Learning Outcomes
To understand what hinders and facilitates integrated working.

Audience  Groups 1-8 (Working Together 2010)  Time  30 minutes

Key Reading


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.
In particular, the Children Act 2004 requires public bodies to cooperate to improve the wellbeing of children.

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

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.
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
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
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.

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.

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.

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.
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

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"For professionals"

- Better understanding of issues and children’s needs
- Improved understanding and trust between professionals
- Greater willingness to take risks
- Learning
- Notional hierarchy, processes or individual agencies
- Joint working as an add on to existing method
- Clear line of accountability and information exchange
- Lack of adequate administrative support

"For services"

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

"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."

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"Understanding integrated working"