

Childhood Neglect: Improving Outcomes for Children

Learning Outcomes

To understand what hinders and facilitates integrated working.

Audience Groups 1-8 (Working Together 2010)

Time 30 minutes

Key Reading

Barlow, J. with Scott, J. (2010) Safeguarding in the 21st Century – Where to now? Devon: Research in Practice.

Horwath, J. and Morrison, T. (2007) 'Collaboration, integration and change in children's services: Critical issues and key ingredients'. Child Abuse and Neglect 31(1): 55-69.

Robinson, M., Atkinson, M. and Downing, D. (2008) Research briefing: Integrated children's services: enablers, challenges and impact. Slough: National Foundation for Educational Research

Siraj-Blatchford, I. and Siraj-Blatchford, J. (2009) Improving developmental outcomes for children through effective practice in integrating early years services. London: C4EO.

Sloper, P. (2004) 'Facilitators and barriers for co-ordinated multi-agency services.' Child: Care, Health and Development 30(6): 571-580.

Links to Common Core

Common Core 1 Effective communication and engagement with children, young people, their families and carers (skills: consultation and negotiation). Identify what each party hopes to achieve in order to reach the best possible and fair conclusion for the child or young person.

Common Core 2 Child and young person development (skills: observation and judgement). Where you feel that further support is needed, know when to take action yourself and when to refer to managers, supervisors or other relevant professionals.

Common Core 5 Multi-agency working (skills: communication and teamwork). Communicate effectively with other practitioners and professionals by listening and ensuring that you are being listened to

Common Core 5 Multi-agency working (skills: communication and teamwork). Share experience through formal and informal exchanges and work with adults who are parents/carers.

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Learning outcomes.

Do we have to work together?
Yes
• Joint working a priority following the Victoria Climbié Inquiry (CM 5730 2003)
• Legal requirement following Children Act (2004) for agencies to cooperate to improve the wellbeing of children
However...
• Audit Commission (2008) found considerable confusion about whether Children's Trusts meant new statutory body or mandated partnership working.
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In particular, the Children Act 2004 requires public bodies to cooperate to improve the wellbeing of children.

Is this a surprise?
Difficulties in collaboration noted since 1960s:
• lack of ownership amongst senior managers
• inflexible organisational structures
• conflicting ideologies and cultures
• lack of budget control
• communication problems
• poor understanding of roles
• mistrust among professionals
• no common language.
(Howarth and Morrison 2007)
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In addition to the points made by Horwath and Morrison (2007), research also finds difficulties in providing a common language to describe collaboration.

Discussion point: Ask participants how they describe the term: collaboration

Terms such as:

- Holistic guidance
- Joined up working
- Multi- and cross-agency working
- Collaboration
- Coordination

What do we mean?
"Service integration is an ecological integrated children's system that is centred on the child and their family, served through service coordination, and supported through integrated organisations and agencies."
(Sue Blackford and Gray Blackford 2006)
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Recent research (Barlow with Scott 2010) is beginning to suggest that what is important in terms of outcomes is quality of integration rather than type of integration.

Do you recognise these scenarios?

- **Multidisciplinary**
...practice among individuals working within a single agency where the focus tends to be on priorities of that agency and coordination with other agencies is rare.
- **Interdisciplinary**
... situation in which individual professionals from different agencies separately assess the needs of child and family, and then meet together to discuss findings and set goals.

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Is the goal to move towards?

Transdisciplinary working

...members of different agencies work together jointly, sharing aims, information, tasks and responsibilities...One coordinated multiagency assessment is undertaken and used by all professionals. Families are seen as equal partners.

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Shared characteristics for working together

Low-level collaboration → Level and degree of service integration → Integration

Two or more organisations
Organisations retain own identities
Relationship is not contractor-provider
Usually some agreement to work together
Usually agreed aims
Aims could not be achieved by one organisation alone
Relationships formalised – usually a structure with planning, implementation and review of agreed work.

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Challenges for effective integrated working

- Political climate.
- Organisational challenges.
- Cultural and professional obstacles.
- Multi-layered integration.

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Different levels and degrees of service integration have been identified from low-level collaboration through to complete integration.

Even full integration can differ from integration of systems, of administration or of service delivery to respond to clients. Integration can also occur within one service sector, across a population group or within a particular service delivery organisation.

A review of the research by the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER 2008) discusses the areas that could pose a challenge for integrated working. The review identified:

- **Political climate:** the term political is used in its broadest sense here as it includes changes in political steer locally and nationally, financial uncertainty, agency reorganisations and a climate of organisational change
- **Organisational challenges:** such as agencies having different policies, procedures and systems that cannot come together
- **Cultural and professional obstacles:** these include professional stereotyping alongside different professional beliefs, and differences in the extent of commitment to involving children and families
- **Multi-layered integration:** understanding that integration of key structures is multi-layered and potential for variation at different levels

Prerequisites for effective integrated working

- Good systems of communication.
- Support, supervision and joint training.
- Secondments between services.
- Commitment to evaluation, audit and change.
- Commitment to consulting with, and acting on, user/carer views.

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What helps working together?

- Commitment to joint working at all levels.
- Strong leadership and emotional intelligence of management.
- Clarity of purpose.
- Clarity of arrangements and responsibilities.
- Relationship and trust between partners.
- Practical interventions to promote integrated working.

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Discussion point: Ask participants to quickly identify the factors which help effective working, and then compare with the those identified through the research.

The literature reviewed by NFER also identified factors, which help effective working together:

- **Commitment at all levels**
 - Commitment to the vision of integration throughout the organisation
 - Buy-in to core concepts and pooled budgets. However, the difficulties of pooling budgets should not be underestimated. Organisations often find it easier to contribute resources which are not financial.
 - Creation of collaborative capacity at strategic levels
- **Strong leadership and management**
 - Supportive leadership to establish and model emotional tone
 - Awareness of emotional processes around change
 - Emotional intelligence of management and leadership associated with development of partnerships: be aware of what others are undergoing
 - Recognition of constraints for others
 - Dedicated posts for capacity for change
- **Clarity of purpose**
 - Clear agreed aims and timetable
 - Clarity for stakeholders about the reasons for involvement
 - Long term vision and focus on compatible goals
 - Collective ownership of shared goals
 - Clarity on shared objectives
- **Clarity of arrangements and responsibilities**
 - Clear agreed protocols
 - Clear professional identities and recognition of roles
 - Respect regardless of organisational status
 - Dedicated posts for capacity for change
- **Relationship and trust**
 - Strong personal relationships, trust and respect
 - Reflect on process of working relationships and process
 - Space for feedback
 - Space to manage ambiguity and conflict
 - Understanding previous history and relationships between organisations
- **Practical interventions**
 - Put in place new induction processes
 - Prepare and train staff
 - Communicate about local services
 - Involve staff in developments and allow service improvements to evolve
 - Implement common processes

What prevents working together?

- Previous history of conflict.
- Competitive relationships.
- Bureaucratic need to follow procedures.
- Issues of accountability.
- Professionals or disciplines not relinquishing roles.
- Power struggles.
- Lack of common language.
- Reliance on key individuals.

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This slide discusses some of the factors that can prevent effective multidisciplinary working. A previous history of conflict can be at both the level of the individual and of the organisation. In terms of accountability, there needs to be clarity about who takes responsibility in each agency operationally and strategically.

Examples of practice models (UK)

- Team around the child and family
- A single worker with small caseload and 24-hour availability of supervision and consultation
- Co-working
- Social work units (Hackney model 'Reclaim Social Work')

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The co-working model involves two workers sharing the Lead Professional role for the family as a whole.

The Hackney model involves the development of social work units that replace individual caseloads with teams, who work together on cases, consisting of a consultant social worker, qualified social worker, children's practitioners, half-time family therapist and administrator. The work of the team is overseen by senior managers and staff are offered training to develop their skills further such as in family therapy.

Do things improve?

'It is suggested that there appears to have been a move away from the view of integrated services as an ideal model, towards a view that the outcomes of integrated working are situation specific and that diverse approaches to the degree/extent of integration may be equally valid.'

(Robinson, Atkinson and Downing 2008)

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Two themes emerged from the research examined by Barlow with Scott (2010): the first, is the importance given to the need to work with other agencies and to maintain a focus on the family as a whole.

Do things improve?

- European models show greater integration in Nordic countries where there is high level of commitment to implementation of holistic child welfare model, characterised by higher levels of investment, trust, authority and negotiation.
- In the UK, research – albeit limited - suggests that integrated working is providing mixed outcomes on a number of levels:
 - service users
 - professionals
 - services.

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The second theme is that the trust developed between families and the professionals, who had the authority to make decisions, was often agreed through negotiation between all workers and the family.

For services users

- Improved access to services and speedier response.
- Better information and communication from professionals.
- Increasing involvement of service user and wider communities.
- Holistic approach.
- Improved outcomes: maintenance in home setting; improvement in attainment.

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For professionals

- Better understanding of issues and children's needs
- Increased understanding and trust between professionals
- Greater willingness to take risks
- Co-learning

But

- Increased demands and pressures on individual agencies
- Joined up working an add-on to existing workload
- Insufficient time for negotiation and information exchange
- Lack of adequate administrative support

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For services

- Quality
- Efficiency
- Greater focus on prevention and early intervention
- Greater reliance on evidence based practice

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Examples given for:

- **Quality:** improved service user experience; more seamless service; clearer identification of service gaps; overcoming fragmentation; involvement of community and service users; harnessing of resources
- **Efficiency:** reduce tensions; reduce duplication; sharing of overheads; more development of solutions locally; building of capacity to resolve difficulties through cooperation between stakeholders
- **A focus on evidence-based practice allowed a focus on targeting conditions that affect parents and communities' ability to care for children**

For the future

'The emphasis of all models that are adopted, particularly within social care, should be on continuity in terms of the practitioner-client relationship.'

(Barrow with Scott 2010, p107)

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