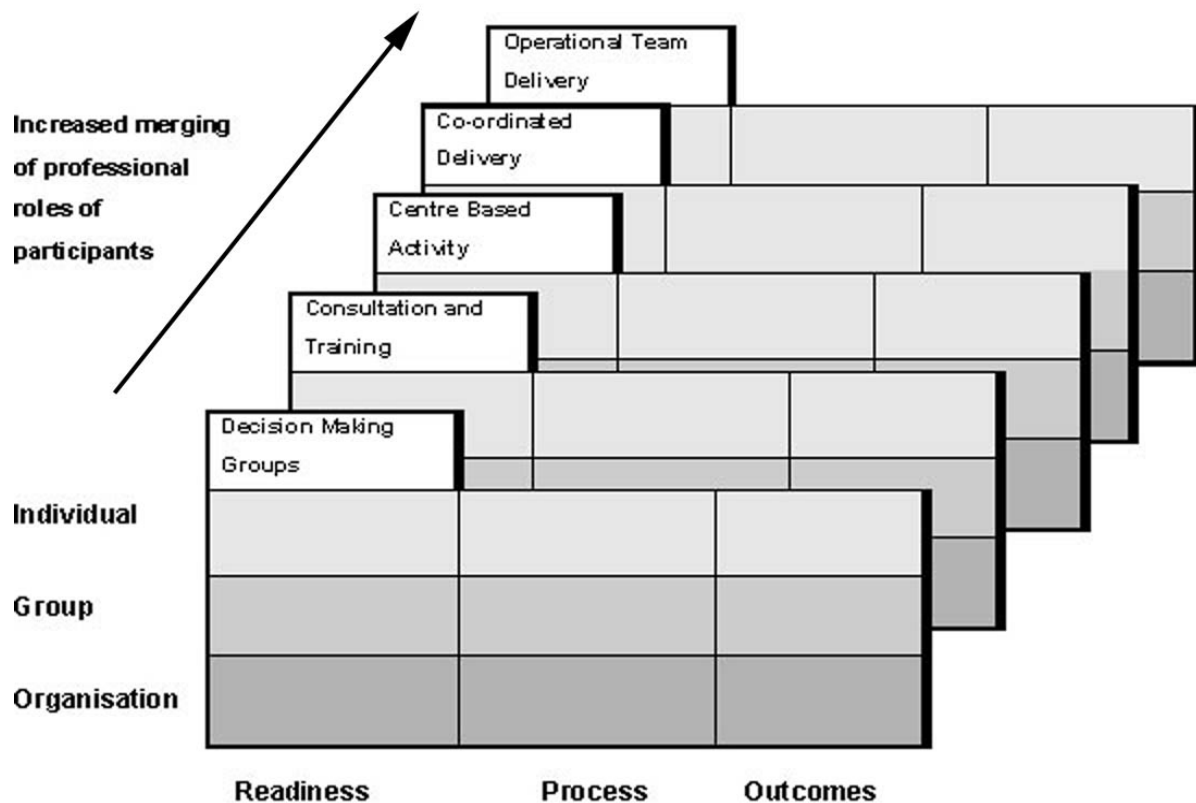
Before applying the matrix to any particular multi-agency initiative, one further dimension must be taken into account. That is, the significance of factors which contribute to the effectiveness of multi-agency work differs depending on the degree of service integration required in any particular initiative.

Atkinson et al (2002) have identified five models of multi-agency working on a continuum, describing the degree of professional engagement and merging of professional roles which occur as services become more integrated. These have been incorporated into the matrix of levels and factors as shown in Figure 3.

These are:

- decision making (strategic) groups e.g. joint policy or steering groups
- consultation and training activities
- centre based activities e.g. within a Child Development Centre
- co-ordinated delivery
- operational team delivery.

Figure 3: Dimensions of multi-agency work in relation to degree of service integration



Personnel with responsibilities at all levels in the system must attend to issues concerning readiness, process and outcome. Some issues will be common to all levels, some will have more relevance at particular levels and others will be peculiar to a particular level. For example, consequential changes in patterns of service delivery will have relevance for individual professionals, the services they represent and the organisation within which they operate, whilst a joint resourcing agreement may be relevant only to services and organisations.

The implications of identified issues will be distinctly different depending on the degree of professional role integration of the joint venture. For example, joint strategy groups may have to concern themselves little with issues of professional role flexibility whilst a multi-disciplinary operational team may have to deal with this as an ongoing concern.

For all individuals involved in integrated working there needs to be a clear understanding and shared acceptance of the degree of flexibility or firmness of distinct professional roles and identity. This must be consistent with the level of service integration relevant to any particular initiative.

It takes a huge effort for joint policy (strategic) groups to be more integrated since members of these groups necessarily represent their individual services. They may have to commit resources from their service, or maintain their professional identity by taking decisions congruent with the policies and procedures held by their service. In some local council areas, posts have been created that are jointly funded by different services in a deliberate attempt to merge professional identities and therefore to more fully integrate service delivery. For the people appointed to these posts, this can create issues around matrix management, having to respond to different structures and take account of different interests. However, on the more positive side, it can serve to integrate services and decision making at strategic planning level where this might not occur otherwise, which in turn can support both the principle and practice of multi-agency working at other levels.

5.6 The Reflective Approach

Being able to reflect on practice is a necessary starting point for all individuals, groups and organisations aiming to improve the effectiveness of the multi-agency work in which they participate. It plays an integral part in evaluating practice, as well as outcomes at all levels, and highlighting necessary changes to policies or processes that will lead to overall improvements. When using the matrix as a tool to consider multi-agency working, the reflective approach is essential in completing the framework and providing the structure for reflecting on practice.

This approach consists of five steps:

1. reflect on your own practice and context to elucidate the key factors
2. identify key factors for your context
3. identify ways forward
4. implement
5. evaluate and repeat step 1

Step 1 - Reflect on practice and context

The starting point is to reflect on their own practice within the specific context of their initiative and taking account of the degree of service integration required. Helpful questions have four main themes:

- what is effective?
- what is more of a challenge?
- how are difficulties overcome?
- how are changes managed?

The questions would vary in their subject matter depending on the specific issue being addressed and are asked in a more concrete manner:

‘How are changes in personnel dealt with, within the multi-agency team, to ensure that there is consistency in plans and approach for children and families?’

or

‘Are there common aims in working together and what works well about them?’

However, as stated earlier multi-agency work is a complex matter. To reflect on your own practice is sometimes hard to do without a framework. The matrix provides such a framework from which to compare specific aspects of an individual’s practice and to prioritise those issues that need to be addressed by the individual, group or service concerned.

Step 2 - Identify key factors

This step requires the identification of strengths, barriers, or other factors that are most pertinent to the context. A range of techniques could be used e.g. a voting/prioritising system. There are also key questions to use e.g.

- which are the aspects pertinent to my/our context?
- which aspects will I/we need to address first?
- how can I/we make things more effective?
- when will I/we review the situation?

Agreement on the most important issues to take forward should be reached through discussion and/or voting.

Step 3 - Identify ways forward

Once the key area has been identified, the task is then to think of possible solutions (e.g. by brainstorming). These responses should then be plotted into the appropriate cells in the matrix. The cell with the most responses is likely to be the most important area to be addressed.

Step 4 - Implement

An action plan should be drawn up and then implemented. It is also useful to consider the next step by asking, ‘how will you know if these changes have been effective?’ This will help identify what measures are required for Step 5.

Step 5 - Evaluate and repeat step 1

The implemented solutions are evaluated, using appropriate measures. The process is then repeated with reflection on practice.

The tools for using this approach, as well as several worked examples are given in appendix 5.

It is suggested that successful partnership working will emerge from a thorough analysis of the specific issues and factors which are uniquely relevant to any particular venture. This analysis and reflection is an ongoing process throughout the life of the multi-agency group. The task of designing and maintaining a service is time consuming and demanding of effort on the part of all participants. Often this is discovered incidentally in the process of attempting to deliver a co-ordinated service and can lead to success, stagnation or dissolution depending often on the degree of individual commitment of participants and emerging of group dynamics.

6. Piloting the Model

The processes developed in this study to assist the effectiveness of multi-agency working were piloted with a further workshop with a group of 15 participants drawn from various organisations in one local council area. Participants included parents, voluntary organisations, social workers, education workers and health professionals, most of whom had taken part in an initial workshop also facilitated by the group undertaking this study.

An introduction of the background to the project was given to the pilot group, with multi-agency working set within the context of 'For Scotland's Children'. The model was then presented to the group with practical worked examples of the process of reflective questioning and the use of the matrix as a tool for reflecting on multi-agency working.

The key success factors for effective multi-agency work that had been identified by the group at the earlier workshop (see section 4), were then used as the starting points for participants to pilot the reflective approach and matrix in identifying a way forward. The participants evaluated this approach through a questionnaire with rating scales and a general discussion (see appendix 4).

6.1 Results

Most participants indicated an increased understanding of multi-agency working following the workshop. One participant felt their understanding was lower following the workshop. As a result of the presentations and discussion, they may have realised that their understanding was not as complete as they had originally thought and that there was more to learn in this area of work.

Most participants also showed improvement in their level of confidence in resolving potential difficulties within their multi-agency teams following the presentations. The one participant who felt their confidence had decreased during the workshop may have felt less confident as a result of understanding more of the complexities involved in ensuring multi-agency groups work effectively.

Participants were asked to rate the various techniques used during the workshop on a 5-point scale. Average ratings varied from 3.6 to 4.5, indicating that overall participants valued the strategies suggested and the model presented.

Participants were positive also about the overall process presented as a possible model for training for multi-agency teams. There were general suggestions however that more time would be required to allow concepts to be better understood and established and to provide time for more practice in using the techniques with 'real' practical issues in mind. Participants also felt that being trained alongside their colleagues in specific multi-agency teams would be very powerful in moving the whole process on and making the team more effective in their tasks.

All but one of the participants stated that the workshop had helped inform their future practice and all but one participant stated that they would need/like further training on multi-agency working. (These were two different participants).

When asked what they might like training on, participants suggested that further information on using the models presented would be useful and in particular a focus on readiness and measuring outcomes. In addition, considering the group process itself, and some of the pros and cons of working in a multi-agency team while maintaining a distinctive professional identity, would be of benefit to explore further.

Additional comments indicated that the matrix model had been extremely useful as a template and that participants were encouraged to know that structured training to prepare people for multi-agency work and to assist in improving effectiveness of multi-agency teams was being prepared.

Detail of participant responses can be seen in appendix 4.

7. Overview

The general consensus from both theoretical and practitioner perspectives, is that multi-agency working is a 'good thing' and a necessary approach to meeting the needs of all children and particularly those from disadvantaged families. It is also high on the political agenda and is being promoted as the favoured approach by the Scottish Executive.

However, there are evidently significant concerns that many multi-agency approaches which are well motivated, with committed people, fail to impact on cycles of disadvantage over the longer term.

Working together across organisations is time consuming and therefore needs to be more effective in terms of outcomes. With this in mind, Huxham and Vangen (2003) advises that "unless potential for real collaborative advantage is clear, it is generally best, if there is a choice, to avoid collaboration". However, there are many situations when it is necessary to work together eg LAAC, child protection etc, and when there is no option.

The practical examples and academic research reviewed earlier highlight several factors which can affect the success of multi-agency working and demonstrate that it is a complex and dynamic process. These elements are pertinent at all organisational levels, with the implication that this is a 'whole organisational' approach.

Surveys of practitioners and managers charged with integrated working, appear to recognise that it is not always effective, and that preparation and training for this role or approach needs to be developed, and needs to be ongoing.

Adopting a reflective and solution-focused approach to problem solving within the multi-agency team appears to provide a structured way to prepare and review progress. Practitioners view this approach as a useful method to incorporate into the process suggested in the accompanying cd, as a detailed tool for identifying areas where multi-agency work is going well and where action to improve practice is necessary.

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9. Appendices

Appendix 1

Collaboration

Most writers on collaboration highlight the level of difficulty associated with this way of operating. If the extent and range of difficulty is not acknowledged and addressed, its impact on the collaborative endeavour can be severe.

What is Collaboration?

An examination of the literature on collaborative operating and of collaboration in practice reveals a variety of *terminology*, which in turn leads to the creation of a variety of inter-agency forms. An examination of collaborative enterprise also highlights a variety of meaning ascribed to the operations and sub-operations and hence to a variety of *functional forms* in collaborative organisations.

A third and more useful concept, which emerges is that of the differences in *rationale* for collaboration.

This is best thought of as a *“highly interrelated set of contrasts which may be thought of as a framework of dimensions upon which alternative rationales for collaborations can be distinguished. The interrelated nature of the dimensions makes them difficult to discuss within (the) linear confines.”* (Huxham 1996)

These dimensions can, however, be usefully considered under five areas:

- empowerment and participation
- power relationships
- addressing conflict
- substantive change
- ambitiousness

Empowerment and participation

This construct can best be considered under a number of sub-headings:

a) *IDEOLOGICAL* -----*INSTRUMENTAL*

The *ideological* end of the continuum relates to a rationale which is visionary and implies the pursuit of a moral ideal. Most conceptions of collaboration seem to be focused more at the

instrumental end of the continuum where the rationale in collaborating is in order to achieve some practical end by working with others.

b) ***PARTICIPATION-----ORGANIZATIONS WORKING TOGETHER***

The rationale for collaboration at the *participation* end of this continuum is the wish to involve groups of people (often minority groups) who are affected by the operation of any agency in the development and implementation of its policy. At the opposite end of the continuum is the intent to involve the 'key organisations' in inter-agency activity.

Power relationships

This again can be considered under a number of sub-headings:

c) ***CHANGING POWER RELATIONSHIPS-----EFFECTING TASK BASED CHANGE***

The rationale for collaboration can be focused more on using the process of collaboration itself as a vehicle for altering the existing levels of power held by constituent elements of the collaborative enterprise. An alternative view of power relationships is that collaboration can be used to increase an organisation's power to attain its own aims.

A particular form of this rationale is that of:

d) ***EMPOWER WEAK -----INCREASE OWN ORGANISATION'S EFFECTIVENESS/POWER***

Address Conflict

It is possible to view collaboration as a means of conflict resolution. This aspect of collaboration can be seen as:

e) ***RESOLVING CONFLICT-----ADVANCING A SHARED VISION***

This concept considers the way in which conflicts may be resolved by all parties finding a collaborative way of progressing matters. In contrast to this is the coalition approach which offers a means of conflict resolution, whereby a sub-group of the conflicting parties forms a coalition which is stronger than the others, leading to a resolution of conflict through a change in power relationships.

This provides another dimension of rationale for collaboration, that of addressing conflict through:

f) **COALITION-FORMING-----ALL PARTY COLLABORATION**

Substantive change

Overall most forms of collaboration tend to focus on the achievement of some *substantive* end. Collaboration can thus be seen in terms of the nature of this substantive end. Collaboration can be seen as being instrumental in effecting *either* task based change *or* in advancing a shared vision.

Ambitiousness

The final dimensions of the rationale for collaboration relate to the ambitiousness of the aims of the collaboration. These can range from:

g) **INFORMATION EXCHANGE-----JOINT AGREEMENT**

An exchange of information is much less ambitious than the achievement of a joint agreement. While the former will be easier to achieve, it will often be less powerful in terms of the level of collaboration achieved. A more ambitious aim in the form of some joint agreement may be a more satisfying collaborative outcome, but its achievability will depend on such factors as the importance attached to the collaboration by each organisation and their familiarity and comfort in working with each other.

h) **INFORMATION EXCHANGE-----ENHANCING ANOTHER'S CAPACITY**

This final dimension, in considering the rationale for collaboration, contrasts the difference in ambition between simply exchanging information and the more ambitious relationship-oriented goals (in contrast to the more ambitious output oriented goals of figure 'g').

Appendix 2

A. Questions for senior managers overseeing Children's Services Plans

Questions to be put to a person in your area who has a responsibility for Children's Services planning, in order to help establish a baseline of what is happening at present.

We would advise the respondent that we are part of a group of EPs, on a national PDP, under the auspices of ASPEP, given a remit of looking at multi-agency working in the context of "For Scotland's Children", that we are particularly interested in training needs, and that we are at the stage of initial consultation, to gauge at what level any training would require to be set.

If there are queries about our authority to ask these questions, we can refer people to the relevant principal psychologist or PDP coordinator.

1. With regard to developing effective multi-agency working, what policies and strategies currently exist or are being developed within our area?
2. In what ways are services working together to plan and resource service delivery?
3. In what ways is multi-agency working improving access to services for children and families?
4. What mechanisms do we have in place or are being developed to support and monitor the effectiveness of the processes involved in working together?
5. How will we know that multi-agency working is an effective approach?
6. What training is in place to promote effective multi-agency working and do you think further training is required?

B. Responses

Key themes emerging from interviews with Children's Services Planners

Q1 Policies and strategies - key themes

- Children's Services Plan
- New Community Schools approach
- Community Health and Care Plan
- various services development plans
- need to transfer strategy into practice
- integrated working needs to be a priority, not just joint working
- geographic responsibilities of education/social work/health, may be a barrier to be overcome
- assessment framework
- Youth Justice Strategy Group

Q2 Joint planning and resourcing - key themes

- management groups
- area groups (managed at a more local level)

- specific groups (e.g. residential placements)
- Changing Children's Services fund etc.
- mainstream budgets generally not pulled - where they are, decisions are joint
- interconnected tasks will come from joined up budgets
- financial flexibility will be required

Q3 Improving access to services - key themes

- little evidence as yet
- need to ensure services are targeted to the most vulnerable
- success cannot be measured just by having more services or more clients
- must have built in evaluation
- generally evaluation is in-house
- improved access should come from having locality teams based around communities
- most vulnerable clients should be identified by staged and targeted interventions

Q4 Monitoring effectiveness of the processes - key themes

- few organisations have inbuilt mechanisms
- mechanisms in place tend to relate to pilot projects and specific initiatives
- general acceptance of the principle
- data must be collated routinely and outcome measures evaluated
- appointment of external researchers to evaluate local outcome targets
- monitoring by Area Children's Service Forums

Q5 Evaluating multi-agency working as an effective approach - key themes

- use formal external evaluation
- whilst it is appropriate to have measures, they are often difficult to apply
- what constitutes a 'useful' measure
- views quality of life of service users is paramount
- it will be difficult to measure joint working perspectives
- speed of access/time to achieve targets will be useful measures

Q6 Training - key themes

- training in specific issues often in place but not much re processes of multi-agency working
- co-ordination of training required
- audit of training needs required
- often no corporate interagency strategy for training
- co-location could offer the opportunity for people working and training together
- need for a shared knowledge of roles/core values/ beliefs of other agencies

Appendix 3

Educational Psychologists Conference - Workshop Summary

Six psychologists attended the workshop, all from different authorities.

The participants were asked to -

- provide definitions of multi-agency work (MAW)
- think about one or two MA Groups they had involvement with, how long they had been in the group, how they became involved, and the main remit of the groups
- consider what promoted effectiveness
- describe what is the main contribution of the psychologist
- outline barriers to successful MAW

A. Discussion/prompt questions used in workshop

Definition

- Are there common aims of working together – do we all share these?
- There are differences between joint working and integrated working. To what extent do you feel services are integrated?

Roles

- How are decisions made within the multi-agency process and at what level?
- Who can/does make decisions?
- Where are the implications of these differences for funding?

Effectiveness

- Has joint working made any difference to pupils, families and services?
- What are the biggest barriers to joined up working – how have you overcome these or how do you plan to overcome them?
- What makes you think that 'joined up working' is a good way to provide services?
- Who coordinates the joint working you are involved in to make sure decisions are followed through?
- How are differences/conflicts resolved between various people involved in joined up working?

Training/preparation

- What training or preparation have you had for your involvement in MAG?
- What training or preparation would have been helpful to you, before being involved in MAG?
- How would you know what your/others training needs are in this area?

B. Responses

Definitions given -

- people planning work together with a shared objective
- meeting with other people to work out what to do to help a young person
- membership of a group
- joint working
- shared understanding of the processes, and what happens in meetings
- co-operative working while being clear about individual remits and their boundaries
- shared understanding and realistic expectations of others in the group
- working together to achieve *agreed* outcomes

There were comments to the effect that the issues were the same in relation to any two people working together, even from the same profession. It should also be recognised that people from the same agency have different approaches.

Multi-agency meetings -

- clear purpose and agenda for meeting
- agenda drawn up in a democratic fashion
- chair allows everyone to contribute, facilitates discussion
- well prepared for meetings / do negotiations with other agencies beforehand
- parent and child appropriately involved and supported

There was comment around meetings being only a part of MAW, with other aspects including working alongside someone, talking to each other prior to meetings, carrying out agreed tasks within timescales, keeping each other informed re developments

Factors for success -

- mutual valuing
- trust – easier when you know others, but sometimes need to remind re-educate people you are familiar with regarding roles/responsibilities
- good communication
- more commitment if part of the group voluntarily
- need for all to identify with the aims of the group
- consistency / continuity of membership of group
- quality of chairing of meetings of group is important to move towards resolution of difficulties
- agreed protocols and procedures

Psychologist's contribution -

- offer a psychological perspective
- bring people together
- awareness of roles
- central figure
- help achieve resolution of differences

Barriers to MAW-

- meetings are usually about difficulties, which require some resolution, and agreement may be hard to achieve
- individuals need to represent their agencies' position
- not being able to make commitments on behalf of your organization
- fear of how others will respond to your exposed view – need to be safe.
- mismatch of understandings / assumptions about aims or roles
- change in personnel
- lack of power to make resourcing decisions jointly
- people becoming skilled in manipulating meetings
- other agencies becoming more skilled at getting other agencies to do tasks
- collusion between professionals
- unclear who can prompt change when there has been changing membership in the group
- dynamic of group

- if a person is press-ganged into a meeting rather than being a volunteer, less likely to contribute positively

Additional discussion points that were covered produced the following observations:

Outcome / evaluation measures -

- agreed outcome measures from aims agreed between agencies
- different agencies might have different measures of success which may be in conflict
- outcome for the child/family is missed in the need to deliver for your service

Training / preparation -

- needs to be a shared exercise from the start
- need not be formal but can be through structured, focussed discussion
- using feedback systems
- training should be across hierarchical levels between agencies
- if shared there needs to be agreement on who leads, plans and delivers.

Some discussion about shared views/approaches at directorate level suggested that there are examples of different services being able to integrate aspects of work, but there was still a feeling that services/departments might have conflicting aims.

Example of a problem-solving process -

The Person Centred Planning approach was outlined. There was some awareness of the approach but no one using it as a basis for meetings.

Appendix 4

Analysis of evaluation from follow-up multi-agency partners workshop

1. Progress relating to how well participants understand the complexities of multi-agency/integrated working, as a result of participating in the workshop:

- 1 = 2 point regression
- 5 = no change
- 4 = 1 point improvement
- 4 = 2 point improvement
- 1 = 3 point improvement

Overall, participants who showed improvement in their understanding of this process had moved up the scale by an average of 1.07 points following the workshop, with a third of participants showing even greater progress.

The participant who felt their understanding was better initially may, as a result of the presentations and discussion, have realised that their understanding was not as complete as they had originally thought and that there was more to learn in this area of work.

2. Progress relating to confidence in knowing how to resolve difficulties within a multi-agency team, as a result of participating in the workshop:

- 1 = 2 point regression
- 3 = no change
- 7 = 1 point improvement
- 1 = 2 point improvement

Overall, participants who showed improvement in their confidence in resolving potential difficulties within their multi-agency teams had moved up the scale by an average of 1.07 points following the workshop, with several participants showing even greater progress.

The participant who felt their confidence has decreased during the workshop may have felt less confident as a result of understanding more of the complexities involved in ensuring multi-agency groups work effectively.

3. Participants were asked to rate the various techniques used during the two workshops on a 5 point scale, where 1 was classed as 'not useful' and 5 classed as 'very useful'. Average ratings were as follows:

- Solution Focused Problem Solving = 4.5
- Providing Theoretical Perspectives (background information) = 3.6
- Providing Theoretical Perspectives (information on complexity) = 3.8
- Models Presented (matrix) = 3.7
- Models Presented (reflective questioning) = 3.9

Overall participants were positive about all of the techniques used during the workshops and the information presented. However, they found the solution focused approach to problem solving the most useful technique.

4. Participants were asked to rate on a 10 point scale, the overall process presented as a possible model for training for multi-agency teams. This was given an average rating of 6.5. Comments on what to change (either add or leave out) were as follows:

- make the workshop tasks more specific to the multi-agency teams being trained
- further development of the information on maintaining professional identity within multi-agency teams
- more initial group work to assist the group in becoming more familiar with the matrix

- although the initial presentation may be valuable to others (background information), I was aware of these issues and therefore would not have needed this information
- more use of practical examples/scenarios
- process could be used to look at/identify the effect of behaviour/situation changes in the young person – more child centred
- some initial induction/awareness raising around the benefits, goals and processes of the theoretical models
- more group activity, discussion and involvement - less complex, dry presentation
- an explanation of why this model may work
- add a focus on the action plan by multi-agency teams
- more formal procedures/guidelines (I'm sure this will come)
- need a longer session
- research base of the theory
- more of an in-depth explanation and discussion

From the comments it would seem that participants are looking for more time to expand on the ideas presented and to provide more detail of the models, the theory behind them and an explanation of how they could be used. There also needs to be more practical examples for groups to work through, again with more time, to allow the models to be used in 'real life' scenarios, specific to the groups being trained.

5. All but one of the participants stated that the workshop had helped inform their future practice and all but one participant stated that they would need/like further training on multi-agency working. (These were two different participants).

6. When asked what they might like training on, participants suggested:

- joint training with my specific multi-agency workers on other techniques to structure meetings
- methods of evaluation
- implementing best practice - consistent guidelines across agencies and organisations about 'how to'
- readiness
- group constructions and processes
- measuring outcomes
- not training as such, but opportunities to shadow other professionals
- the process of 'doing' the training with 'real' multi-agency teams would be useful (particularly with less successful teams)
- some more on the pros and cons of distinctive professional identity
- models of integrated delivery

7. Additional comments were also provided:

- matrix model is extremely useful as a template
- encouraging to know that preparation for multi-agency training is beginning – thank you
- I liked the way of identifying the issues using the numbers, which gave a clear impression of patterns within the matrix
- always good to have ones thinking challenged/developed

Appendix 5

The Reflective Approach

This approach consists of five steps:

Step 1 – Reflect on own practice

Instructions

1. Answer the questions (see below) considering the degree of service integration required
2. Collate the responses for the questions.
3. Decide the key issues to address
4. You are ready for step 2

General themes

What has been effective?
What has been more of a challenge?
How were difficulties overcome?
How are changes managed?

Specific examples

1. Are there common aims for working together with members of _____?
2. There are differences between joint working and integrated working. To what extent do you feel services are integrated?
3. What is most effective when considering who should be involved?
4. How are decisions made within the multi-agency team? Could these be improved?
5. Who has power to make decisions about expenditure?
6. Are there differences in the level of decisions that can be made from the different services?
7. What difference has joint working made to the pupils, families or services?
8. What are the biggest barriers to evaluating outcomes jointly?
9. How are differences or conflicts between people resolved?
10. What types of meetings have you been involved in? what works well in these meetings?
11. Is there a need for a coordinator, if so who should it be?
12. How are changes in personnel dealt with and is it different for different services?
13. If people have different expectations about the roles of the team members how can this be overcome?
14. What makes you think that joined up working is a good way to provide a service?

15. What would it be considered unnecessary to work jointly?
16. What other issues are particularly effective?
17. What difficulties are there around sharing information?
18. How do you avoid duplication of meetings so that peoples time is used effectively?

Step 2 – Generate ideas for way forward.

Instructions

1. Take the key issues.
2. Plot them onto the multi-agency matrix
3. Decide as a group which of the issue(s) is the most important
4. Generate possible solutions (see below)
5. Collate the list of solutions
6. Plot them onto the matrix

Generating solutions – possible method

Brainstorm -

- How many ways can this issue be made better?
- What is the best way forward?
- What else can be done?

Step 3 – Decide on way forward

Instructions

1. Look for patterns on the matrix
2. Cells which have several solutions are likely to be key areas for deciding on a way forward.
3. Each person takes two or three votes for the ones they want to do
4. Place your votes on the solutions
5. Discuss which of the solutions with the group
6. Write an action plan

List of Solutions

Solutions	Votes

Step 4 – Implement

Instructions

1. Write action plan to implement
2. Set date for review

Ways Forward	Success Criterion	By

Step 5 – Evaluate

Instructions

1. Take action plan
2. Gather data if necessary for success criteria
3. Analyse whether objectives have been achieved.
4. Does this improve multi-agency work?

Evaluation Check list

Changes made	Change seen	Further action

	Readiness	Process	Outcome
Individual			
Group			
Organisation			

Appendix 6

Training Framework – suggestions for activities within CD-ROM

TRUST:

Think of experiences you have had of coming into a multi-agency

- What makes a difference in tempting you to trust others?
- How did you set about gaining others' trust?
- Did anything happen which undermined your trust in others?
- What benefits have you seen from an establishment of trust?
- What has threatened this trust once it has been established?

Aims of exercise: To raise awareness of necessity of trust.
 To demonstrate fragility of trust.
 To highlight own role in establishing trust.

POWER:

Think of multi-agency settings you have experienced:

- Who were the powerful people/agencies?
- Who seemed to be lacking in power?
- Were these power relationships consistent, or what contributed to changes in relative power?
- What has led you to feeling in control?
- What has made you feel powerless?
- What did you need to see happen to bring you some feeling of power?
- Were there any disruptive effects on aims of partnership by lack of power, either resting in individual members, or in the group as a whole?
- Who / what could be responsible for changing power?

Aims: To raise awareness of existence of power disparities and how these affect working together.
 To stimulate discussion of how power relationships might change.

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