

**LITERATURE
REVIEW**

**Multi-agency working and its
implications for practice:**

A review of the literature

**Mary Atkinson
Megan Jones
Emily Lamont**

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Executive summary

In recent years, multi-agency working has received much attention and has been the focus of some political agendas. For example, the Government's *Every Child Matters* white paper sets out a Children's Trust model of practice, involving a range of professionals working together in an integrated way in order to promote positive outcomes for children and young people (DfES, 2005). Recent reviews of literature on multi-agency working are typically limited to one specific sector or issue and do not consider multi-agency working in the wider sense, across all sectors and different types of activity. The NFER was therefore asked by the CfBT Education Trust to conduct a multi-agency literature review, which, it is hoped will contribute to current knowledge about multi-agency activities and best practice. The literature review builds on previous NFER work highlighting the variety of multi-agency working which exists, the associated challenges and the key factors for its success, as well as its 'potential' impact (e.g. Atkinson *et al.* 2001 and 2002; Tomlinson, 2003).

Different types/models of multi-agency working

- While there is much discussion and refinement of models of multi-agency activity within the literature this does not appear to have extended to **linking models with outcomes**, particularly for service users. A number of authors implicitly or explicitly draw a picture in which 'integrated', 'transdisciplinary', or 'holistic' working practices will bring about the most benefit (to all, and to service users in particular). However, studies tend not to provide evidence that this is the case. Thus, one fruitful area for further research would be to investigate which models of multi-agency activity bring about which types of outcomes for professionals, agencies and, importantly, for service users.
- Multi-agency activity **takes many forms** and the **terminology used to describe it varies**, making classification and comparison between different types difficult. Even so, there have been several attempts in the literature to characterise or categorise different types of multi-agency activity.
- Models of different types of multi-agency activity tend to focus on one of two aspects – either the **extent** of multi-agency activity or the **organisation** of multi-agency structures or teams. Those classifying the extent of activity approach it by producing a hierarchical typology of forms, based on the extent, 'stage' or depth of the multi-agency activity.

- Examination of both types of model led to a distillation of them into three principal dimensions. These were **organisation**, **joint investment** and **integration**. The types of questions that might be asked in order to assess the type or extent of multi-agency activity are therefore: Are there organisational structures set up to support multi-agency working? To what extent are agencies and/or professionals working towards a shared vision or common goal? To what degree are services synthesised and coordinated? To what extent is the focus of services on the service user?

The impact of multi-agency working

- Some studies focused on the perceived benefits of multi-agency working, the most commonly identified being improved/more effective services and joint problem solving, although the ability to take a holistic approach and increased understanding and trust between agencies were also cited.
- Whilst the impacts on professionals involved in multi-agency working appeared to be often cited and well evidenced, empirical evidence for impacts on service users was sparse. Given the current climate, which places much emphasis on multi-agency working and the attention given to the client's voice, this would seem an important area for further research.
- Positive impacts on professionals centred mainly around multi-agency activity being rewarding and stimulating, increased knowledge and understanding of other agencies, and improved relationships and communication between agencies. Negative impacts on professionals involved in multi-agency activity focused in particular on uncertainty regarding their professional identities. There were some conflicting messages about whether multi-agency working resulted in an increase or reduced workload for the professional involved, although the evidence seemed to be weighted towards an increased workload.
- The main impacts on service users, where they were reported, was their improved access to services, through speedier and more appropriate referral, and a greater focus on prevention and early intervention. Impacts cited also included improvements to the lives of service users through more focused support, enabling disabled children, for example, to remain at home and attend their local school.
- There were mixed reports with regard to whether multi-agency working increased or reduced the demand on services/agencies as a whole, although, as with the demand on professionals, the evidence seemed to be weighted more towards an increased demand. These conflicting findings, together with the previous conflicting reports with regard to the impact on professionals' workload, suggest that the demand placed on both individuals and agencies might warrant further investigation.

Factors influencing multi-agency working

- There was evidence within the literature sample to indicate that facilitators and barriers to multi-agency working had been explored in some depth and there was a lot of commonality and agreement amongst the findings from a range of different sources and sectors.
- **Working relationships:** Issues concerning working relationships were found to be central to multi-agency activity. One of the key issues relates to clarity over role demarcation, a lack of which was highlighted as the most frequently identified challenge. The importance of those involved having commitment to multi-agency working and the development of understanding, trust and mutual respect amongst participants was also emphasised.
- **Multi-agency processes:** Communication was identified, within the literature examined, as the most common facilitator of multi-agency work and good communication was therefore considered key to its success. Coupled with this, was the need for clarity of purpose through the establishment of clear and shared aims and objectives.
- **Resourcing multi-agency work:** Adequate resourcing, in terms of funding, staffing and time, was found to be central to the success of multi-agency working. Whilst financial certainty and equity was important, inadequate or time-limited funding was identified as problematic. A rapid turnover of staff, recruitment difficulties and insufficient time allocated for multi-agency activity were also reported to be potential threats to its success.
- **Management and governance:** In terms of management and governance, leadership was identified as the key aspect influencing multi-agency work. An absence of clear leadership and a lack of support from upper management were revealed as particularly damaging.

Effective multi-agency practice

- The implications for good practice with regard to multi-agency working have been widely explored in the literature and, as such, there appears to be conclusive evidence with regard to many elements of good practice.
- According to the literature, the establishment of effective working relationships depends on four key areas: clarifying roles and responsibilities (e.g. by ensuring parity amongst partners, valuing diversity); securing commitment at all levels (e.g. by having commitment at senior level, highlighting the benefits); engendering trust and mutual respect (e.g. through sharing skills and expertise, equal resource distribution); and fostering understanding between agencies (e.g. through joint training and recognition of individual expertise).
- Three areas were identified as important in developing effective multi-agency processes: ensuring effective communication and information sharing (e.g. by

having transparent lines of communication, creating opportunities for discussion), developing a shared purpose (e.g. by agreeing joint aims, conducting a needs analysis) and effective planning and organisation (e.g. by developing shared protocols, having a clearly defined structure).

- It was considered important to secure the necessary resources for multi-agency work and this involved securing adequate and sustained funding (e.g. through pooled budgets, written agreements around funding), ensuring continuity of staffing (e.g. by ensuring staff capacity, providing support for staff) and an adequate time allocation (e.g. by having realistic timescales, built in time for planning).
- Effective management and governance was particularly dependent on ensuring effective leadership (e.g. by identifying a key staff member, appointing leaders with special attributes), although also dependent on effective governance and management arrangements (e.g. by developing appropriate accountability systems and having a transparent decision-making process) and an effective performance management system (e.g. through joint review and evaluation protocols and joint performance indicators).
- Overall, three aspects of good practice emerged throughout the literature as particularly important in that they were each identified as key to addressing a number of critical issues to the success of interagency practice. These areas of good practice related to providing sufficient time for the development of multi-agency working, the provision of joint training and agreement of joint aims and objectives.

Concluding comments

Review of the literature sample within this study again testified to the complexity of multi-agency working. Whilst there has been some discussion about models of multi-agency working within the literature over the last five years, this does not seem to have extended to the linking of models with facilitators, barriers and, more importantly, outcomes. This is an area that may fruitfully be explored in further research.

There is substantial empirical evidence for the impact of multi-agency working on the professionals involved. Multi-agency activity is rewarding and stimulating for staff and provides them with a greater understanding of other agencies and services, although it can also lead to uncertainty over professional identities. In contrast, there seems to be very little empirical evidence for the impact on service users. The evidence available suggests

that the main benefit to service users is likely to centre around improved access to services, but more research needs to be conducted in this area.

There is also little evidence to draw on to determine the impact of multi-agency working on the agencies and services involved. There appears to be conflicting evidence with regard to the demands that multi-agency working makes on both the agencies, and the professionals involved (although it seems to be weighted towards an increased demand on both). This would indicate the need for further exploration in this area and a pressing need to confirm (if evident) the impact on service users.

In contrast, facilitators, barriers and good practice with regard to multi-agency working have been widely explored in the literature and, as such, there appears to be much conclusive evidence with regard to elements of good practice. These findings are not new and appear to have been well refined and documented over the last few years. There is therefore a wealth of information for practitioners to draw on. It may be that practitioners need to be directed to accessible sources of information and there needs to be more acknowledgement that effective multi-agency working is not easily achieved and takes time. However, by considering the information that is currently available, it would appear to be a process that can be worked through.

1 Introduction

This report focuses on the findings from a literature review on multi-agency working conducted by the NFER for the CfBT Education Trust (CfBT). Within this chapter, the following are detailed:

- Background
- Aims/focus of the study
- Methodology
- Overview of the literature sources
- Structure of the report.

1.1 Background

In recent years, multi-agency working has received much attention and been the focus of many political agendas. The Government's Every Child Matters (ECM) white paper sets out a Children's Trust model of practice, involving a range of professionals (e.g. health, education and social care) working together in an integrated way in order to protect and promote positive outcomes for children and young people (DfES, 2003 onwards). Working in partnership is therefore a key mechanism for the delivery of the ECM five outcomes for children and young people: being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and achieving economic wellbeing.

With a view to conducting a detailed and up-to-date literature review with regard to multi-agency working, the CfBT therefore asked the NFER to undertake a brief scoping exercise in order to explore what types of reviews had previously been undertaken in this field. A number of sources were searched for relevant research (e.g. Social Care Online, Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts, PsycINFO, DfES, Department of Health and the Scottish Executive).

Findings from this scoping exercise indicated that reviews of literature on multi-agency activity are typically limited to one specific sector or issue and do not consider multi-agency working in the wider sense, across all sectors and different types of activity. The findings from this initial scoping exercise therefore suggested that it is both timely and pertinent to carry out a review of multi-agency work across different sectors and to assess the relevant literature to further current knowledge about multi-agency activities and best practice.

The review aims to build on previous NFER research, which focused on different types of multi-agency practice, impacts and the challenges and facilitators associated with multi-agency working (Atkinson *et al.*, 2001; 2002). In that study, the first phase involved an audit of multi-agency approaches between health, social services and education. Following on from this, a range of different initiatives were selected and key personnel interviewed, with a small number being revisited for the purposes of more detailed case-study analysis. The findings derived from the research suggested that different types of multi-agency activity existed and that there was 'complexity' and also 'potential' in integrating services. The current review of literature therefore builds on the findings of this initial research by providing an up-to-date analysis of what the literature is currently saying about multi-agency practice.

1.2 Aims/focus of the study

The overall purpose of this study was to review existing research and evaluation to explore different models of multi-agency work, the impacts and possible facilitators and challenges to multi-agency working, as well as the implications this has for good practice. The review aimed to address the following research questions.

- What research on multi-agency working has been carried out since 2000?

- In what ways can the research be categorised so as to gain an overview of different models of multi-agency working, methodology and substantive area (e.g. education, health, community etc)?
- What is the evidence for different models of multi-agency working?
- Has any work explored the impact of multi-agency work and the facilitators/challenges?
- What are the most compelling findings on outcomes of multi-agency working based on the best evidence available?
- What are the implications for good practice?
- What research is planned or currently underway in this area but not yet published?
- What gaps are there in the research or evidence-base?

1.3 Methodology

This section outlines the methodology and includes:

- The search strategy
- Identification of the most relevant pieces of literature
- Analysis of the evidence.

The search strategy

Sources were identified from a range of educational databases. Details of the range of databases searched and the key words used are provided in the search strategy which is detailed in Appendix 1. The initial criteria for inclusion were:

- Evidence from empirically-based research and evaluation
- Evidence about different types of multi-agency working
- The impact of multi-agency working
- The facilitators and challenges to multi-agency working
- Implications for good practice
- Evidence from a variety of sectors, such as education, health, social care, police and so on

- A balance of UK-based sources and wider international literature as appropriate (particularly the US)
- Literature published from 2000 onwards.

However, given the vast number of sources originally identified (see below), in the main, evidence from literature published from 2003 onwards was included in the review, and only selected prior sources were used where they were thought to be particularly pertinent.

In addition, in order to obtain as full a picture as possible of multi-agency working across a range of different sectors, further identification of sources was sought via e-mail requests to relevant individuals and organisations working in this field. This included requests to all children's trust pathfinder local authorities for whom contacts were available (23), since they were perceived to be leaders in integrated children's services; major relevant funders (e.g. DfES, Department of Health, Home Office etc.); and other individuals known to CfBT and NFER who may be undertaking relevant work in this area. In total, 79 organisations were contacted for this part of the search.

Identification of the most relevant sources

A three-step selection process was applied to the identified literature using the criteria described above in order to help identify the most relevant sources and findings.

- Firstly, search parameters identified references and abstracts, which were explored for their pertinence to the review. The full sources of items for possible inclusion were then requested from the library or downloaded from the internet.
- Secondly, the quality and relevance of sources was considered. Information and findings from these publications were briefly summarised onto an Excel spreadsheet against a number of relevant headings (e.g. type of multi-agency working; factors that facilitate; challenges, the impact of multi-agency working etc.).

- Thirdly, the most relevant sources were identified using the main criteria (leading to 29 sources being included). These were summarised more fully into an agreed template (see Appendix 2).
- The main criteria for inclusion in the review were that sources contained information pertinent to the research questions: types or models of multi-agency working; the impact of multi-agency working; factors which facilitate multi-agency working and the associated challenges. In addition, whether sources conformed to search parameters, their relevance and research quality were taken into account.

Analysis of the evidence

Initial searches identified 1385 sources as relevant to the literature review. As a result of the selection process (based on initial abstract information and using the criteria identified above) 89 sources were identified for closer examination and application of the key review criteria.

Detailed examination of these sources led to the final selection of 33 sources fitting the required criteria. These sources referred to 29 actual research studies, as some sources related to the same piece of research and were therefore counted as one work overall. These sources were then summarised more fully into an agreed template, thereby capturing information relevant to the review (see Appendix 2). The summary template utilised allowed researchers to review the evidence in terms of the quality of the research. This was assessed by considering:

- The appropriateness of the analysis that was reported
- Any author interpretations
- Any biases/caveats to be aware of
- Any corroboration or triangulation of sources.

Once the templates had been completed for each source, a coding system was developed and applied to each of the summaries. This process enabled the research team to account for the range of evidence, to locate the evidence in context and to draw out key themes across the different sources. A detailed summary of the literature in terms of the area/target groups, the

dates of sources, the research methods covered and their location is provided in Appendix 3.

From the 79 organisations which were emailed regarding current research details, only 12 responses were received, despite reminders being sent. These responses included seven completed pro formas and five email responses containing relevant links. A list of the organisations responding to the email is provided in Appendix 4. Links, in the main, identified pieces of research which had already been included or eliminated from the review. However, a few current projects of interest were:

- **Youth justice Board:** The national evaluation of children's trust by the National Children's Bureau (NCB) which is examining six YOTs nationwide using focus groups with parents and young people, surveys with practitioners in YOTs and partner agencies, as well as interviews with other stakeholders. This data is currently undergoing analysis.
- **Leicester Children's Trust:** Evaluation of a local programme in order to develop a model for integrated children's services.
- **NSPCC:** A three-year project involving a survey of schools in three counties within the multi-agency context of safeguarding. Initial findings highlight difficulties in making referrals from schools and finding out what happened next.
- **Institute of Education:** A research project for the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth entitled 'What Works in Collaboration'. This is an international literature review on effective collaboration between agencies and is due to report summer 2007, but not available at the time of publication.
- **Universities of Birmingham, Oxford and Bath:** A project entitled 'Learning in and for Interagency Working', which produced a literature review in the early stages and this has been included within the review. The project also includes detailed examination of multi-agency practices via small-scale intensive studies in five local authorities, focused on for example, a YOT; a 'virtual' multi-agency team; extended school; multi-professional team; and LAC team. The project also plans to hold workshops with local authorities to discuss data. The key findings from the project are soon to be published, but were not available at the time of this review.
- **DfES:** Research into the role of the budget holding lead professional to report in March 2008; evaluation of early learning partnerships to be completed March 2008; early intervention and intervention with children at risk starting September 2007.

1.4 Structure of the report

Findings from the review are presented under the following chapter headings:

- Different types/models of multi-agency working
- The impact of multi-agency working
- Factors influencing multi-agency working
- Effective multi-agency practice
- Concluding comments.

2 Different types/models of multi-agency working

This section addresses two of the aims of this review: to explore in what ways the research can be categorised so as to gain an overview of different models of multi-agency working; and to examine the evidence for different models of multi-agency working. As such, section 2.1 begins by presenting some exemplification of the range of terminology relating to multi-agency activity to be found in the literature. section 2.2 addresses the feasibility of classifying the different types of multi-agency activity within the sources that informed this review. The chapter then moves on in section 2.3 to examine the models of multi-agency activity presented in the literature, before drawing out three common dimensions to models of multi-agency activity in section 2.4. It should be noted, however, that this review sought to address a number of aims, of which models of multi-agency working was just one part. As a consequence, the models presented in this chapter represent a flavour of the extensive work that has been undertaken in this area.

2.1 Terminology of multi-agency working

Activity that could be characterised as ‘multi-agency’ is referred to by a large number of different terms. Some of these are listed in Table 2.1. This has implications for researching multi-agency activity. The confusing and/or conflicting nature of some of these terms can make research more complex and lead to difficulties in making comparisons between studies.

Table 2.1 Terms of reference for multi-agency activity

Multi-agency working	Atkinson <i>et al.</i> (2002)
Multi-agency activity	Kennedy <i>et al.</i> (2001)
Partnerships	Dickson <i>et al.</i> (2004)
Partnership working	Fox and Butler (2004)
Interprofessional collaboration Interprofessional work Interprofessional consultation	Harker <i>et al.</i> (2004); Leathard (2003)
Co-operative practice	Harker <i>et al.</i> (2004)
Joint-working	Kennedy <i>et al.</i> (2001)
Multi-disciplinary working	Gregson, (1992) cited in

	Leathard (2003)
Integration	Leathard (2003)
Interagency working	Warmington <i>et al.</i> (2004)
Interdisciplinary working	Watson <i>et al.</i> (2000; 2002 cited in Sloper (2004))
Transdisciplinary working	Watson <i>et al.</i> (2000; 2002 cited in Sloper (2004))

Percy-Smith (2006) attempted to define these terms and these definitions can be found in Appendix 5 of this report.

2.2 Classification of different types of multi-agency activity

The literature examined testified to the complex nature of multi-agency working and this can make classification of different types problematic. For the purposes of this study, researchers attempted to classify the literature sample according to a number of variables. This included the target group or area within which the multi-agency activity was focused, the agencies or sectors involved and the models of multi-agency activity examined. The findings from this exercise are now presented to both exemplify the ways in which multi-agency activity can be classified and to provide an overview of the literature sample (further detail regarding numbers within each category are provided in Appendix 3).

The reviewed literature covered a wide range of areas and target groups, suggesting that multi-agency practice is relevant across a wide range of areas. Of the sources that explored multi-agency activity on a particular area or target group, those most commonly encountered focused on early intervention or family support. In addition, more than one initiative was described within each of the following areas: disabled children; crime prevention; behaviour problems; child welfare/protection; drugs education/substance abuse (see Appendix 3). Others included looked after children; homelessness; mental health; domestic violence and strategic

partnerships, illustrating the wide range of areas in which multi-agency activity is adopted.

In exploring the agencies involved in multi-agency activity, it was evident that the majority involved the three key agencies, education, social services and health, plus a number of other agencies/sectors, most often the voluntary/community sector, but also the police, the youth service, regeneration departments and businesses (see Appendix 3). There were a few examples each of education, social services and health involvement only, education and social services partnerships, education and health partnerships, and social services and health partnerships.

Classifying the multi-agency activity according to various models of multi-agency working, using information available in the sources was problematic. Some sources did not identify a particular model, whilst others examined activity based on a range of models. Those that were classifiable have been categorised according to the terminology used within the source. Models identified most frequently were: centre-based/co-location; coordinated response; multi-agency teams; and meetings/consultation (see Appendix 3). In addition, the models identified in more than one source were: school-based delivery; referral models; decision-making groups; operational delivery; joint-service delivery; and informal arrangements/liaison/contact. Other terms that suggested particular models can be found in Appendix 3.

2.3 Models of multi-agency activity

Overall, some description of types or models of multi-agency working was given in about half (16) of the sources. These tended to be based on the 'extent' and 'organisation' of multi-agency working and both of these areas are covered in turn in this section.

Models that describe the *extent* of multi-agency working

One approach to modelling or classifying different types of multi-agency working has been to produce a hierarchical typology, often presented as a progression or journey towards multi-agency working. Using this approach, Gaster *et al.* (1999), cited in Percy-Smith (2005:p. 9) identify a ladder of partnership as follows.

- **Information exchange:** Involving mutual learning, knowledge of what each partner does and could do, openness about decision-making processes, new methods of access to information
- **Planning action:** Involving identifying local and service needs where cross boundary working is needed and could be effective. Debate of local needs and priorities, agree different partners' contributions, decide actions and processes. Identify (the need for) new partners.
- **Implementing projects and service plans:** Joint or separately taken action on agreed plan, identify monitoring methods and review processes, mutual feedback on success/failure.
- **Coordination and co-operation in practice:** Involving active coordination process; coordinator knows what's going on, draws on each (autonomous) partner as appropriate, helps to nurture developmental and co-operative culture and involve and support new partners.
- **Collaboration and full partnership:** Involving separate and distinct roles but shared values and agenda. Pooled resources, blurred boundaries, continuously developing to meet changing needs. Less powerful partners supported to play a full role.

Percy-Smith (2005: pp. 28–29)

Similarly, Townsley *et al.* (2004a: p 27) describe a three-level typology that they observed in the literature they reviewed for their study. These are paraphrased below.

- **Autonomous working:** Services are still separate but individual professionals from different disciplines will work together to achieve specific goals. Professionals may offer training and support to staff from other agencies, but the focus and funding of service delivery remain single agency and services are separate with little obvious coordination.
- **Coordinated working:** Professionals from different agencies assess separately the needs of children and families but meet together to discuss their findings and set goals. The focus of service delivery will be multi-

agency and coordination of services across agencies is achieved by a multi-agency panel or task group. Funding may be single- or multi-agency.

- **Integrated working:** Services are synthesised (and coordinated). The approach is more holistic with the focus of service delivery on the user. Funding is multi-agency and professionals operate as a team, with the expectation that roles will be blurred or expanded. A key person, or link worker, coordinates services for families and liaises with other professionals and agencies on their behalf.

In a related approach, Fox and Butler (2004) refer to earlier research describing a four-level typology of different stages of engagement with multi-agency working (Griffith, 2002, cited in Fox and Butler, 2004: p. 39). This was originally produced with an initial stage describing **networking** that the authors felt should precede any partnership. The three stages, or levels of engagement, are paraphrased below.

- **Cooperation:** At this stage relationships may be more formal. Members agree to co-operate with each other. Their goals remain individual rather than collective, but they see their future as linked. Some planning and division of roles may be required.
- **Coordination:** In this second (originally third) stage group members agree to carry out pieces of work together, which represent collective goals. Each member is now allowing their activities to be influenced by the contributions of other members. The aim is usually to deliver pre-set, common objectives.
- **Integration:** In this final stage the activities undertaken are developed, implemented and 'owned' by the group. The partners are committed to co-designing something for a shared purpose. The organisations involved are brought into a new structure with commitment to a common mission.

The authors combine these with three functions that partnerships might perform as follows.

- **Strategic:** The immediate product of partnership will be strategic priorities that shape the strategies of individual partners.
- **Commissioning:** The product of partnership will be commissioning priorities and the performance management of services and projects that are commissioned.

- **Service delivery:** The partnership will move from being a virtual organisation to a physical one in which individuals from different organisations come together to manage and deliver services.

Fox and Butler (2004: p. 39)

Thus, some partnerships will combine integrative approaches with a service delivery function for example, a youth offending team, whilst others may combine coordinating approaches with a strategic function such as a Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.

Models that describe the *organisation* of multi-agency working

In addition to the *extent* of multi-agency working, several models in the literature adopted the second approach to describing multi-agency activity; that is, according to the way it is organised.

Atkinson *et al.* (2002) examined a wider range of multi-agency initiatives within local authorities and distilled them to present five different models of multi-agency activity distinguished by their organisation and, partly, by their function. Their models are paraphrased below.

- **Decision-making groups:** Providing a forum for professionals from different agencies to meet, discuss and make decisions.
- **Consultation and training:** In which professionals from one agency enhanced the expertise of those of another by providing consultation and/or training.
- **Centre-based delivery:** In which professionals from a range of agencies operated from a single centre to deliver a more coordinated and comprehensive service, they also became more aware of what others' roles entailed.
- **Coordinated delivery:** Where a number of agencies involved in the delivery of services were coordinated by a coordinator with responsibility for pulling together previously disparate groups.
- **Operational-team delivery:** In which professionals from different agencies worked together on a day-to-day basis to form a multi-agency team that delivered services directly to clients.

The authors also presented these models in diagrammatic form, and these have been re-produced in Appendix 6 of this report.

Sloper (2004) in a review of the literature related to multi-agency working identified seven models of activity, again based on the way in which teams or services are organised, from the sources she reviewed. In essence, these overlap with those identified by Atkinson *et al.* (2002) and extend their five different types of multi-agency activity to include the following.

- **Strategic level working:** This subsumes 'decision making' and extends to include joint planning, commissioning and purchasing.
- **Placement schemes:** In which posts crossing the organisational divide are established (e.g. social workers working within primary health care). In the past, these professionals usually acted as care managers but were not necessarily part of a clear multi-agency system.
- **Case or care management:** Within multi-agency teams where an identified individual has responsibility for ensuring a coordinated service to families. In the Atkinson *et al.* model, this was a sub-type within 'operational team delivery'.

Sloper directs us to the fact that the last of these, 'case or care management', is the only one that aims to ensure that services are coordinated at the point of delivery to children and families yet, this was noted by Atkinson *et al.* (2002) as the least common model in their study of local authorities.

Again related to these models, Percy-Smith (2005) outlines four useful models of partnership or multi-agency working presented by the Audit Commission in 1998 (pp. 17–19). These models are also categorised by organisational form as follows and while they describe 'partnerships' can equally refer to multi-agency teams.

- **Separate organisation:** In this model a distinct organisation is set up with a separate legal identity. Such a model is suitable for larger partnerships with a medium- to long-term life span that need to employ staff.
- **'Virtual' organisation:** Here, the partnership has a separate identity but a distinct legal identity is not created. The partnership can have its own name, logo, premises and staff. However, at a formal level, one partner employs staff and manages resources.

- **Co-locating staff from partner organisations:** This is a less formal arrangement involving groups of staff from partner agencies working together to a common agenda under the direction of a steering group. There may be pooling of resources, but staff continue to be managed by their employing agency.
- **Steering group without dedicated staff resources:** This is the simplest and least formal model. The partnership consists of a steering group without dedicated staff or budget so outputs must be capable of being implemented through partners' mainstream programmes and staff.

In addition to presenting the four different models of 'partnership working' the Audit Commission state some of the pros and cons to each model. **Separate organisations** have the advantage of providing a clear, strong identity for the partnership. As a separate entity, they may be able to do things that individual partners cannot. This organisational structure reduces the likelihood of any one partner dominating and can employ staff who identify with the partnership rather than an individual partner agency. The disadvantage of this model is that the formal commitments required to set it up may be off-putting to smaller organisations and there is a risk that partner agencies may become distant from the partnership if it takes on too much of a life of its own. The second '**virtual**' **organisation** model avoids some of the complex issues that need to be addressed if setting up a legal organisation while, at the same time, having a distinct partnership identity. However, responsibilities and accountability may be unclear. **Co-location** can be appropriate for partnerships that do not require a strong, separate identity and work well where there are high levels of trust enabling an informal arrangement to work. However, it is generally not suitable for major new projects and can lead to staff having confused loyalties. Finally, a **steering group** can be effective where the aim is to improve coordination of services but is not suitable for major new initiatives or for partnerships that aim to have a longer lifespan.

The Audit Commission's consideration of these models leads them to conclude that all partnerships require at least one body (whether it be a steering group or a board) that is recognised by all partners, or agencies, as the mechanism for decision making: *'A properly constructed partnership board is essential to make sure that the partnership delivers its objectives and*

remains accountable to the partners' (Audit Commission, 1998: 19, cited in Percy-Smith, 2005:30).

Sloper (2004) reviews some research by Watson *et al.* (2000; 2002) who identified three categories of joint working, based on how professionals work together at an operational level, and this too considers the extent to which professionals are working together in delivering services. It can be paraphrased as follows.

- **Multi-disciplinary working:** Among individuals working within a single agency.
- **Inter-disciplinary working:** Individual professionals from different agencies separately assess the needs of child and family and meet to discuss findings and set goals.
- **Transdisciplinary working:** Members of different agencies work together jointly, sharing aims, information, tasks and responsibilities.

Of these, **transdisciplinary working** is reported to be a more holistic approach, centred on the needs of child and family. As with '**integration**' in the models related to **extent** of multi-agency working, there is an indication that this model would be most valued by, or **of most value to, families/service users**. However, as yet, there is less emphasis in the literature on presenting evidence to show how, or to what extent all of the models described in this chapter are implemented in practice. More importantly, there is **little evidence on the effects** that integrative or transdisciplinary models, in particular, have on outcomes for children and families (see Chapter 3, section 3.3).

Finally, Warmington *et al.* (2004) offer a contrasting view to the majority consensus that **integration** is the ultimate model of multi-agency activity. The authors used activity theory and object analysis in reviewing types of multi-agency working and present a distinctive interpretation of interagency working that they name **co-configuration**. In the study, the authors state that the current ideal for effective interagency working is where professionals aim to form tight communities of practice or teams. However, there is an increasing

tendency for professionals to work in loose, constantly shifting configurations (often depicted as a barrier to effective inter-agency working) that could be seen as a new form of interagency working. Thus, they characterise co-configuration as **distributed expertise** where professionals working with families may not share professional backgrounds, common values or physical location and this should be seen as an alternative to **compact teams** or **professional networks**. The authors also introduce the term **knotworking** characterised as rapidly changing, partially improvised collaborations between otherwise loosely connected professionals. As with the other models, there is no attempt in this study to link co-configuration or knotworking with outcomes.

2.4 Dimensions of multi-agency activity

Overall, three principal dimensions could be said to underlie all of these classification systems or models that have been produced to categorise forms of multi-agency activity that combine to characterise how 'multi-agency' a service might be.

- **Organisation:** How far do organisational structures support the multi-agency activity
- **Joint investment:** To what extent do partner organisations share a vision and common goal for the multi-agency activity
- **Integration:** How integrated is the 'team' and how deeply into the structures and vision of the 'team' does collaboration penetrate?

Each of these dimensions encompasses a range of different constituent variables, similar to the enabling factors and challenges that will be raised in Chapter 4 and the good practice examples explored in Chapter 5 of the report. Each of these dimensions, however, represents a somewhat different combination of factors, which, when combined can help to assess the 'multi-agency' nature of different activities. The common dimensions are described below.

Dimension one: Organisation

This refers to the organisational aspects of the multi-agency practice and whether there are organisational structures specifically set up to support the collaborative working. Assessing this dimension can be achieved by asking the following types of questions.

- **To what extent do professionals from different agencies work together on a day-to-day basis?** In some of the multi-agency models described here it would appear that staff are co-located or centre-based and work together in 'tight communities of practice' to deliver services. At the other end of the spectrum, multi-agency activity occurs at the strategic or decision-making level and professionals have little regular contact. Or, it may be the case that distributed expertise and 'knotworking' result in professionals working closely for short periods of time.
- **Does the 'team' have any formal legal or statutory status?** In some cases, multi-agency activity will occur with formal, written agreements, at the other end of the spectrum, some collaborative practice occurs through 'partially improvised' structures and informal arrangements.
- **Does the 'team' have shared funding and resources for multi-agency activity?** Funding and resources may come from a separate source, through pooled budgets or be largely funded by one agency.
- **Do the agencies share any staff?** In the models examined, shared staff included staff employed solely to coordinate the work of the partnership or multi-agency team. They might also include case-workers, key-workers or link-workers.

Example: Organisation

Child Behaviour Intervention Initiative: An example of the use of a key worker (Window *et al.*, 2004)

This source provides a description of a new multi-agency service for children with behavioural problems that covers the interface between primary care practitioners and specialist child mental health services. The service consists of family support workers, educational psychologists and primary mental health workers. One of the two case studies examined in this research was set up as a predominantly preventive service operating an open referral policy. Here, depending on the nature of the referral, the case will be passed on to a relevant professional, for example, a mainly school-related problem will be allocated to the educational psychologist and mental health difficulties will be allocated to the primary mental health worker. Each referral will also be assigned a family support worker who helps to coordinate the child's contact with professionals.

Dimension two: Joint investment

This refers to the extent to which both professionals' and agencies' aims and interests are bound together and the perception of those involved that they are working towards a common goal.

- **Is there a strategic vision?** Many sources found that shared vision requires a climate of mutuality and reciprocity and that relationships in which one party is identified as 'lead' or 'expert' should be avoided. This will be developed and discussed in Chapter 4.
- **To what extent are agencies working in a climate of shared vision, aims and a common purpose?** The degree to which professionals from different backgrounds share aims and are working towards a common goal.
- **To what degree is decision-making shared between agencies?** When one agency in particular takes the lead in decision-making there may be less investment from other agencies in those decisions.
- **Is there a clear line of accountability?** Are partners/team members aware of the areas of multi-agency practice for which they are responsible?
- **Does the multi-agency activity forward the agency's own aims?** In configurations of multi-agency practice in which services are not integrated or do not form separate organisations, it may be the case that

where the multi-agency activity forwards the agency's own aims, there will be more investment from partners.

Example: Joint investment

Collaborative support for children with Special Educational Needs (Tomlinson, 2003)

This source provides a description of collaborative support for children with special educational needs that relies upon shared values and aims. At one special school, teachers and therapists worked together closely. They were able to 'cross over, blur the edges of their roles' and share skills to ensure pupils' needs were met holistically.

Lack of clarity in services for disabled children with complex health care needs (Townesley *et al.*, 2004b)

In one multi-agency service, providing services for disabled children with complex health care needs and their families, a lack of clarity in terms of decision making and accountability was perceived as a real obstacle to multi-agency work:

Lines of management for patient care are completely confused – as children move between medical and community directorates; as they move from the [acute setting] to the [multi-agency service]. There's no clear plan for accountability – in a medic-legal sense, or in a more general sense as they move through the system. It makes it very difficult for us to work together as a team.

Since this service did not have a pooled budget, all the agencies involved were potentially accountable to a range of different people and agencies.

Dimension three: Integration

This refers to the degree to which the 'team' or practice is integrated and how deeply into the structures, vision, investment and practice of those involved in the activity collaboration penetrates.

- **To what degree is there information exchange between agencies?** Has there been mutual learning, do partners know what each does and what they

could do? Is there openness about decision-making processes? Can partners access information held by one another?

- **To what extent are activities influenced by the contributions of other members?** Do professionals from different backgrounds share information, tasks and responsibilities?
- **How far does the activity impact on the other work conducted by agencies?** In multi-agency practice in which services are not integrated, but where professionals and agencies continue to work beyond the partnership or team, does the multi-agency activity inform and support that work or detract from it?
- **To what degree are services synthesised and coordinated?** Are agencies working within a single organisational structure? Is this a 'new' structure set up to achieve a particular set of goals, or a particular purpose? To what extent are individuals from different organisations coming together to manage and deliver services?
- **To what extent is the focus of service delivery on the user?** In the most 'integrated' services the approach to delivery is holistic and centred on the user, funding will be multi-agency. Professionals operate as a team with an expectation that roles will be blurred or expanded and a coordinator or link worker will coordinate services for families and liaise with other professionals or other agencies on their behalf.

Example: Integration

Child and family support team: An example of integrated working (Townsend *et al.*, 2004a)

This source provides a description of a case-study site with a well-established multi-agency team of 16 professionals from a wide range of disciplines set up originally in 1991. The team has a full-time manager, dedicated administrative support and professionals are co-located in their own building. This team provides and coordinates services and support to disabled children from birth to age 19, and to their families. Team members from different professional backgrounds work together closely on a day-to-day basis. The nature of their contact means that a two-way exchange of knowledge, ideas and skills takes place between all those involved and professional roles and agency boundaries often overlap. Some members of the service act as key workers to children and families, in addition to their role as specialist workers or therapists.

Key points

- While there is much discussion and refinement of models of multi-agency activity within the literature this does not appear to have extended to **linking models with outcomes**, particularly for service users. A number of authors implicitly or explicitly draw a picture in which 'integrated', 'transdisciplinary', or 'holistic' working practices will bring about the most benefit (to all, and to service users in particular). However, studies tend not to provide evidence that this is the case. Thus, one fruitful area for further research would be to investigate which models of multi-agency activity bring about which types of outcomes for professionals, agencies and, importantly, for service users.
- Multi-agency activity **takes many forms** and the **terminology used to describe it varies**, making classification and comparison between different types difficult. Even so, there have been several attempts in the literature to characterise or categorise different types of multi-agency activity.
- Models of different types of multi-agency activity tend to focus on one of two aspects – either the **extent** of multi-agency activity or the **organisation** of multi-agency structures or teams. Those classifying the extent of activity approach it by producing a hierarchical typology of forms, based on the extent, 'stage' or depth of the multi-agency activity.
- Examination of both types of model led to a distillation of them into three principal dimensions. These were **organisation**, **joint investment** and **integration**. The types of questions that might be asked in order to assess the type or extent of multi-agency activity are therefore: Are there organisational structures set up to support multi-agency working? To what extent are agencies and/or professionals working towards a shared vision or common goal? To what degree are services synthesised and coordinated? To what extent is the focus of services on the service user?

The impact of multi-agency working

This section examines the impact of multi-agency working for service users, for the professionals and for the agencies themselves. Overall, the impacts of multi-agency working were not frequently referred to in the literature; references to impacts were found in just under half of the sources examined here. This might indicate a need for further research in this area. The perceived impacts of multi-agency working are discussed before moving on to the actual impact on those involved, which is presented in the following sections:

- Impacts on professionals
- Impacts on service users
- Impacts on services/agencies.

3.1 Perceived benefits of multi-agency working

While not providing specific evidence of impacts of multi-agency working, three research studies refer to the intended or perceived benefits of multi-agency activity. They are discussed in more detail below.

Fox and Butler (2004) offer four substantive advantages that multi-agency partnerships are intended to deliver, which the authors summarise as:

- Holistic approaches to tackling social and economic issues that cut across the spheres of influence of a number of different organisations
- Improving service delivery, particularly through the delivery of more seamless services
- Devolving solution development, often through the promotion of local problem solving based on some form of local needs analysis
- Increasing involvement of service users and wider communities.

These intended benefits are also reflected in Percy-Smith (2005) in her book *What Works in Strategic Partnerships for Children?* and outlined in a 2006 journal article (Percy-Smith, 2006). The author notes that all models or theories of partnership working contain the underlying, or explicit, assumption that partnership working will bring about wide-ranging benefits that would be unlikely to emerge in the absence of the partnership. These assumptions overlap those identified by Fox and Butler and can be summarised as follows.

- Partnerships will **eliminate contradictions or tensions** between policies, programmes or interventions, which will result in **more efficient deployment of resources** through the elimination of duplication, sharing of overheads, securing better value for money and achievement of economies of scale.
- Partnerships will result in **more effective services** as a result of clearer identification of service gaps, improved integration and the overcoming of fragmentation, involvement of the community and service-users and the harnessing of resources of individual partners (e.g. financial resources, skills, information, political access and people). They should also result in services that are more integrated from the point of view of citizens or service users.
- Partnerships may **build capacity to resolve policy problems**, either through providing access to additional resources through grant regimes or leverage, or through improving the flow of ideas and cooperation between stakeholders.
- There can be benefits in terms of **increased understanding and trust between agencies**, which can lead to willingness to take risks, enhanced potential for innovation and improved outcomes.

In common, therefore, these sources identify two particular areas of perceived benefits of multi-agency working: improved/more effective service delivery and joint problem solving.

An overall typology of all the impacts identified is provided in Table 3.1 and this is followed by sections devoted to the impacts on those involved, i.e. professionals, service users and agencies/services.

Table 3.1 Summary of the impacts of multi-agency working

Impacts on professionals	
Personal wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professionals found multi-agency working to be rewarding, stimulating and enjoyable • Increased job satisfaction • Opportunities for creativity and autonomy • Increased professional confidence
Professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased knowledge and understanding of the roles of other agencies • Increased knowledge and understanding of cross-disciplinary issues • Changed professional understanding and practice • Expansion of roles and the development of new ones
Professional identities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased accountability • Confusion over roles and professional identities • Questioning of individual roles • Uncertainty over professional status
Working practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved communication between agencies/services • Improved interaction amongst professionals • Increased accessibility of other agencies • Improved accessibility to information from other agencies • Greater opportunities for information sharing and problem solving • Increased workload on individual professionals • Potential for duplication
Impacts on service users	
Improved services for service users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier/quicker access to services • Referral to appropriate agencies/services • Increased focus on prevention/early intervention and reduced need to access specialist services • Reduced stigma attached to accessing services
Improved lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabled children and young people to remain in their local community, i.e. live at home/attend the local school • Improved support for children and young people • Improved educational attainment
Impacts on agencies/services	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased demand placed on services/agencies • Reduced demand made on services/agencies • More positive inter-agency relationships • Improved communication between agencies • Improved data sharing • Efficiency savings

3.2 Impacts on professionals

The area of impact most frequently described in the literature reviewed here covers impacts on the professionals involved in multi-agency working, as compared to the impacts on service users (see section 3.3) or those on agencies as a whole (section 3.4). The impacts on professionals described in the literature fall into four main areas (some of which have negative as well as positive impacts associated with them):

- Professional wellbeing
- Professional development
- Professional identities
- Working practices.

Professional wellbeing

Professionals involved in multi-agency work reported that they enjoyed it and that they found it **rewarding and stimulating** (e.g. Abbot *et al.*, 2005a; Atkinson *et al.*, 2002). For those involved in developing new working approaches, there was **job satisfaction** from the creativity and autonomy the experience afforded (Moran *et al.*, 2006). Two studies that explored multi-agency working within the context of health and social care, reported gains in **confidence** among professionals, **improved relationships with other professionals and improved relationships with families** (Abbott *et al.*, 2005a; Moran *et al.*, 2006).

Example: Professional wellbeing

General multi-agency working (Atkinson *et al.*, 2002)

The most often cited impact on professionals in this national study of multi-agency working was that they found participation in multi-agency working rewarding or enjoyable. Interviewees talked about enjoying having the opportunity to work with professionals from a range of different backgrounds because they found this stimulating and thought provoking. They described the work as 'motivating' and, in one case, 'a morale boost'. One education advisor, for example, stated that he had enjoyed working with people outside of education.

Early intervention family support team (Moran *et al.*, 2006)

Within the early intervention family support team examined, despite the various challenges identified by social workers involved in multi-agency early intervention family support, overall there was a great deal of commitment and enthusiasm described by social workers for their new role in this respect. Many commented on the job satisfaction that they derived from the creativity and autonomy they experienced in developing new ways of working and approaches in conjunction with other agencies.

Professional development

Beyond impacts on multi-agency team members' themselves, a number of studies highlighted impacts on professional development from multi-agency activity. In four studies, it was found that new ways of working had **increased knowledge and understanding of the roles of colleagues** from other professions (e.g. Abbott *et al.*, 2005a; Anning, 2005; Atkinson *et al.*, 2002 and Moran *et al.*, 2006). As well as understanding colleagues' roles, there were reports of **new knowledge and understanding of cross-disciplinary issues** or differences between statutory and non-statutory intervention (e.g. Abbott *et al.*, 2005a; Anning, 2005; Atkinson *et al.*, 2002 and Moran *et al.*, 2006). In some cases, 'joined-up thinking', such as was necessary for multi-agency activity, had **changed professional understandings and practices** (Anning, 2005 and Atkinson *et al.*, 2002).

Abbott *et al.* (2005a) reported that new ways of working developed when professionals worked in multi-agency teams on behalf of disabled children with complex health care needs, had led to an **expanded role**, usually involving a range of new tasks. On occasion, there were also examples where multi-agency working offered professionals **the opportunity of developing a new role** (e.g. that of key worker).

Example: Professional development

Disabled children with complex care needs (Abbott *et al.*, 2005)

Prevalent among many responses from the professionals in each service involved within this study regarding disabled children with complex care need was a heightened knowledge about the roles of colleagues from other disciplines. They believed this to be the result of working more closely together in multi-agency teams, meetings and forums. As well as learning about each other's roles in relation to individual children and families, there were reported to be opportunities to reflect on issues which crossed disciplines. For example, in one service, there had been multi-agency forums to discuss confidentiality and consent which had resulted in a more consistent approach across agencies.

Professional identities

A positive impact on professional identities, which Abbott *et al.* (2005a) found arose from multi-agency work between health, social care and education, was that **individuals felt more accountable**. For example, if they said in the context of a multi-agency team meeting that they would action a particular item, then they made sure that they did.

However, alongside this, the Abbott *et al.* (2005a) study highlighted a number of negative impacts on professional identities that arose from multi-agency work between health, social care and education. The expansion of new roles within a team led to **confusion regarding roles** amongst team members and to **uncertainty about roles**, including some individual questioning of what their role might be within new contexts. The study also found **negative impacts on professional status** in some multi-agency teams. For example,

social workers did not feel that their role was taken seriously by their colleagues in health. Related to this, barriers were also present between multi-disciplinary colleagues from the same agency (e.g. community health practitioners and doctors). Role demarcation as a challenge of multi-agency working is discussed further in section 4.1.

Example: Professional identities

Disabled children with complex care needs (Abbott *et al.*, 2005)

This study found evidence of both role expansion and role blurring as a result of multi-agency practice. In three of the six services examined some professionals said that working relationships with colleagues from other disciplines were so strong that there had been an expansion of their role. They were all prepared to take on any task within their capability which effectively supported families rather than saying, 'I'm a social worker and I don't do that kind of task.' Four of the six services had also created the new professional role of 'key worker', acting as a central point of contact for a family and as coordinator of professionals and support services for the family. Staff in these services stated that they were forced to leave their specialities behind and instead adopt the new role of key worker. As a result, one worker had constructed quite clear boundaries around his different roles. On the negative side, although less common, a key worker within one service was less clear about how to reconcile her professional identity and status as a social worker with her developing key worker role. One senior manager also sounded a note of caution about professionals working outside their area of expertise. This manager felt that difficulties had arisen from people overstepping their roles.

Working practices

A number of studies found that multi-agency working led to **improved communication between professionals** (Abbott *et al.*, 2005a; Atkinson *et al.*, 2002; Moran *et al.*, 2006). In particular, Atkinson *et al.* identified 'improved interactions' between colleagues. In the Abbott *et al.* (2005a) study it was found to be easier to get hold of colleagues from other agencies within the

multi-agency team, easier to access information and there were improved formal opportunities for information sharing and problem solving.

Example: Improved communication

Early intervention family support team (Moran *et al.*, 2006)

When examining an early intervention family support team, these authors found that regular interagency meetings were seen as a significant means of ironing out difficulties. The social work team, for example, held a joint 'away day' with a team from a partner agency to discuss the interface between the two teams and practical issues, such as referrals and case recording procedures. This was reported to have worked well from the perspective of both agencies.

There was also evidence of negative impacts on working practices as a result of multi-agency working. These included **increased workload** (Abbott *et al.*, 2005). However, this was largely a perception at management level and was not a feature of the reports of frontline staff. Related to this, Atkinson *et al.* (2002) found that multi-agency activity led to **increased demands and pressure on services and on individual professionals** in half of the initiatives examined in their study. In relation to this issues, the findings from the study by Smith and Mogro-Wilson (2007) raise two questions, which they suggest warrant further exploration: Do staff who diligently work to collaborate find themselves overloaded? Do professionals operating in climates where there is perceived overload pursue collaboration in order to reduce their workload?

Example: Increased workload

Health promotion (Atkinson *et al.*, 2002)

This study highlighted how, although multi-agency working was reported to be rewarding, it could also lead to an increased workload and additional pressures for individuals. According to one interviewee, for example, working across two agencies was considered to be extremely time consuming. This interviewee went on to explain that you have to put in additional effort to keep contact with both agencies and it is easy to lose contact with one or the other. She reported that she put a lot of effort into ensuring face-to-face contact with both agencies. She also noted that there is a danger that those engaged in multi-agency activity lose their identity and other people lose their sense of who you are as well. She intimated that it required considerable stamina to maintain this. Another interviewee within this study described it as a trade off between the increased pressure and the professional gains.

A further negative impact of multi-agency working was **duplication**, especially when a number of multi-agency teams were in operation. For example, professionals working in a multi-agency team focused on disabled children with complex health care needs found that some of their tasks were also being completed by professionals working in different multi-agency teams (e.g. a multi-agency team for looked-after-children, for children with disabilities, for SEN etc.) (Abbott *et al.*, 2005a).

3.3 Impacts on service users

Analysis of the literature would indicate that, whilst the impact on professionals may be well documented, the impact on service users, which may be less easy to assess, is not as well evidenced. This may therefore be a key area for future research in this field. In a review of literature on multi-agency working that formed part of an evidence gathering exercise to inform the Children's National Service Framework, Sloper (2004) notes that there have been very few studies providing real evidence of outcomes for multi-agency activity for service users. This view is echoed by Smith and Mogro-Wilson (2007), writing in the US on interagency collaboration as a practice of

frontline staff. The sources informing this review do not present a great deal of additional evidence of the outcomes for service users from multi-agency activity. However, Sloper (2004) goes on to note that one study presents some evidence of 'positive outcomes' for families with multi-agency key worker systems for disabled children. She also highlights another review which suggests that there is evidence for 'positive effects' of multi-disciplinary team working in health care. The evidence of impacts on service users, such as there is within the literature in this sample, is presented according to the following themes: improved services and improved lives for service users.

Improved services for service users

One of the key impacts for service users identified within the literature is the improvement of services. Kennedy *et al.* (2001) in a study of good practice in multi-agency working on homelessness, for example, found that services were improved for those clients who were accessing more than one service or organisation – especially those using jointly provided services or those within multi-agency case-review meetings. Two particular aspects of improved services for service users were reported: **better access to services** and **services having a more preventative/early intervention focus**.

Atkinson *et al.* (2002) report that one of the impacts for service users was in **gaining access to services not available previously** and **easier/quicker access to services**. Abbott *et al.* (2005b) in a study of the impact of multi-agency working for disabled children with complex health care needs found that the 'key worker' function in the multi-agency activity they studied was particularly instrumental in bringing about improved access to services. Window *et al.* (2004) investigated a multi-agency service for child behavioural problems and found that such services offered **direct access** and self-referral for families, and also offered **faster response times**, as well as **referring clients to appropriate agencies**.

Example: Improved access to services

Homelessness (Kennedy *et al.*, 2001)

In this study, in relation to the impact of multi-agency provision on service users, several agency workers highlighted the increased accessibility of services to homeless people in areas where there was previously little or no provision. For example, in relation to the supported accommodation/resettlement project, workers spoke of the visible improvements in the health and self-esteem of some service users. In addition, despite some of the challenges raised by workers at the one-stop-shop initiative (such as tensions between agencies), none of the workers doubted the increased accessibility of statutory services to homeless people that had been created through an open door service and outreach support. Many of the service users commented that the services and support they had received had been invaluable.

Children with learning disabilities (Atkinson *et al.*, 2002)

One of the cases studies examined within this study focused on a multi-agency assessment service for children with learning disabilities. The benefits for the children and their families centred around improved access to services, including only having to visit one place for a complete assessment and a reduced waiting time for assessment, as well as not having to repeat their story a number of times. The main benefit to children and their parents, reported by interviewees from all three different agencies, was that they only had to go to one place for a range of assessments by different agencies. In addition, they noted that families were offered advice and support and were very much involved throughout the process.

Atkinson *et al.* (2002) found that **prevention and early intervention** was a direct benefit to service users as a result of working in a multi-agency way. In particular, early identification and intervention, especially in initiatives where a coordinated approach to delivery was adopted, were reported to **prevent the need for access to more specialist services**, or services located outside of the local authority. Moran *et al.* (2006) additionally identified that early-intervention through multi-agency working benefited families by **reducing the stigma related to contact with some agencies**, for example, social services or the police.

Example: Prevention and early intervention

Family support (Moran *et al.*, 2006)

All of the social workers involved in family support felt that working with partner agencies in settings away from the social services district office (e.g. early years centres and schools) increased respect for social services from the families' perspective and reduced the chance that families would feel stigmatised by social services involvement. The social workers who worked within school settings also developed novel ways of engaging families to enhance the 'approachability' of social workers for families. Initially, on school open evenings, families steered clear of the social workers, but this difficulty was overcome by timetabling contact so that all parents spent an allocated amount of time speaking to all of the professionals in turn, including the social workers. Social workers reported that engaging with families in settings such as schools was helping to change families' perceptions of them for the better and was likely to enable earlier detection and a reduction in families' difficulties.

Few studies highlight negative impacts of multi-agency working on service users. However, Abbott *et al.* (2005b) found that some of what they describe as '**classic social work tasks**' had **not improved**. These included, for example, support for benefit claims and accessing sitting services for families with disabled children who have complex health care needs. In this study, the authors suggest that this may be related to the fact that social workers felt marginalised by their medical colleagues within the multi-agency team.

Improved lives for service users

One area of impact on service users highlighted in a minority of the literature was a general improvement in their lives as a result of multi-agency activity. Abbott *et al.* (2005b) found that 16/25 of families with a disabled child with complex health care needs felt that their lives had improved since their services had been delivered by a multi-agency health, social services and education team. In this study, they found that the focused support offered by multi-agency teams **allowed more disabled children with complex health**

care needs to live at home and attend their local schools, and children were additionally reported to be attending school or nursery on a regular basis. Atkinson *et al.* (2002) similarly reported **benefits to young people's educational attainment** and **improved support for young people and their parents** as a result of multi-agency teams within local education authorities, although in this study, service users were not included in the research sample.

Example: Improved lives for service users

Looked after children (Atkinson *et al.*, 2002)

This study included a case study of a multi-agency operational team established to address the educational needs of looked after children (LAC). The benefits to children reported by interviewees, among others, included improved educational attainment, improved access to education and maintenance within education. The SENCO indicated that the team had provided one-to-one support for pupils with deep seated problems who were having difficulties in school and had been effective in helping them access education. This was reported to be individual support that they might otherwise not have received. The multi-agency approach adopted meant, in addition, that children were aware that all the professionals involved were working in their best interests. The residential care manager reported that the team's involvement enabled residential social workers to take a more proactive stance about children's education, to help them fulfil their role as corporate parents and, in this way, to improve children's access. Children were reported to receive appropriate educational provision more quickly since social workers no longer spent days on the telephone trying to identify the right contacts within the education department. A multi-agency approach meant that a holistic approach to children's needs was adopted and all those concerned with LAC were brought together to give a coordinated response.

3.4 Impacts on agencies/services

The final area of impact to be found in the literature reviewed here is on the services/agencies themselves. Few studies explored the impact on agencies or services specifically (i.e. beyond the context of impacts on professionals or

service users access and referral). However, where they did, there was evidence of both increased and reduced demand on services as a result of multi-agency activity, together with some evidence of improved data sharing and efficiency savings.

As for individual professionals, multi-agency working was frequently found to place **increased pressure or demands on services**. For example, Atkinson *et al.*, (2002) reported that, in one initiative, the fact that children with mental health problems were identified earlier meant an increase in referrals to mental health services, which put pressure on that particular agency. However, the same study noted that, in several initiatives, reports were that multi-agency working had **reduced demand on services**. Again, similar to impacts for professionals, Moran *et al.* (2006) found that agencies involved in multi-agency working developed **more positive interagency relationships** and benefited from **improved communication between agencies**.

Example: The demands on agencies/services

LAC and mental health (Atkinson *et al.*, 2002)

In this study, whilst ten interviewees out of the 30 interviewed, from a third of all the initiatives examined, highlighted the increased demands and pressures on agencies, five interviewees also reported reduced pressure or a reduced workload as a result of multi-agency activity. A service manager within social services, in an initiative focused on LAC, for example, reported that knowledge of the education system meant that social workers were now able to challenge school practice, placing increasing demands on schools. Similarly, in another initiative, the fact that children with mental health problems were identified earlier meant an increase in referrals to mental health services, thereby putting added pressure on this service.

Harker *et al.* (2004) draw attention to **improved IT systems and data sharing** as an impact on services due to the funding and impetus of joined-up working. Tomlinson (2003) emphasises, in her review, the **budgetary and resource-savings** for services as a result of multi-agency activity.

Key points

- Some studies focused on the perceived benefits of multi-agency working, the most commonly identified being improved/more effective services and joint problem solving, although the ability to take a holistic approach and increased understanding and trust between agencies were also cited.
- Whilst the impacts on professionals involved in multi-agency working appeared to be often cited and well evidenced, empirical evidence for impacts on service users was sparse. Given the current climate, which places much emphasis on multi-agency working and the attention given to the client's voice, this would seem an important area for further research.
- Positive impacts on professionals centred mainly around multi-agency activity being rewarding and stimulating, increased knowledge and understanding of other agencies, and improved relationships and communication between agencies. Negative impacts on professionals involved in multi-agency activity focused in particular on uncertainty regarding their professional identities. There were some conflicting messages about whether multi-agency working resulted in an increase or reduced workload for the professional involved, although the evidence seemed to be weighted towards an increased workload.
- The main impacts on service users, where they were reported, was their improved access to services, through speedier and more appropriate referral, and a greater focus on prevention and early intervention. Impacts cited also included improvements to the lives of service users through more focused support, enabling disabled children, for example, to remain at home and attend their local school.
- There were mixed reports with regard to whether multi-agency working increased or reduced the demand on services/agencies as a whole, although, as with the demand on professionals, the evidence seemed to be weighted more towards an increased demand. These conflicting findings, together with the previous conflicting reports with regard to the impact on professionals' workload, suggest that the demand placed on both individuals and agencies might warrant further investigation.

4 Factors influencing multi-agency working

This section focuses on the factors that influence multi-agency working by facilitating or inhibiting it. Twenty-eight of the 29 sources identified facilitating factors; 21 of the sources identified challenges associated with multi-agency working. There was evidence within the literature examined to indicate that facilitators and barriers to multi-agency working had been explored in some depth and that there was a lot of commonality and agreement amongst the findings from a range of different sources and sectors.

It was evident from the analysis of the literature that the challenges were inextricably linked to the facilitating factors. They have therefore been addressed together in this chapter and the way in which each factor facilitates or inhibits multi-agency working is highlighted in each section. Good practice, which often stems from some of the challenges and facilitating factors, is addressed separately in Chapter 5. The factors influencing multi-agency working identified within the literature sample fell into the following categories:

- Working relationships
- Multi-agency processes
- Resources for multi-agency work
- Management and governance.

Table 4.1 provides an overview of the factors that facilitate and challenge multi-agency working.

Table 4.1 Factors that facilitate and challenge multi-agency working

Facilitating factors	Challenging factors
WORKING RELATIONSHIPS	
Role demarcation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity over roles of agencies • Clear role boundaries • Acknowledging professional differences • Status issues/hierarchies addressed • Understanding of each other's responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Status issues/power struggles • Professional hierarchies • Lack of equal representation • Blurring of professional boundaries • Role ambiguity • Redistribution of specialist skills
Commitment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness to work together • Commitment from all staff • Strategic commitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of commitment • Inappropriate levels of representation • Competing priorities
Trust and mutual respect	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive regard for workers from different agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of trust between individual and agencies
Understanding other agencies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of what other agencies can contribute • Appreciation of different agency contexts • Understanding the range of perspectives involved • Development of a partnership culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stereotypical thinking • Ignorance of other services • Failure to recognise the contribution of others • Different professional models and beliefs • Conflicting professional and agency cultures
MULTI-AGENCY PROCESSES	
Communication	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparent structures for communication • Maintaining constant communication • Adequate IT systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of clear channels of communication • Poor interagency communication
Clarity of purpose	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing clear and realistic aims • Aims understood and agreed by all agencies • Developing a shared vision based on jointly held values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of clarity about the rationale for multi-agency work • Divergences in objectives

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate targets • Clear justification for partnership 	
Planning and consultation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive planning systems • Consulting service users • Conducting a needs analysis • Extensive consultation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of consultation with key stakeholders

Organisational aspects	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective systems, protocols and procedures • Establishing formal protocols • Clearly defined structure or model • Continual reassessment of processes and procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to address temporal aspects of partnerships • Competing policies and procedures • Complex and time consuming negotiations • Organisational restructuring • Different targets and incentives
Information exchange	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing clear protocols for information exchange • Accurate and up to date shared data between agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidentiality issues • Different rules and protocols around information sharing • Legal, ethical and practical obstacles
RESOURCES FOR MULTI-AGENCY WORK	
Funding	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate funding with shared access • Financial certainty • Equity between partners • Explicit agreements about the pooling or sharing of resources • Sufficient administrative support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflicts over funding within and between agencies • inadequate funding • Time-limited funding • Management of a variety of funding streams • Lack of joint budgets
Staffing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment and retention of staff • Effectiveness of particular personalities • Adequate staff • Co-location of staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff turnover and recruitment difficulties • Lack of qualified staff • Salary differentials • Variations in conditions of service
Time	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated time for start-up • An incremental approach to joint working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of time to devote to joint working • Time involved in developing and sustaining relationships
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4.1 Working relationships

Several factors concerned working relationships within multi-agency groups.

The key aspects were:

- Role demarcation
- Commitment
- Trust and mutual respect
- Understanding other agencies.

Role demarcation

Within the literature there is evidence that role demarcation, or clarity over the role of each agency, facilitates multi-agency working (e.g. Faye *et al.*, 2005; Carpenter *et al.*, 2005). For example, having clear role boundaries and acknowledging professional differences is reported to have led to more effective working relationships (Darlington *et al.*, 2004a). Where status/hierarchies were addressed and all members had a clear understanding of each others responsibilities, multi-agency working was reported to be easier to achieve (e.g. Frost and Lloyd, 2006).

Role demarcation, however, was the most frequently identified challenge to multi-agency working (identified in 12 out of the 29 sources). In particular, the literature frequently reported that struggles over status levels threatened multi-agency relationships. For example, Healey *et al.* (2004) explored the issues surrounding local strategies for linking child health and education. They found that statutory and voluntary bodies did not have equal status on partnership boards, which caused tensions. Robinson and Cottrell (2005) also refer to professional status and they found that redefining and redistributing specialist skills in multi-agency groups had provoked complex responses about core beliefs and identities. Other literature reported that power

struggles take place, that low morale results from blurring professional boundaries or role ambiguity, and that professional image, hierarchies and identity all present a challenge to multi-agency work (Moran *et al.* 2006; Lessard *et al.*, 2006; Frost and Lloyd, 2006). Johnson *et al.* (2003) highlighted the problem of 'turf issues' and Kennedy *et al.* (2001) reported that limitations and duties of particular agencies, as well as different remits inhibited multi-agency work.

Commitment

Commitment was the most frequently identified facilitator of multi-agency work that concerned working relationships and this was identified in 14 of the 29 sources (e.g. Kennedy *et al.*, 2001; Lawrence *et al.*, 2003; Harker *et al.*, 2004). Evidence within the literature emphasised that individuals needed to be willing to work together and that commitment is required from all staff (e.g. Lessard *et al.*, 2006; Moran *et al.* 2006). Some sources identified the importance of commitment from staff at strategic levels (e.g. Tomlinson, 2003), whilst others stated that both senior and frontline staff need to be committed (Sloper, 2004).

A lack of commitment was frequently identified as a challenge to multi-agency working (e.g. Atkinson *et al.*, 2002; Lawrence *et al.*, 2003). There was evidence that inappropriate levels of representation or absent partners may threaten commitment (Fox and Butler, 2004). Competing priorities for team members also presented a challenge. Carpenter *et al.* (2005) looked at the ways in which Sure Start worked with local social services departments and found that, as Sure Start only covered part of social service managers' areas of responsibility, meetings were often not prioritised by them due to competing time and resource pressures.

Trust and mutual respect

The literature highlighted that trust, mutual respect and confidence were important factors in multi-agency work and this was highlighted in ten out of the 29 sources (e.g. Allnock *et al.*, 2006; Carpenter *et al.*, 2005; Okell *et al.*,

2001 in Leathard, 2003). Darlington *et al.* (2004b), for example, reported that positive regard for workers from different agencies facilitated interagency collaboration between child protection services and mental health. Similarly, in summarising research findings from a number of sectors, Percy-Smith (2006) reported that building trust and developing mutual respect was necessary in order to develop partnerships. The literature also identified that a lack of trust between individuals and agencies inhibited the development of partnerships (e.g. Sloper 2004; Kennedy *et al.*, 2001).

Understanding other agencies

According to several sources, understanding the role and work of other agencies ensures effective multi-agency work (e.g. Lessard *et al.*, 2006; Atkinson *et al.*, 2002). For example, having an awareness and knowledge about what other services could contribute helps to establish and maintain effective multi-agency groups (Allnock *et al.*, 2006; Dickson *et al.*, 2004). Hamill and Boyd (2001) explored interagency provision for young people with challenging behaviour and found that effective interagency work relied upon an appreciation of the different contexts in which different professionals work, and on understanding the range of perspectives that are brought to multi-agency groups.

There was also evidence that a lack of understanding about other agencies can be a significant challenge to multi-agency work (Darlington *et al.*, 2004b). Indeed, Hamill and Boyd (2001) revealed the difficulty of stereotypical thinking about other professionals, and Lessard *et al.*, (2006) found that ignorance of services offered by other organisations poses difficulties for collaborative practice. It was identified, for example, that primary care teams were preoccupied with developments and recent changes within their own agency and did not always recognise the importance of schools contributions to health matters (Healy, 2004). Failing to recognise the contribution of other agencies in this way can inhibit multi-agency endeavours. Differing core professional models were also found to be a threat to successful multi-agency work. For example, Robinson and Cottrell (2005), referring to the perspectives and experiences of health professionals in multi-agency teams,

found that there were different explanations/beliefs amongst team members from different agencies regarding offending behaviour.

In addition, developing a partnership culture and understanding the cultures of different agencies were found to assist multi-agency work (Lawrence et al, 2003; Hamill and Boyd, 2001). However, the literature largely referred the damaging role that different agency cultures can play. For example, Atkinson *et al.*, (2002) found that conflicting professional and agency cultures were a challenge, particularly at strategic level, and Healey (2004) highlighted the cultural change required to enable health and education to work together effectively.

Other factors concerning working relationships

Less common within the literature, but related to working relationships, were the findings that a history of collaboration and joint training or team building could influence multi-agency working

- **Joint training/team building:** One-third of the literature sources revealed how joint training or team building could facilitate multi-agency work (Carpenter *et al.*, 2005; Percy-Smith, 2006). Harker *et al.*, (2004) reported on the value of inter-professional training sessions to promote interagency collaboration, in this case, around the education of looked after children. The literature also identified that joint training can also lead to cultural barriers being broken down.
- **A history of collaboration:** Evidence within the literature also points to a history of collaboration as a factor which facilitate multi-agency work. For example, it was reported that delivering functions through existing partnerships can be beneficial (Percy-Smith, 2006) and a history of joint working can allow agencies to build on previous arrangements and partnerships.

4.2 Multi-agency processes

A number of influencing factors were revealed in the literature that related to the multi-agency processes. The areas most frequently identified were:

- Communication

- Clarity of purpose
- Planning and consultation
- Organisational aspects
- Information exchange.

Communication

Communication was the most frequently identified facilitating factor for multi-agency work, being identified in 17 out of the 28 sources (e.g. Abbot *et al.*, 2005b; Dickson *et al.*, 2004; Salmon and Rapport, 2005). Having transparent structures for communication, maintaining constant communication throughout the life of the multi-agency group and good communication between agencies were all found to contribute to the success of multi-agency working (e.g. Frost and Lloyd, 2006; Lessard *et al.*, 2006). Having adequate IT systems for communication was also seen to be particularly important (Sloper, 2004).

Difficulties with communication were identified at all levels of multi-agency working (Atkinson *et al.*, 2002). The literature stated that, where clear channels of communication are absent, and, where interagency communication is poor, the success of multi-agency working is threatened (e.g. Sloper, 2004).

Clarity of purpose

Clarity of purpose was also frequently identified as assisting multi-agency work (identified in 14 out of the 28 sources). Establishing clear and realistic aims and objectives that are understood and accepted by all agencies, developing a shared vision and having appropriate targets were found to facilitate multi-agency working by creating a clear and shared purpose for the group (Sloper, 2004; Lawrence *et al.*, 2003). Percy-Smith (2006) reports that shared visions should define the partnerships scope and purpose, and be based on jointly held values. Having a clear justification that a partnership is needed reportedly helps to realise a vision, and a justification that a group

presents value for money is also reported to facilitate multi-agency work (Fox and Butler, 2004). Indeed, Townsley *et al.* (2004b) found that a lack of clarity around the rationale for multi-agency work can be an inhibiting factor. Identifying divergences in objectives was said to be important (Lessard *et al.*, 2006).

Planning and consultation

Effective planning and consultation with service users and member agencies is identified in the literature as important for the success of multi-agency initiatives (e.g. Dickson *et al.*, 2004). For example, Frost and Lloyd (2006) reported that inclusive planning systems were instrumental to the implementation of multi-disciplinary teamwork. Consulting service users on issues and priorities, where appropriate, was also found to assist multi-agency working, as was carrying out a needs analysis (Fox and Butler, 2004; Percy-Smith, 2006). Indeed, it was stated that extensive consultation will lead to bottom-up development and result in widespread commitment (Leathard *et al.*, 2003). Conversely, lack of consultation with key stakeholders is likely to lead to a lack of commitment.

Organisational aspects

Examination of the sources revealed that organisational arrangements can promote an ethos of joint working (Carpenter *et al.*, 2005; Harker *et al.*, 2004). Setting up effective systems, protocols and procedures for multi-agency working was found to be a key facilitator (e.g. Atkinson *et al.*, 2002). For example, establishing formal protocols (such as multi-service agreements) and having a clearly defined structure or model to explain how the multi-agency process will operate were reported to facilitate multi-agency work (Lessard *et al.*, 2006; Townsley *et al.*, 2004b). One source reported that groups should continually reassess and streamline pragmatic strategies regarding forms, procedures, and other processes (Woodbridge *et al.*, 2001).

Conversely, it was identified that the success of multi-agency groups can be inhibited when organisational aspects are not adequately arranged or implemented. For example, failure to address the temporal aspects of partnerships, and competing policies and procedures reportedly create barriers to multi-agency work (Fox and Butler, 2004; Atkinson *et al.*, 2002). In addition, Moran *et al.*, (2006) discovered that negotiating protocols and practical procedures with every partner agency is very complex and time consuming. Organisational restructuring, hindrance of rules and regulations, and having different targets and incentive structures were also identified as factors that could inhibit multi-agency working (Harker *et al.*, 2004; Healey, 2004; Lawrence *et al.*, 2003).

Information exchange

Further to the organisational aspects discussed above, more specific findings were raised with regard to information exchange. There was evidence of the importance of information exchange in multi-agency collaborations within the literature (e.g. Lessard *et al.*, 2006). For example, it was found that establishing clear protocols for information exchange can overcome the confidentiality issues associated with some services (Darlington *et al.*, 2004b; Robinson and Cottrell, 2005) and to be important that data held between agencies is accurate, up to date and can be shared (Harker *et al.*, 2004; Woodbridge *et al.*, 2001).

The literature also sets out the way that inadequate information exchange can inhibit multi-agency working. Confidentiality issues can reportedly confound information sharing processes and inhibit effective multi-agency cooperation (Darlington *et al.*, 2004b; Lessard *et al.*, 2006). Indeed, different 'rules' around information sharing and protocols regarding confidentiality were also highlighted by Robinson and Cottrell (2005). In addition, Carpenter *et al.*, (2005) discovered legal, ethical and practical obstacles to sharing information. These were perceived to be major barriers to effective joint working at case-work and service development levels.

Other multi-agency process issues

Less common factors, related to multi-agency processes, which were found to have an influence on multi-agency working, included identifying a common language, providing opportunities for discussion and involving the relevant people.

- **A common language:** Some studies found that a lack of common language use amongst partner agencies inhibited multi-agency work. For example, Darlington *et al.*, (2004b) identified a lack of shared discourse as a challenge, and Healey (2004) to agencies speaking 'different languages'.
- **Opportunities for discussion:** An opportunity to discuss practitioner beliefs is reported in the literature to facilitate multi-agency work (e.g. Anning, 2005). Lessard *et al.* (2006) state that participation in discussion committees could facilitate multi-agency communication. Similarly, Salmon and Frances (2005) report that expression of alternative viewpoints is a consistent feature of multi-agency meetings and having a forum for different views to be expressed is recognised as one of the advantages of multi-agency meetings.
- **Representation:** Involving the relevant people in multi-agency groups was identified as a facilitator to multi-agency working (Atkinson *et al.*, 2002; Tomlinson, 2003). Percy-Smith (2006) revealed that deciding on the membership of any emergent partnership is key to its effectiveness.

4.3 Resources for multi-agency work

There were found to be three key influencing factors that related to the resourcing of multi-agency activity: funding, staffing, and time.

Funding

Various pieces of literature identified funding as a key factor for multi-agency work (e.g. Dickson *et al.*, 2004; Tomlinson, 2003). Adequate and available funding with shared access was identified as important by Atkinson *et al.*, (2002) and Kennedy *et al.*, (2003). Financial certainty and equity between partners was found to facilitate multi-agency work, as were explicit agreements about how partnerships will pool or share resources (Carpenter *et al.*, 2005; Sloper, 2004; Townsley *et al.*, 2004b). Other resources, such as

having sufficient administration support, were also reported to be reliant on adequate funding.

However, funding was also identified as a key challenge to multi-agency work. Atkinson *et al.*, (2002) found that funding is particularly important in the early stages of development of multi-agency initiatives. Furthermore, the authors discovered conflicts over funding within and between agencies, as well as a general lack of funding for multi-agency activity. They go on to explain that generous funding can also lead to problems with regard to managing the various funding streams. Concerns over the sustainability of funds were also raised within the literature as inhibiting multi-agency development (e.g. Atkinson *et al.*, 2002; Lawrence *et al.* 2003). Lawrence *et al.*, reported, for example, that interventions that relied on time-limited funding were not always sustainable. Inadequate or unequal funding and a lack of joint budgets were also revealed to be inhibitors of multi-agency work (Kennedy *et al.*, 2001; Sloper, 2004; Townsley *et al.*, 2004b). One source, for example, found that budgetary constraints had led to a lack of staff to devote to partnership working (Healey, 2004).

Staffing

The literature also revealed that effective staffing was key to multi-agency partnerships. Where staff can be recruited and retained (Allnock *et al.*, 2006), where particular personalities are involved (Carpenter *et al.*, 2005) and where adequate and available staff are in place (Kennedy *et al.*, 2001), it was found that multi-agency working is more likely to operate with success. In addition, six pieces of literature testified to the benefits of co-locating staff from different agencies/services so that they were based on one site (Abbott *et al.*, 2005b; Frost and Lloyd, 2006). Tomlinson (2003), in her literature review, concluded that co-locating staff from different agencies, a joint location or a change in location can help multi-agency working.

The literature frequently highlighted staffing issues as a key challenge to multi-agency working. There was evidence that staff turnover and recruitment

difficulties led to problems in sustaining joint initiatives, responding to the needs of other agencies and undermined effective delivery (Carpenter *et al.*, 2005; Healey, 2004; Kennedy *et al.*, 2001; Lessard *et al.*, 2006). Some sources of literature highlighted staff turnover as a key challenge and some referred to shortages of staff, lack of qualified staff and recruitment difficulties. Salary differentials and variations in conditions of service were also found to inhibit joint working (Hamill and Boyd, 2001). In addition, uncertainty about the future of jobs due to continuing policy change was identified as a challenge for multi-agency work (Carpenter *et al.*, 2005).

Time

The literature revealed that ensuring time is available for multi-agency work will aid multi-agency collaborations (Atkinson *et al.*, 2002; Kennedy *et al.*, 2001). Furthermore, having phases dedicated to the initial stages and start-up of multi-agency groups and taking an incremental approach to joint working was found to facilitate effective working practices (Noaks *et al.*, 2003; Sloper, 2004). A lack of time, the time involved in developing and sustaining and relationships and a lack of time to devote to joint working were all reported to be inhibitors of multi-agency work (e.g. Johnson *et al.*, 2003 Kennedy *et al.*, 2003; Sloper, 2004).

4.4 Management and governance

Analysis of the literature sample revealed three factors affecting multi-agency working which related to management and governance issues. They were:

- Leadership
- Governance and accountability
- Performance management.

Leadership

Leadership was by far the most common factor raised in relation to management and governance (identified in 15 out of the 28 sources). Just

under half of the literature sources referred to leadership as a factor that can facilitate multi-agency work. Atkinson *et al.*, (2002) found that leadership and drive at a strategic level, including vision and tenacity, enhanced multi-agency working. Clear managerial presence and support, and a specific leader or coordinator for the partnership was also seen as instrumental (Carpenter *et al.*, 2005; Dickson *et al.*, 2004; Noaks *et al.*, 2003). Strong leadership and a multi-agency steering or management group were also identified as facilitators of effective partnerships (Harker *et al.*, 2004; Lawrence *et al.*, 2003; Sloper, 2004). Townsley *et al.*, (2004b) stressed the positive role that leadership can play in multi-agency partnerships. The authors state that effective leadership and the existence of allies and champions at strategic and operational levels within all of the organisations involved will contribute to the partnership's success.

The absence of clear leadership, and a lack of support and commitment from upper management was found to be damaging to multi-agency work (Harris, 2003; Lawrence *et al.*, 2003). For example, Salmon and Frances (2005) looked at the discourse emerging from multi-agency meetings and found that professionals can feel unsupported within their own agencies, thus inhibiting the success of multi-agency groups.

Governance/accountability

A number of sources identified the importance of clear lines of accountability and governance structures (Frost and Lloyd, 2006). Having a clear framework of responsibilities and accountabilities, combined with an environment that gets the most out of the individuals tasked with making the partnership work was found to be particularly influential over success by Fox and Butler (2004). Percy-Smith (2006) highlighted how an appropriate governance structure can facilitate effective and efficient decision making and Townsley *et al.*, (2004b) identified that agreed arrangements for accountability are important. Conversely, Fox and Butler (2004) found that poor governance, including lack of clarity around accountability, inhibited multi-agency work.

Performance management

Five literature sources identified performance management, monitoring and evaluation as a facilitator of multi-agency work (e.g. Townsley *et al.*, 2004b). Being able to demonstrate that a partnership is making a difference by designing and implementing evaluation frameworks to measure the impact of partnership activity was found to be important (Fox and Butler, 2004; Percy-Smith, 2006). This can be helpful in highlighting the benefits of interagency work to those involved, thereby enhancing their commitment. Sloper (2004), in reviewing a range of literature, found that monitoring and evaluating multi-agency services, and reviewing policy and procedures is important in the light of changing circumstances and new knowledge.

Key points

- There was evidence within the literature sample to indicate that facilitators and barriers to multi-agency working had been explored in some depth and there was a lot of commonality and agreement amongst the findings from a range of different sources and sectors.
- **Working relationships:** Issues concerning working relationships were found to be central to multi-agency activity. One of the key issues relates to clarity over role demarcation, a lack of which was highlighted as the most frequently identified challenge. The importance of those involved having commitment to multi-agency working and the development of understanding, trust and mutual respect amongst participants was also emphasised.
- **Multi-agency processes:** Communication was identified, within the literature examined, as the most common facilitator of multi-agency work and good communication was therefore considered key to its success. Coupled with this, was the need for clarity of purpose through the establishment of clear and shared aims and objectives.
- **Resourcing multi-agency work:** Adequate resourcing, in terms of funding, staffing and time, was found to be central to the success of multi-agency working. Whilst financial certainty and equity was important, inadequate or time-limited funding was identified as problematic. A rapid turnover of staff, recruitment difficulties and insufficient time allocated for multi-agency activity were also reported to be potential threats to its success.

- **Management and governance:** In terms of management and governance, leadership was identified as the key aspect influencing multi-agency work. An absence of clear leadership and a lack of support from upper management were found to be particularly damaging.

5 Effective multi-agency practice

Having discussed the factors that influence multi-agency working, this section discusses examples of good practice. It highlights strategies suggested in the literature to address negative influences, and to ensure that the multi-agency work is successful. This section draws on twenty-five of the 29 literature sources that identified implications for good practice. The implications for good practice have been widely explored within the literature and, as such, there appears to be conclusive evidence with regard to elements of good practice, which are presented under the following categories (the same as the influential factors):

- Working relationships
- Multi-agency processes
- Resources for multi-agency work
- Management and governance.

Table 5.1 at the end of the section provides a summary of effective practice for multi-agency work within these four key areas.

5.1 Working relationships

Implications for good practice are closely linked to the factors identified in section 4.1 and they fall into the following areas:

- Clarifying roles and responsibilities
- Securing commitment at all levels
- Engendering trust
- Fostering understanding between agencies.

Clarifying roles and responsibilities

Taking time in initial multi-agency meetings to clarify roles and responsibilities was found to be important for the success of multi-agency working within the

literature (e.g. Abram *et al.*, 2005). Robinson and Cottrell (2005) state that this preparatory work should be sustained throughout multi-agency work. The literature revealed that each worker should have **a clear role and a clear sense of how they contribute** to a wider purpose in order to break down role ambiguities (Frost and Lloyd, 2006). Lawrence *et al.*, (2003) state that, if adequate arrangements were put in place, 'turf issues' could be minimised. For example, providing staff with optimistic views of the collaboration by **highlighting potential positive outcomes** and disseminating the benefits of other collaborations in order to minimise any tensions over 'turf issues'. The authors also identify the importance of **engaging in pre-planning** to anticipate and therefore minimise the potential for these issues to arise.

Percy-Smith (2006) found that it was necessary to ensure that there is parity in the perceived status of representatives in a multi-agency group from different organisations so that **all agencies are equally represented** in order to address status inequalities between different agencies. Successful multi-agency teams were reported to respect specialist expertise but combine this with a willingness to explore and **celebrate professional diversity** regardless of status (Robinson and Cotterell, 2005; Frost and Lloyd, 2006). It was also found that barriers related to status/hierarchies can be addressed by recognising and valuing differences and by building a definition of expertise that values diversity (Frost and Lloyd, 2006). Frost and Lloyd go on to report that providing time to **reflect on new professional identities** is also helpful.

Example: Clarifying roles and responsibilities

Multi-disciplinary teamwork in child welfare (Frost and Lloyd, 2004)

Frost and Lloyd, from studying multi-disciplinary team work in child welfare, report that forming a new work identity is a process of negotiation and there is therefore a need to interact with others in planning and forming roles. In multi-agency working, roles can become blurred, confused and flexible. This is a dynamic process of change. Effective joined-up working should not imply that people lose clarity about their roles. An effective multi-agency team will contain people with different attributes and skills that form a successful whole. Each worker must therefore have a clear role and a clear sense of how they contribute. Workers can have a real fear that professional service

delivery may be compromised and this must be allayed. Working together on a day-to-day basis will inevitably break down some prejudices and facilitate communication, but this can also enhance difference and hierarchy. The way forward is to recognise and value difference and build a definition of expertise that values diversity. Some workers may feel that their skills and expertise, and therefore their professional identity, could be undermined. In effective teams individual skills are recognised and developed to the benefit of all.

Joint training opportunities and boundary crossing exercises were reported in the literature as leading to clearer role demarcation. For example, joint training or shared learning in groups was found to be effective in reducing professional stereotypes (Lyne *et al.*, 2001 cited in Sloper, 2004). Furthermore, there were also reports that boundary crossing between agencies generates new professional practice, leads to a renegotiation of practice and to reduced anxiety over professional barriers (Warmington *et al.* 2004).

Securing commitment at all levels

Almost half of the literature sources provided implications for good practice with regard to encouraging commitment to multi-agency collaborations. Allnock *et al.* (2006) found that leaders of agencies are in a position to maximise the likelihood of interagency collaboration if their commitment can be clearly seen by the workforce. It is therefore important that **senior managers show a strong commitment**. Harker *et al.* (2004) stress that operational staff need to be committed, as well as strategic staff. Tomlinson (2003) concluded within her literature review that this is best secured through **consultation with professionals and clients** and facilitated where participants are willing to work towards a common goal. Atkinson *et al.* (2002) report that personal commitment is needed from professionals, and that they shouldn't be directed to work in a multi-agency way. A number of sources highlighted that commitment could be achieved by **highlighting the potential benefits** of multi-agency practice and **bringing out the positive outcomes for service users** (e.g. Healey, 2004; Townsley *et al.*, 2004b).

Example: Securing commitment at all levels

A whole school approach to emotional wellbeing (Healey, 2004)

The staff involved in this initiative felt that good management and leadership were very important in giving a higher profile to the school ethos and work. It was considered important that the senior management team led by example in setting expectations about the way staff worked. Almost all of the peer supporters involved thought that their roles were important. The headteacher demonstrated commitment to the project by becoming a trained as a counsellor. This factor was reported to have significantly benefited the school, since it not only demonstrated her commitment to the project but she has also been able to implement other ideas as a result.

Sure Start Local Programmes (Allnock *et al.*, 2006)

A recurring theme in the interviews conducted in this study with managers across all partner agencies in this study was that the development of good relationships between agencies required strategic commitment. Local authority chief executives were reported to be highly committed, which enhanced the profile of the local programmes and the morale of programme staff. Examples of the strategic level commitment of different agencies were given. The attitude of one director of social services, for example, was that they were only a partner and that he was responsible for the family centres and planned to look at the relationship between them and SSLPs. Strategic level commitment by early years services entailed their funding a wide variety of service providers, including child minders, voluntary playgroups and private nurseries, as well as local day nurseries, nursery school and nursery classes. By comparison, health service respondents viewed Sure Start very positively and appreciated its role in prevention and early intervention but tended to focus on the challenges of working in partnership. They recognised that the strategic directions of health and SSLPs might differ and that this could, and sometimes did lead to conflict. Where a cohesive approach was absent, health visitors sometimes felt a lack of support 'from the top'. However, the broad picture was one of enthusiasm at most levels for joint working, with the proviso that managers needed to be sensitive to the different concerns of their partner agencies.

Some sources also identified the value of acknowledging and **valuing peripheral team members**, part-time staff or seconded members in order to

secure widespread commitment (Frost and Lloyd, 2006; Robinson and Cottrell, 2005). Noaks *et al.*, (2003) found that people are more likely to attend meetings if **opportunities for decision making** are created. They also report that meetings should be prevented from becoming too large and ensuring they are chaired effectively and supported by clear/accessible minutes. Using **resources** to underpin commitment and a **strong collaborative history** were also revealed as factors which could maximise commitment to multi-agency work (Townesley *et al.*, 2004; Tomlinson, 2003).

Engendering trust and mutual respect

Trust and mutual respect were reported to follow on from a better understanding of other agencies, clear role and status demarcation and effective communication. However, four specific examples of how to build trust in a multi-agency group were also referred to in the literature. Trust and mutual respect was found to evolve where **close working relationships** are developed, and people feel able to be open and honest with other agencies and to discuss any concerns and difficulties (Kennedy *et al.*, 2001). Noaks *et al.*, (2003) found that trust can be developed by **sharing skills and expertise**, and is more likely when agencies are willing to be honest regarding gaps in knowledge. The process of developing a shared vision (see section 5.2) is also reported to engender openness and mutual respect between partners (Percy-Smith, 2006). **Equal resource distribution** was also found to be a factor in building trust (Allnock *et al.*, 2003).

Fostering understanding between agencies

Hamill and Boyd (2001) found that multi-agency groups are more likely to succeed when they find ways to enable professionals to **share experiences** and to appreciate one another's role. **Joint training** can reportedly break down interagency myths and stereotypical beliefs (Darlington *et al.*, 2004a; 2004b). Dickson *et al.* (2004) also referred to the value of joint training or forums to share information about different agencies. As well as joint training, Harker *et al.*, (2004) found that a better understanding of other agencies can

be achieved through **work-shadowing schemes** between different professions. The authors refer to a scheme in which social workers and teaching staff took up opportunities to shadow one another's working practices over six half-day sessions. This helped to enhance understandings of each others professional practice. Healey (2004) also revealed that a better understanding of other agencies can be achieved by **giving key players more time together** to foster a mutual understanding, and that there should be accessible, **practical guides to working with different sectors** made available.

Example: Fostering understanding between agencies

General multi-agency working (Atkinson *et al.*, 2002)

Within this national study, the second most important factor identified as important for effective multi-agency working was an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of different professionals and different agencies, which was highlighted by professionals involved in multi-agency working across a range of sectors and areas. When asked in more detail about this, they clarified that this was about all those involved having a clear understanding of what was expected of them and, linked to this the importance of understanding the constraints under which other agencies operated so that expectations were realistic. Without such clarity it was considered easy for agencies to work on different agendas, to assume that a piece of work was somebody else's responsibility, for misunderstandings to develop, or for clients to receive conflicting information. In addition to understanding, interviewees referred to having mutual respect for the professional roles of other agencies and to valuing each other's contribution. Being able to put yourself in the shoes of others, to see their point of view and their priorities, was considered one of the keys to success.

Connexions services (Dickson *et al.*, 2004)

Where Connexions services were examined, it was found that forums for ground level workers to share information and good practice helped to spread knowledge, as well as overcoming fears that Connexions would 'take over' existing services. Shared training was also reported to have facilitated this. According to one professional, 'We are not competing any more, what we are trying to do is create the best possible service and that is through the Connexions Service and where it dovetails with other services like the Youth Service and Youth Offending Team.'

The literature provided some practical examples of how cultural barriers could be broken down between different agencies. Hamill and Boyd (2001) found that a partnership culture needs to be given a high priority and that opportunities need to be created for professionals to engage in **crossing boundaries** and **sharing expertise**. Fox and Butler (2004) state that a shared culture can be developed through **a leader with 'cultural intelligence'**, i.e. one who can identify the cultures within different

organisations and then construct appropriate responses to them. Placing strategic members of staff in departments where there is some reluctance to work collaboratively was also identified as a way of breaking down barriers as this can raise the profile and culture of multi-agency work (Harker *et al.*, 2004). Lawrence *et al.* (2003) found that '**staff loan**' programmes, allowing representatives of a collaborating agency to be loaned to another agency and housed in that office, could assist with professional learning and understanding of other agencies. They also found that encouraging each agency to provide an **agency presentation**, providing information about their role and procedures, prior to any multi-agency work was beneficial.

5.2 Multi-agency processes

Implications for good practice related to multi-agency processes linked closely to influencing factors and fell into the following areas:

- Ensuring effective communication and information sharing
- Developing a shared purpose
- Effective planning and organisation.

Ensuring effective communication and information sharing

It was found that that there needed to be **transparent structures** for communication within and between agencies and **clear communication protocols** for communication to be effective (Frost and Lloyd, 2003). Three sources of literature referred to good practice for information exchange. Both Darlington *et al.* (2004b) and Dickson *et al.* (2004) found that establishing clear protocols for information exchange and formalising the process will lead to more effective outcomes. Dickson *et al.* report that **joint training** can facilitate information sharing. It was also revealed that different professional groups need to value one another in order to establish trust around information sharing (Allnock *et al.*, 2006). **Frequent opportunities for communication** (e.g. meetings, phone calls and emails) were reported to help to build effective communication links, and it was stated that the more

contact practitioners have with one another, the more inclined they would be to seek further communication (Carpenter *et al.*, 2005; Lawrence *et al.*, 2003).

Example: Ensuring effective communication and information exchange

Sure Start (Allnock *et al.*, 2006)

Allnock *et al.* draw out the significance of trust for building partnerships when they focus on examples of the complexities of information sharing and making and receiving referrals. Within the Sure Start programme under study, staff were reported to have different attitudes to information sharing, having come to the programme with different professional experience and codes of practice, especially in respect of confidentiality and child protection. Programme managers had to reconcile these differences. Some programmes had developed a referral system specific to their programme, which all members of staff, regardless of their own agency's policy, adhered to. In terms of information sharing, most programmes were aware of the danger of duplication and bombarding individual families with uncoordinated visits. One programme manager had therefore set up a systematic record of who was visiting who and when. Overall, programme managers were diligent in maintaining a close view of the work being undertaken with their partners and this facilitated the overcoming of barriers around information sharing.

The type of communication also emerges as important in the literature. For example, Kennedy *et al.* (2001) found that **face-to-face meetings** are important and Noaks *et al.* (2003) found **accessible written information** and the use of **web based communication** to be important. Other sources emphasise the importance of **written updates** in order to minimise miscommunications, particularly in the early stages of multi-agency work (Lawrence *et al.*, 2003), or deep and inclusive discussions (Harris, 2003). The need for both **formal and informal** modes of communication was identified by Moran *et al.* (2006). Indeed Lawrence *et al.* (2003) explain that more informal modes of communication can be encouraged through the development of personal connections. A number of sources also identified

co-location as a strategy for improving lines of communication (e.g. Frost and Lloyd, 2006; Moran *et al.*, 2007).

Example: Ensuring effective communication and information exchange

New Start Partnership (Tomlinson, 2003)

One of the examples given within this review is that of a New Start Partnership which developed a toolkit to map, collate and disseminate examples of good practice programmes aimed at its client group. A pro forma was developed requesting project contact details, a short description of the initiative, type and present size of the client group, existent multi-agency practices and referral mechanisms. Following two sweeps of relevant organisations, the toolkit contained over 100 entries. Once collated the information was published in an A5 hardback booklet and sent to 800 organisations across the borough that have contact with young people. As well as identifying some really good pieces of work and highlighting the value of multi-agency practice, the process of involving people in a common task was advantageous in developing networks.

Atkinson *et al.* (2002) found that it was important for the professionals involved in multi-agency working to have effective communications skills, in particular, the skills of **listening, negotiating and compromising**. Embedding communication into working practices (Tomlinson *et al.*, 2003) and developing proactive approaches to communication, discussing problems and being 'up-front' with issues were also identified as having implications for good practice (Lawrence *et al.*, 2003).

Linked to communication and information exchange, a number of practices were identified within the literature to facilitate the development of a common language between professionals. Hamill and Boyd (2001) found that professionals needed to **explore differences in terminology** and come to terms with their own understandings. It was also found that key players needed to be given **time together to foster mutual understandings** and informed dialogue (Healey, 2004). Similarly, investing time and resources in **team building activities** is reported to encourage the creation of a shared

language (Robinson and Cottrell, 2005). Ensuring that all representatives understand terms or acronyms was found to be crucial to effective multi-agency working (Frost and Lloyd, 2006; Lawrence *et al.*, 2003).

Developing a shared purpose

Having clarity of purpose was reported to lead to better role demarcation, clarity around accountability, better performance management and evaluation, greater commitment and more trust between different agencies (Abram *et al.*, 2005; Fox and Butler, 2004; Allnock *et al.*, 2006; Lawrence *et al.*, 2003; Percy-Smith, 2006).

The literature highlighted examples of effective practice concerning clarity of purpose within multi-agency groups. **Developing a shared vision** emerged as important in achieving clarity of purpose. For example, Percy-Smith (2006) identified that a shared vision should be agreed and should define the partnership's scope and purpose, but also be inspirational and based on jointly held values. Frost and Lloyd (2006) found that the development of **agreed strategic objectives and shared core aims** and ensuring that all staff have a sense of these was required for effective multi-agency work. Indeed, Lawrence *et al.* (2003) state that clearly articulating the goals and anticipated outcomes of multi-agency work is conducive to its success. The importance of **targets being shared and relevant across agencies** to promote partnership work was revealed, as was also the need to develop shared understandings of purpose. (Allnock *et al.*, 2006; Dickson *et al.*, 2004; Hamill and Boyd, 2001; Healey, 2004; Robinson and Cottrell, 2005).

Example: Developing a shared purpose

Services to disabled children (Townesley *et al.*, 2004b)

One of the key success factors identified within this study was the need for explicit agreement and commitment to a clear, shared vision that defines the purpose of the partnership. Several sites focused on delivering services to disabled children examined in this study had paid particular attention to clarifying the rationale for joint working and gaining commitment from the different stakeholders, including families. Bringing people together through preliminary meetings or conferences to discuss the rationale for multi-agency working, learn more about the process and likely outcomes and establish relationships and trust, was a strategy reported to be employed very successfully in several areas. The involvement of families in these early meetings and discussions was also felt to be significant since this helped to promote the benefits of multi-agency working to families themselves while ensuring that meeting their needs was the primary focus for the development of the service.

Carrying out a **needs analysis and mapping** existing provision was also identified as a way of clarifying the purpose of multi-agency groups (Percy-Smith, 2006), as was also holding open days and providing joint training/staff development (Allnock *et al.*, 2006; Hamill and Boyd, 2001). Establishing a clear justification for the partnership and having the time, space and information to ask, 'Why work in partnership?' was also identified (Fox and Butler, 2004; Townesley *et al.*, 2004b).

Effective planning and organisation

Two sources of literature referred to the importance of consultation as part of the planning process. Fox and Butler (2004) found that **involving service users** in partnerships leads to a better understanding of need and successful service design. They also state that, for this to be effective, service users should be engaged in a way that is empowering and sustainable, and recommend that consultation is characterised by good design, and appropriate research instruments, sampling strategies and analysis. It was also noted that consulting on needs, issues and priorities with services users,

providers and potential partners leads to more effective multi-agency work (Percy-Smith, 2006).

Townsley *et al.* (2004b) found that a **clearly defined structure** or model to explain how the multi-agency process will operate, one that is clearly documented for professionals and service users, was beneficial for multi-agency working. Taking time to set up **structures to support joint working** such as cooperative agreements, service level agreements or coordinating bodies were cited as good practice in the literature (Noaks *et al.*, 2003; Harker *et al.*, 2004). Noaks *et al.* (2003), for example, found the use of task groups to transform the strategic plans into operational policy helpful. **Developing shared protocols** with all professionals involved and reviewing them regularly was also identified as good practice (Frost and Lloyd, 2006; Moran *et al.*, 2006). The adoption of pro-collaboration policies and written commitment to inter-professional working were also reported to be important (Smith and Mogro-Wilson, 2007; Harker *et al.*, 2004). **Joint training**, as well as understanding, and catering for the different working conditions of different agencies were highlighted by Healey (2004) as effective practice.

Example: Effective planning and organisation

Looked after children (Harker *et al.*, 2003)

Lead officers involved in all three authorities involved in this study focused on LAC were reported to be instrumental in developing policy statements to emphasise the need for a corporate approach to underpin the work of all authority departments. Many staff believed that these written statements helped to promote a whole-authority approach, but were not seen as sufficient alone to ensure effective interagency practice. Backing up policy statements with frameworks to translate principles into practice was important. Where considered most effective, this included the setting up a range of coordinating bodies to oversee project progress and to ensure that written commitment was evident in operational practice. This consisted of: a project board to approve project implementation plans, monitor progress and adapt plans were necessary; An executor group allocate priorities to a range of inter-professional task groups charged with carrying forward the work. Task groups meet regularly in an interagency reference group and progress reports go to

the project board.. The establishment of this series of inter-professional coordinating groups was viewed by many personnel as crucial to ensuring the sustainability of a joint working approach. It was also felt that the framework engendered progress by making task groups accountable and the ability of the board to modify implementation plans could result in a sense of ownership for the plan amongst operational staff

Multi-disciplinary teamwork in child welfare (Frost and Lloyd, 2004)

Effective working requires shared procedures that have been developed with the involvement of all participants. According to Frost and Lloyd, these procedures and policies become the solid representations of joined-up working. In reality, however, practice is an interactive process through which informed, reflective professionals interpret and enact policies and procedures. They need to be owned by staff and this process takes time. Development of procedures and policies needs to be handled with considerable skill and leadership. Effective procedures and policies should be regularly reviewed, subjected to consultation and changed and reformed when necessary.

In addition, there was evidence that achieving effective representation in multi-agency working should impact positively on its success. Abram *et al.* (2005) found that the composition of multi-agency groups should be selected purposefully to ensure that there is **equal representation from all agencies**. Percy-Smith (2006) states that deciding on the membership of an emergent multi-agency group should balance the need to involve all organisations that have an interest with the need to deliver the partnership's objectives as efficiently as possible. It was reported that members of groups that occupy senior management positions in their own institution enables them to 'make things happen' as opposed to more junior staff who 'have less clout' (Harris, 2003). Tomlinson (2003) concluded that using a checklist of all the agencies involved with the client group and **involving people in the early stages of development** was beneficial, adding that, in some cases, the 'relevant people' whose involvement is valuable are the service users.

It was found that a history of collaboration can be maximised by **delivering new functions through existing partnerships** (Percy-Smith, 2006) or by assessing the variability of members history of collaboration to identify

training needs (Abram *et al.*, 2005). Where there are few inherited interagency linkages, Allnock *et al.* (2006) states that **proactive networking by key stakeholders** will improve this situation.

5.3 Resources for multi-agency work

Implications for good practice were identified in the literature in relation to securing adequate and sustained funding, ensuring continuity of staffing and ensuring adequate time.

Securing adequate and sustained funding

A number of good practices regarding funding were identified and some sources referred to resources more generally. For example, Allnock *et al.* (2006) discovered that committing resources will keep all agencies engaged and that resources must be **distributed evenly across agencies**. It was found that **dedicated resources** are needed to support the management and administrative functions of the multi-agency working (Townesley *et al.*, 2004b). The need for senior managers to recognise the importance of **shared resources** and to act as champions for funding arrangements at strategic and sometimes operational levels was also reported. Three sources found that **pooled budgets** and **joint funding** helped to reduce conflicts over funding between agencies and secure greater commitment (Atkinson *et al.*, 2002; Tomlinson, 2003; Townesley *et al.*, 2004a). Three sources also found there to be some value in identifying and using alternative sources of funding (Atkinson *et al.*, 2002; Tomlinson, 2003; Lawrence *et al.*, 2003). Lawrence *et al.* reported that individuals should not be asked to engage in multi-agency work without funding support whilst they are still accountable for their full workload. There was also evidence for the importance of **stable funding**, Moran *et al.* (2006) and that **clearly written agreements for funding arrangements** should be produced and agreed (Townesley *et al.*, 2004b).

Example: Securing adequate and sustained funding

Mental health strategy group with linked teams (Atkinson *et al.*, 2002)

The chair of the steering group explained that there were some difficulties around funding because health were able to contribute relatively easily from their mainstream funding, whilst education and social services relied much more heavily on targeted project funding, which was often time limited. This sometimes caused problems for long-term planning and placed additional pressure on these agencies to maintain their input to the project. This was reported to take up unnecessary amounts of time which could be spent on project development. This was something that the steering group wanted to address during the process of moving the operational projects forward from being a geographically limited initiative to a mainstream service.

Ensuring continuity of staffing

Two sources of literature identified good practice with regard to staffing. Percy-Smith (2006) looked at the delivery of effective partnerships and found that **staffing capacity** needed to ensure continuity over time. Noaks *et al.* (2003) looked at partnership and interagency working in On Track projects and found that **setting up support networks** for coordinators and encouraging delegation to other senior staff relieves individual pressure on coordinators. The authors state that this subsequently helps to alleviate problems with staff turnover due to high pressure.

Ensuring adequate time

The literature revealed that sufficient time needed to be devoted to multi-agency work. For example, Frost and Lloyd (2006) found that time needed to be provided to allow individuals to reflect on new professional identities (which in turn leads to clearer role demarcation). The literature also identifies that **realistic timetables** are needed for developing and implementing new arrangements, and that there needs to be **built in time for planning and development** of the partnership. Time needs to be built in, for example, for the agency partners to develop trusting relationships and time needs to be allocated for the development of appropriate systems and protocols, e.g. service level agreements (Moran *et al.*, 2006; Noaks *et al.*, 2003). This is reported to lead to more effective working practices (Frost and Lloyd, 2006).

Example: Ensuring adequate time

Offending behaviour On Track (Noakes *et al.*, 2003)

One of the key factors identified as influencing multi-agency working within this study was the acknowledgement or lack of acknowledgement of the need for time for a project start up phase. Expectations of when the service delivery would begin were reported to have been unrealistic. One coordinator described the On Track model as complex and felt that time spent on laying the foundations was vital. The need for such planning, including developing service level agreements, was not acknowledged. Several respondents also felt that insufficient time was allowed for community consultation in the initial planning phase. The timescales were felt to be too short for genuine community consultation with the consequence that projects delivered little more than tokenistic efforts. Another stated that there was little time for informed discussion and to consider where On Track fitted in the bigger picture. In addition, it was noted that short timescales meant that it was opportunistic which agencies were part of the initial consultation process and this was considered to have an ongoing effect on agencies; understanding and connection with On Track and to have negatively impacted on their engagement with providing data for the evaluation.

5.4 Management and governance

In relation to management and governance, the literature referred to effective practice with regards to leadership, governance and accountability, and performance management.

Ensuring effective leadership

Half of the sources of literature that contained implications for good practice included implications for effective leadership. Having a leader to manage the multi-agency group is identified as good practice in itself (e.g. Harker *et al.*, 2004). In their review of interagency provision for young people with challenging behaviour, Hamill and Boyd (2001) found it was important to have

a **'key staff member'** in place who can assume responsibility for coordinating the services of all professionals and for monitoring and evaluating the quality of the service provided. Lawrence *et al.* (2003) report that leaders should be **key decision makers**.

Example: Ensuring effective leadership

Children with disabilities (Lawrence *et al.*, 2003)

The stakeholder respondents in this survey indicated that it was critical that upper management was involved and committed to partnership working. There were repeated indications that success or failure is dependent on the commitment of key decision makers who are truly representative of the agencies involved. The governor of Ohio, for example, played a significant role in supporting and promoting interagency work and the Governor's office acted as an independent agency that facilitated and coordinated partnership between agencies. A number of suggestions were made: involving someone who truly understands the agency's position and priorities; involving someone with enough authority to make decisions in behalf of the agency; involving someone who can provide immediate and direct assistance when problems arise; and involving someone who can authorise the utilisation of the agency's resources to support the partnership

There was also evidence within the literature that leaders require **special attributes**, such as a shared vision and tenacity to drive the multi-agency agenda, strong entrepreneurial skills for relationship building and networking, and they need to be fully committed to the multi-agency group (Atkinson *et al.*, 2002; Frost and Lloyd 2006; Allnock *et al.*, 2006). Providing leaders with **time to fulfil their role** was also found to be important and to ensure more effective leadership (Carpenter *et al.*, 2005; Townsley *et al.*, 2004b), as was a **sustained impetus** from leaders to build effective partnerships (Healey, 2004). The literature states that leaders could benefit from **support from 'local champions'** who promoted cultural changes, established partnerships and helped to deliver joint action, and also from support networks of other leaders (Healey, 2004; Noaks *et al.*, 2003).

Example: Ensuring effective leadership

Multi-disciplinary teamwork in child welfare (Frost and Lloyd, 2006)

Effective leadership involves individuals who can work in the new ever-changing world of joined up working that involves networking and crossing boundaries. It is essential that senior managers are fully committed to the principles of partnership working. Thus, they report that individual relationships between the senior managers of partnership organisations can be an important first step in establishing organisational relationships. The personal commitment that senior managers give can be an incentive to the involvement of other staff in their organisations. They report on examples of such leadership, such as effective YOT managers with entrepreneurial skills, which they use to build good relationships with governing bodies and to broker interagency agreements. The authors also introduce the concept of 'boundary crossing individuals' from another study. They state that these individuals operate as entrepreneurs in creating new solutions to problem and have well developed skills at mobilising political, financial and technical resources from a range of sources and bringing these to bear on particular needs and issues.

Appropriate systems of governance

Fox and Butler (2004) found that governance is crucial to multi-agency work. They state that it is necessary to develop appropriate systems to ensure accountability, but that these must be appropriate to the type of multi-agency partnership. This requires **clear roles and responsibilities** for the accountable body and all elements of the partnership. It also requires well-defined **transparent decision-making processes** that ensure decisions are made at the appropriate level, and **a project management system** that is common to all of the work undertaken in the partnership. Percy-Smith (2006) also identifies good practice regarding accountability. She identified that partnerships or multi-agency groups should be **accountable to the wider partnership group**, service users and external stakeholders. Frost and Lloyd (2006) found that lines of accountability needed to be considered and addressed to ensure that they make sense for frontline workers.

Example: Appropriate systems of governance

Multi-disciplinary teamwork in child welfare (Frost and Lloyd, 2004)

Frost and Lloyd state that, when professional work in a vertically managed environment, the lines of accountability are clear. A social worker, for example, would expect to be accountable through their team leader, through a district manager to a service head and then to the director. In multi-agency working, these lines of accountability can become complex and blurred. For example, in some teams, a worker might be seconded from an agency that is responsible for their service conditions, be line managed by the team manager of the multi-agency team and receive supervision from a third party. They suggest that this inherent complexity does have to be carefully considered and addressed. The organisation of the team and lines of accountability need to make sense for front-line workers. It is also important to ensure that frontline workers are offered effective support and supervision.

Establishing performance management systems

Fox and Butler (2004) discovered that performance management (as well as governance) is crucial to partnership working. Firstly, multi-agency groups need **clear aims and objectives**, and secondly, they need a **performance management system** that reflects the complexity of partnership working, is bespoke for the needs of the partnership and can relate partnership activity to the achievement of outcomes. It was also identified that multi-agency groups should establish **joint review and evaluation protocols** and develop **joint performance indicators** that reflect that nature of the work undertaken in multi-agency contexts (Moran *et al.*, 2006).

Key points

- The implications for good practice with regard to multi-agency working have been widely explored in the literature and, as such, there appears to be conclusive evidence with regard to many elements of good practice.
- According to the literature, the establishment of effective working relationships depends on four key areas: clarifying roles and responsibilities (e.g. by ensuring parity amongst partners, valuing diversity); securing

commitment at all levels (e.g. by having commitment at senior level, highlighting the benefits); engendering trust and mutual respect (e.g. through sharing skills and expertise, equal resource distribution); and fostering understanding between agencies (e.g. through joint training and recognition of individual expertise).

- Three areas were identified as important in developing effective multi-agency processes: ensuring effective communication and information sharing (e.g. by having transparent lines of communication, creating opportunities for discussion), developing a shared purpose (e.g. by agreeing joint aims, conducting a needs analysis) and effective planning and organisation (e.g. by developing shared protocols, having a clearly defined structure).
- It was considered important to secure the necessary resources for multi-agency work and this involved securing adequate and sustained funding (e.g. through pooled budgets, written agreements around funding), ensuring continuity of staffing (e.g. by ensuring staff capacity, providing support for staff) and an adequate time allocation (e.g. by having realistic timescales, built in time for planning).
- Effective management and governance was particularly dependent on ensuring effective leadership (e.g. by identifying a key staff member, appointing leaders with special attributes), although also dependent on effective governance and management arrangements (e.g. by developing appropriate accountability systems and having a transparent decision-making process) and an effective performance management system (e.g. through joint review and evaluation protocols and joint performance indicators).
- Overall, three aspects of good practice emerged throughout the literature as particularly important in that they were each identified as key to addressing a number of critical issues to the success of interagency practice. These areas of good practice related to providing sufficient time for the development of multi-agency working, the provision of joint training and agreement of joint aims and objectives.

Table 5.1 Effective practice strategies: A summary

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE STRATEGIES	
Working relationships	
Clarifying roles and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take time initially to clarify roles and responsibility of all parties • Each worker should have a clear role and sense of contribution • Recognise and value differences, value diversity • Joint training can help to clarify roles and shared learning in groups can reduce stereotypes • Provide time to allow professionals to reflect on their new professional identities • Reduce 'turf issues' by pre-planning and highlighting the positive outcomes of collaboration and disseminating those from other service collaborations • Ensure parity in the perceived seniority of representatives from different organisations • Foster respect for specialist expertise combined with a willingness to explore and celebrate professional diversity • Boundary crossing can lead to a renegotiation of professional practice
Securing commitment at all levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-agency work requires commitment at both strategic and operational levels • Foster personal commitment rather than professionals being directed to work in a multi-agency way • Ensure that the professional involved can see the benefits of multi-agency work as this secures greater commitment and stops it from floundering • Provide opportunities for sharing goals and visions, establishing trust and mutual responsibility as this helps secure commitment • Creating opportunities for decision making, and effectively chairing meetings encourages attendance • Ensure that part-time, peripheral or seconded staff feel included • Consult with professionals and clients from the beginning to secure commitment. • A strong history of collaboration raises levels of commitment • Commitment should be underpinned by resources • Leadership modelling commitment heightens commitment levels
Engendering trust and mutual respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of close working relationships aids honesty and encourages open discussions of problems • Sharing skills and expertise develops trust, as does a willingness to be honest regarding knowledge gaps • Shared visions and equal resource distribution develops trust

<p>Fostering understanding between agencies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint training and forums can help to foster understanding between agencies • Recognition of the unique roles of individuals and utilisation of all skills • Work shadowing schemes can enhance understanding • Key players should be given time together to foster mutual understanding and informed dialogue • Accessible, practical guides to working with different sectors • Appointing a leader with 'cultural intelligence' who can identify the different cultures and construct an appropriate response • Provide opportunities to cross-boundaries, to examine current practice for each agency and to rethink the multi-agency philosophy • Give the culture of partnership and collaboration high priority • Basing strategic level staff in a reluctant department can raise the profile of multi-agency working • Take time to learn and understand each agency's mission, priorities and technical language • Staff secondments into partner agencies or presentations from different agencies at the start of collaboration can help to break down barriers
<p>Multi-agency processes</p>	
<p>Ensuring effective communication and information sharing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create transparent lines of communication with clear protocols • Increased contact through meetings, working groups or training etc, results in greater inclination to seek further communication • Create frequent opportunities for communication, discussion and debate • Face-to-face meetings and a mix of formal and informal modes of communication • Develop personal connections to promote working relationships and informal links • Co-locate of services where possible • Provide accessible, written updates, particularly at early stages of multi-agency partnerships • Have a pro-active approach to communication and embed into working practices • Formalise processes for information sharing and establish clear protocols • Provide joint training to facilitate information sharing and the exchange of good practice • Ensure that all representatives understand all terms or acronyms and provide definitions of the most common terms. • Explore any differences in terminology as a group and consider any different understandings • Key players in multi-agency groups might benefit from more time together to foster informed dialogue • Team activities and service development should allow for creation of a shared language

<p>Developing a shared purpose</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a shared vision to define the scope and purpose of the partnership and use this as a reference point • The shared vision should be inspirational and based on jointly held values • Develop a shared understanding • Have a clear justification for partnership and demonstrate value for money • Develop clarity of roles and responsibilities (role demarcation) • Ensure targets and objectives are relevant and shared across agencies. • Clearly articulate goals and outcomes • Develop guidelines to show how services are coordinated • Provide joint training or staff development • Set up a steering group to identify problems, key issues and different cultures • Conduct a needs analysis to create a picture of existing provision and boundaries of provision
<p>Effective planning and organisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult service users on needs, issues and priorities in a way that empowers them and is sustainable • Use well designed consultations, good instruments and strategies etc • Develop shared protocols and written commitment to inter-professional working that are reviewed regularly • Develop a clearly defined and well documented structure/model to explain multi-agency operation and make this available to service users • Set up systems and structures to support joint working, such as service level agreements, coordinating bodies and multi-professional groups • Understand and cater for distinctive working conditions and the aims and objectives of different sectors • Disseminate good practice • Provide joint training to develop common ways of working • Use task groups to transform strategic plans into operational action • Adopt pro-collaboration policies and inform frontline staff • Select representation purposefully, ensuring equal representation • Balance the need to involve all organisations with the need to deliver partnership objectives efficiently and involve all relevant agencies early • Use a checklist of all agencies involved with the client group • Ensure representation of service users where relevant • Deliver any new functions through existing partnerships wherever possible • Assess the variability of members' history of collaboration when bringing a multi-agency group together • Provide training to those inexperienced in multi-agency work • Where there are few inherited linkages, proactive networking at strategic levels could counterbalance this

Resources for multi-agency work	
Securing adequate and sustained funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pooled budgets or joint funding • Identify and use alternative sources of funding • Avoid asking individuals to be involved in multi-agency work without additional funding, i.e. whilst still being held accountable for their full workload • Ensure stability of funding and distribute resources equally across agencies • Produce and agree clearly written agreements for funding arrangements • Recognition by senior managers of the importance of shared resources and the need to act as champions for funding arrangements at strategic/operational levels • Ensure dedicated resources to keep everyone engaged • Resources should be available to support management and administration
Ensuring continuity of staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support leaders and delegate responsibility to alleviate problems with staff turnover • Consider capacity issues to ensure continuity of representation over time • Facilitation through co-location, a joint location or a change in location
Ensuring adequate time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build in time for planning, developing and implementing arrangements • Sufficient groundwork on team building and developing trust • Create time for reflecting on new professional identities • Have a project start up phase for planning and development
Management and governance	
Ensuring effective leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior positions have more clout than junior staff in management roles • Leaders require shared vision and tenacity to drive the agenda as well as full commitment, strong entrepreneurial skills and networking • Partnerships needs sustained input from leadership and leaders need time and resources for their role • Reorganise work to ensure that managers can get time to get involved • Leaders should consult with and provide support for frontline staff, as well as addressing service conditions and staff welfare • Provide support networks for leaders and some delegation to other staff to relieve pressures • Leaders should model commitment to maximise collaboration
Establishing appropriate governance systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processes/structures of accountability need to be appropriate to the type of partnership and make sense to frontline workers • Have clear roles and responsibility for the accountable body • Give accountability to external stakeholders and be accountable to service users • Consistency of governance structures with the vision and approach the partnership is taking, and facilitate efficient and effective decision making
Establishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear aims and objectives and joint performance indicators

**performance
management
systems**

- Performance management systems that reflect the complexity of partnership working, capture a range of activity and have a clear focus on outcomes.
- Have joint review and evaluation procedures (e.g. team away days)

6 Concluding comments

Review of the literature sample within this study again testified to the complexity of multi-agency working. Whilst there has been some discussion about models of multi-agency working over the last five years within the literature, this does not seem to have extended to the linking of models with facilitators, barriers and, more importantly, outcomes. This is an area that may fruitfully be explored in further research.

There is substantial empirical evidence for the impact of multi-agency working on the professionals involved. Multi-agency activity is rewarding and stimulating for staff and provides them with a greater understanding of other agencies and services, although it can also lead to uncertainty over professional identities. In contrast, there seems to be very little empirical evidence for the impact on service users. The evidence available suggests that the main benefit to service users is likely to centre around improved access to services, but more research needs to be conducted in this area.

There is also little evidence to draw on to determine the impact of multi-agency working on the agencies and services involved. There appears to be conflicting evidence with regard to the demands that multi-agency working makes on both the agencies, and the professionals involved (although it seems to be weighted towards an increased demand on both). This would indicate the need for further exploration in this area and a pressing need to confirm (if evident) the impact on service users.

In contrast, facilitators, barriers and good practice with regard to multi-agency working have been widely explored in the literature and, as such, there appears to be much conclusive evidence with regard to elements of good practice. These findings are not new and appear to have been well refined and documented over the last few years. There is therefore a wealth of information for practitioners to draw on. It may be that practitioners need to be directed to accessible sources of information and there needs to be more acknowledgement that effective multi-agency working is not easily achieved

and takes time. However, by considering the information that is currently available, it is a process that can be worked through.

Appendix 1

Search strategy

The databases searched were the following:

- British Education Index (BEI)
- The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)
- Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA)
- Current Educational Research in the United Kingdom (CERUK)
- ChildData
- International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS)
- PsycINFO
- Social Care Online.

Search strategies for all databases were developed by using terms from the relevant thesauri (where these were available), in combination with free-text searching. The key words used in the searches, together with a brief description of each of the databases searched, are outlined below. Throughout the \$ symbol has been used to denote truncation of terms, and (ft) the use of free-text search terms.

British Education Index (BEI)

BEI provides bibliographic references to 350 British and selected European English-language periodicals in the field of education and training, plus developing coverage of national report and conference literature.

- #1 Agency Cooperation
- #2 Interagency OR Inter Agency (ft)
- #3 Multiagency OR Multi Agency (ft)
- #4 #1 OR #2 OR #3
- #5 Children's Trust\$ (ft)
- #6 Every Child Matters (ft)
- #7 Children Act\$ (ft)
- #8 #5 OR #6 OR #7
- #9 #4 AND #8

- #10 Effective\$ (ft)
- #11 Good Practice (ft)
- #12 Best Practice (ft)
- #13 #10 OR #11 OR #12
- #14 (#4 AND #13) NOT #8

The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

ERIC is sponsored by the United States Department of Education and is the largest education database in the world. It indexes over 725 periodicals and currently contains more than 7,000,000 records. Coverage includes research documents, journal articles, technical reports, program descriptions and evaluations and curricula material.

- #1 Agency Cooperation
- #2 Interagency OR Inter Agency (ft)
- #3 Multiagency OR Multi Agency (ft)
- #4 #1 OR #2 OR #3
- #5 Childrens Trust\$ (ft)
- #6 Every Child Matters (ft)
- #7 Children Act (ft)
- #8 No Child Left Behind (ft)
- #9 #5 OR #6 OR #7 OR #8
- #10 Effective\$ (ft)
- #11 Good Practice (ft)
- #12 Best Practice (ft)
- #13 #10 OR #11 OR #12
- #14 #4 AND #9 AND #13

Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA)

ASSIA is an index of articles from over 600 international English language social science journals. The database provides unique coverage of special educational and developmental aspects of children.

- #1 Interagency Collaboration
- #2 Children
- #3 Young People
- #4 #2 OR #3
- #5 #1 AND #4
- #6 Collaborative Approach
- #7 Collaborative Case Management

- #8 Collaborative Decision Making
- #9 #6 OR #7 OR #8
- #10 #4 AND #9
- #11 Every Child Matters (ft)
- #12 Children's Trust\$ (ft)
- #13 Children Act\$ (ft)
- #14 #11 OR #12 OR #13

Current Educational Research in the United Kingdom (CERUK)

CERUK is a database of current or on-going research in education and related disciplines. It covers a wide range of studies including commissioned research and PhD theses, across all phases of education from early years to adults.

- #1 Inter Agency Collaboration
- #2 Multi Agency Working
- #3 Multi Agency Support Teams
- #4 Every Child Matters Agenda
- #5 Children's Trusts
- #6 Children Act (2004)

ChildData

ChildData is produced by the National Children's Bureau. It encompasses four information databases: bibliographic information on books, reports and journal articles (including some full text access); directory information on more than 3,000 UK and international organisations concerned with children; Children in the News, an index to press coverage of children's issues since early 1996; and an indexed guide to conferences and events.

- #1 Multiagency
- #2 Multiagency Centres
- #3 Interagency Relations
- #4 Interprofessional Relations
- #5 Multidisciplinary
- #6 #1 OR #2 OR #3 OR #4 OR #5
- #7 Children's Services
- #8 Children's Trusts
- #9 Every Child Matters
- #10 Children Act 2004

- #11 #7 OR #8 OR #9 OR #10
- #12 Effectiveness
- #13 #12 AND (#6 OR #11)

International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS)

IBSS is one of the largest and most comprehensive social science databases in the world with coverage dating from 1951 onwards. Current data is taken from over 2,400 selected international social science journals and around 7,000 books per annum.

- #1 Interagency
- #2 Multiagency
- #3 Children Act
- #4 Every Child Matters (ft)
- #5 Children's Trust\$
- #6 #1 OR #2 OR #3 OR #4 OR #5

PsycINFO

This is an international database containing citations and summaries of journal articles, book chapters and technical reports, as well as citations to dissertations in the field of psychology and psychological aspects of related disciplines, such as medicine, sociology and education.

- #1 Integrated Services
- #2 Interagency OR Inter Agency(ft)
- #3 Multiagency OR Multi Agency (ft)
- #4 #1 OR #2 OR #3
- #5 Children (ft)
- #6 Young People (ft)
- #7 #5 OR #6
- #8 #4 AND #7
- #9 Every Child Matters (ft)
- #10 Children's Trust\$ (ft)
- #11 Children Act (ft)
- #12 #9 OR #10 OR #11

Social Care Online

This database provides information about all aspects of social care, from fostering, to mental health and human resources.

- #1 Interagency Cooperation
- #2 Interprofessional Relations

Appendix 2

Literature summary template

Title: Author(s): Date: Publisher:	
REVIEW OF SOURCE	
Useful background material	
Purpose/focus of literature	
Type/models of multi-agency working/activity	
Impact/outcomes of multi-agency working/activity	
Factors that facilitate multi-agency working	
Challenges to multi-agency working	
Implications for good practice	
Any other key findings, conclusions, recommendations	
DESCRIPTION OF SOURCE	
Sector	
Country/area	
Participants	
Method(s)	
When data collected	
Source/document type	
Key references	
REVIEW OF EVIDENCE	
Reviewer's comments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the reported analysis adequate and correct? • Are the author's interpretation supported by the evidence? • Are there any biases/caveats raised or to be aware of? • Is there corroboration or triangulation of sources? 	

Relevance to review (high, medium, low)		
Date of review:	Reviewed by:	
Categorisation (for maxQDA)		

Appendix 3

Literature sample information

Target groups/areas covered

- The sources were classified according to their main focus. The main focus of the 29 sources was as follows:
- General multi-agency working (7) (e.g. two literature reviews, multi-agency teams)
- Early intervention/family support (5) e.g. Sure Start; Centres of Excellence
- Theory/models of multi-agency working (2)
- Crime prevention (2)
- Challenging behaviour/behaviour problems (2)
- Child welfare/protection (2)
- Drugs education/Substance abuse (2)
- Disabled children/complex care needs (2)
- Strategic partnerships (1)
- Integrated care (1)
- Children whose parents are incarcerated (1)
- Domestic violence (1)
- Connexions (1)
- Looked after children (1)
- Child health/health promotion (1)
- Homelessness (1)
- Mental health (1).

Agencies involved

The sources were also classified according to the agencies involved in the multi-agency activity examined. The findings were as follows (a number were impossible to classify accurately on the information available within the source):

- Education, health, social services and other agencies (18)
- Education, health and social services (2)
- Education and social services (2)
- Education and health (1)
- Social services and health (2)
- Unclassified (4).

Models of multi-agency activity

The sources were also classified according to the models of multi-agency activity examined, where this was possible from the information given. Some sources did not identify models and others examined activity based on a range of models and therefore could not be classified as one model. The remainder have been classified according to the terminology used within the source. The findings were as follows:

- centre-based/co-location (7)
- coordinated response (5)
- multi-agency teams (4)
- meetings/consultation (4)
- school-based delivery (2)
- referral models (2)
- decision making group (2)
- operational delivery (2)
- joint service delivery (2)
- informal arrangements/liaison/contact (2).

In addition, a number of models were identified in just one source. These included: cooperative practice; integrated strategies; co-configuration; strategic partnership; interorganisational; formation of a separate legal identity; formation of a virtual organisation; collaboration; and a service-level agreement. Finally, in five sources models were either unclassified or no models were identified.

Method

The sources were classified according to the main methodology used in the research.

- National evaluation (6) Sure Start; Connexions; three-year longitudinal evaluation by NCB on effectiveness of interagency work for LAC; On Track; national evaluation of multi-agency integrated care system in the US.
- Literature review/review of evidence (4).
- Local evaluation (3) Excellence Centres; local Sure Start programmes in eight case study regions; challenging behaviour in region in Scotland.
- Large scale/national mixed methods (3) pro forma, telephone interviews, case studies; large-scale ESRC funded project and literature review; literature review, survey and case studies on homelessness in 32 local authorities in Scotland.
- Small-scale mixed methods (3) comparison of two collaborations using observations, survey, interviews; early intervention family support team using focus groups and interviews; five multi-agency teams using observation, document analysis, interviews and focus groups.
- Case studies (2) case studies of two families of schools regarding drug education; health initiatives in schools.
- Survey (2) state-wide survey Australia on child protection and mental health services; survey in US on child welfare and substance abuse.
- Interviews (2) stakeholders in state departments and agencies in Ohio; analysis of strategies to encourage collaboration.
- Theoretical paper/chapter (2).
- Discourse analysis (1) of eight multi-agency meetings.
- Comparison of referrals (1) analysis and comparison of referrals in two child behaviour intervention sites.

Date of source

The literature sample was also classified according to the date of the work:

- 2001–02 (4)
- 2003 (5)

- 2004–05 (15)
- 2006–07 (5).

Country/location

In addition, the sources were classified according to their origin.

- UK (21) England (4) (NE 2; London 1); England and Wales (2) Scotland (2) South Wales (1)
- United States (4) children whose parents imprisoned; general multi-agency working; substance abuse; integrated care
- International (2) reviews
- Canada (1) domestic violence
- Australia (1).

Appendix 4

Organisations responding to the email request for recent research

The following organisations responded to the email request:

- Carnegie Young People's Initiative
- The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)
- The Department for education and Skills (DfES)
- Youth Justice Board
- Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS)
- Demos
- National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR)
- Nuffield Foundation
- Social Science Research unit, the Institute of Education, university of London
- Universities of Birmingham, Oxford and Bath
- Ealing Local authority
- Leicester Children's Trust.

Appendix 5

Definition of terms relating to multi-agency activity

- **Joined-up:** deliberate and co-ordinated planning and working, takes account of different policies and varying agency practice and values. Can be thinking, practice or policy development.
- **Joint working:** professionals from more than one agency working directly together on a project.
- **Multi-agency/cross-agency working:** more than one agency working together. Service provided by agencies acting in concert and drawing on pooled resources or pooled budgets.
- **Multi-professional/multi-disciplinary working:** working together of staff of different professions, background and training.
- **Inter-agency working:** more than one agency working together in a planned and formal way.
- **Cross-boundary working:** agencies working together on areas that extend beyond the scope of any one agency.
- **Cross-cutting:** cross-cutting issues are those that are not the 'property' of a single organisation or agency. Examples include social inclusion, improving health, urban regeneration.
- **Integration:** Agencies working together within a single, often new, organisational structure.
- **Networks:** Informal contact and communication between individuals or agencies.
- **Collaborative working/collaboration:** Agencies working together in a wide variety of different ways to pursue a common goal while also pursuing their own organisational goals.
- **Co-operation:** Informal relationships between organisations designed to ensure that organisations can pursue their own goals more effectively.
- **Co-ordination:** More formal mechanisms to ensure that organisations take account of each other's strategies and activities in their own planning.
- **Partnership:** 'two or more people or organisations working together towards a common aim' (Leeds Health Action Zone 2002, cited in Townsley *et al.* 2004a).

Source: Percy-Smith (2005) unless otherwise stated.

Appendix 6

Five organisational models of multi-agency activity

Figures 1–5 give diagrammatic representations of some models of multi-agency working.

Figure 1 Decision-making groups

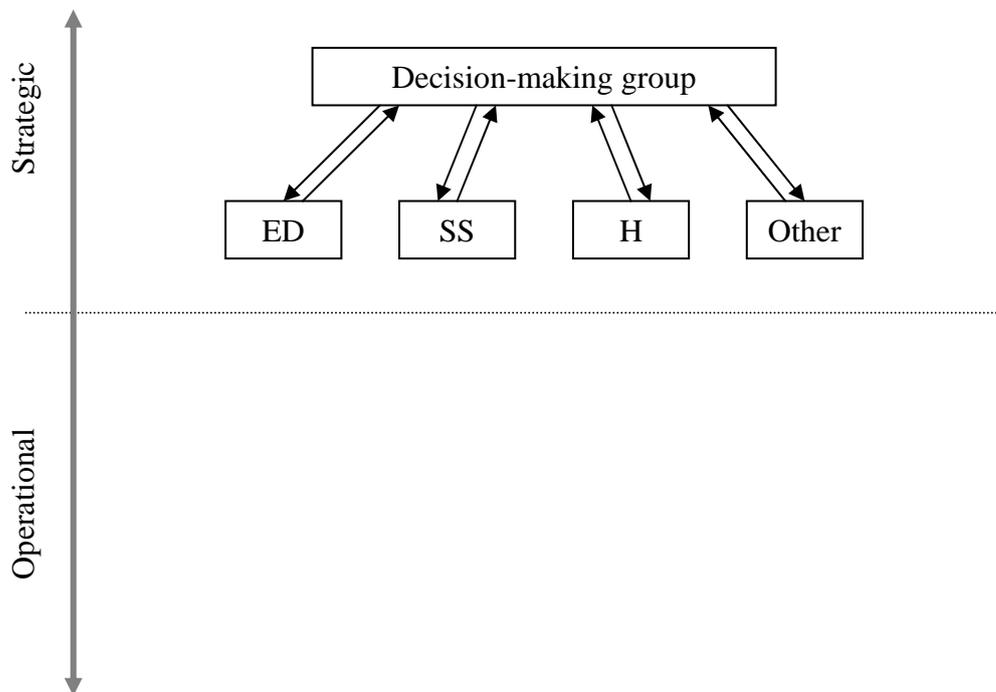


Figure 2 Consultation and training

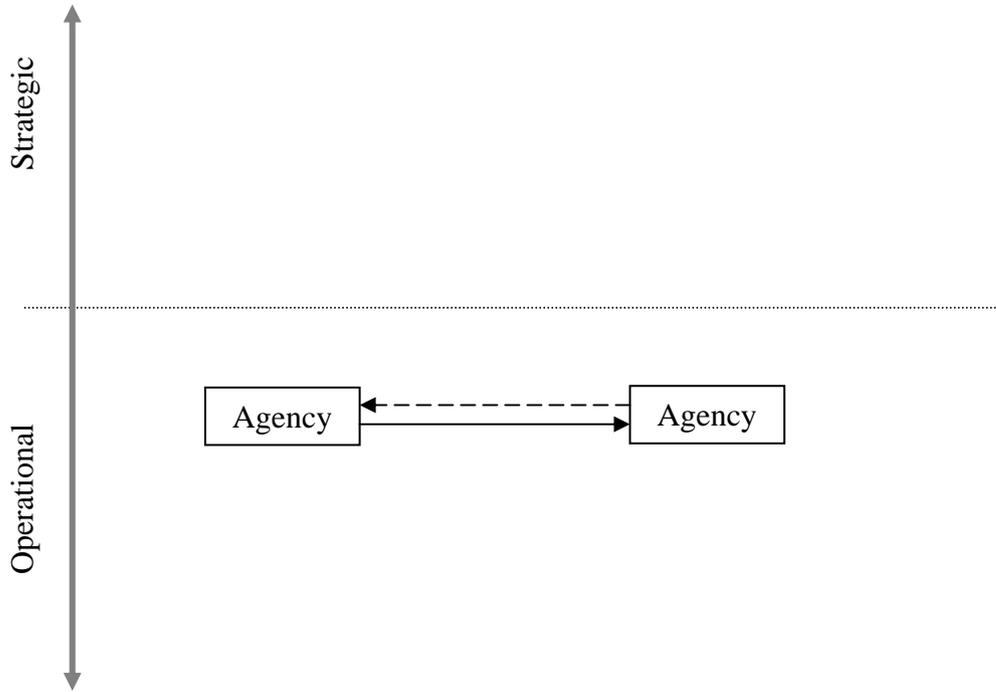


Figure 3 Centre-based delivery

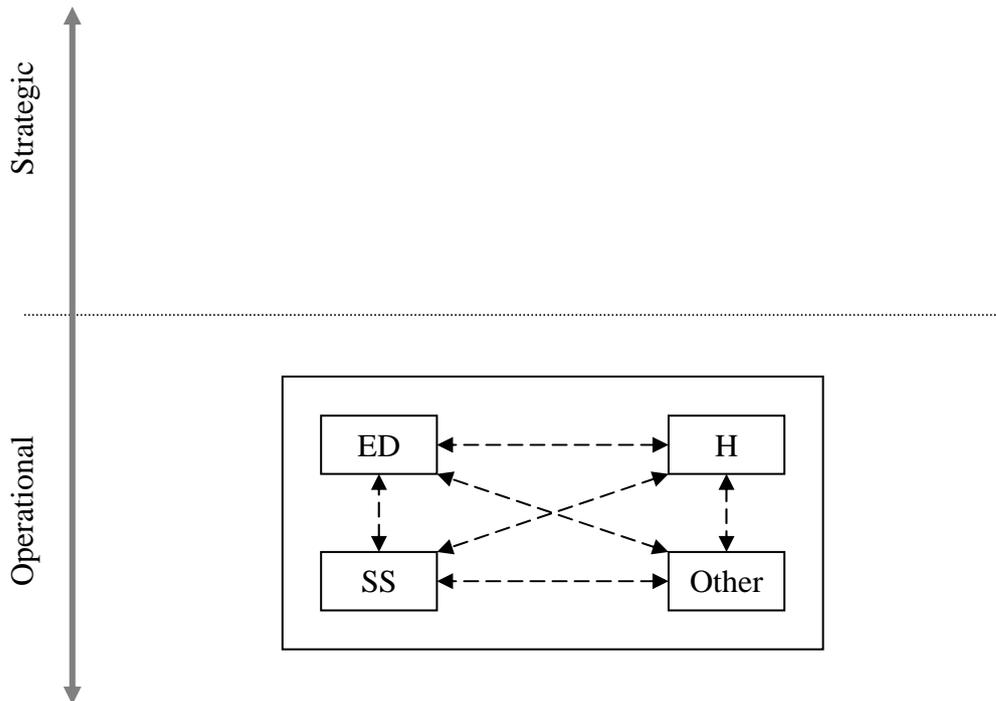


Figure 4 Coordinated delivery

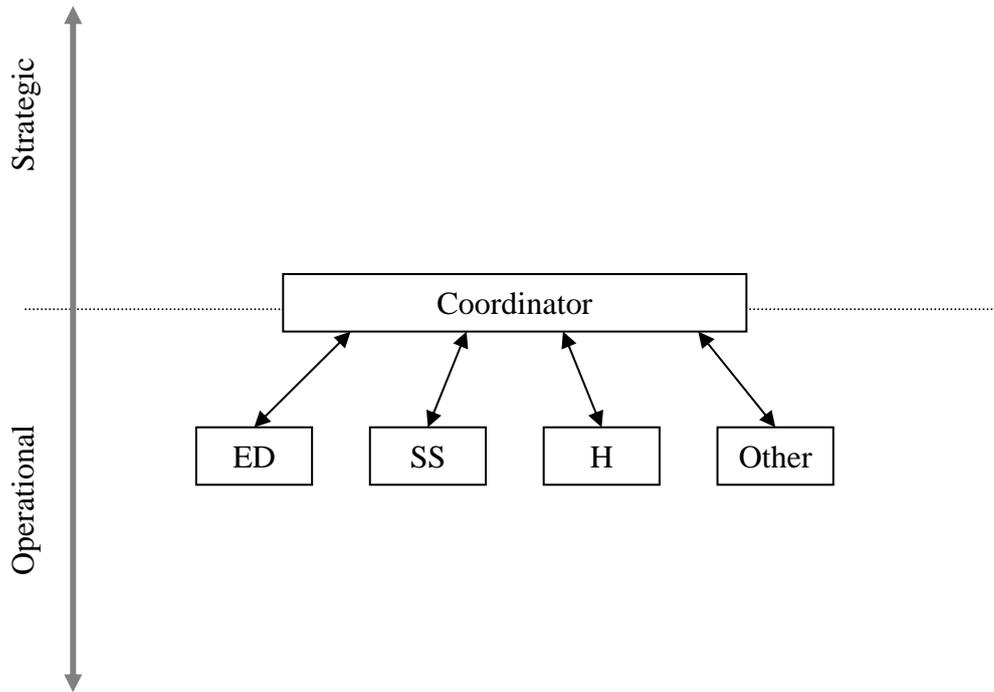
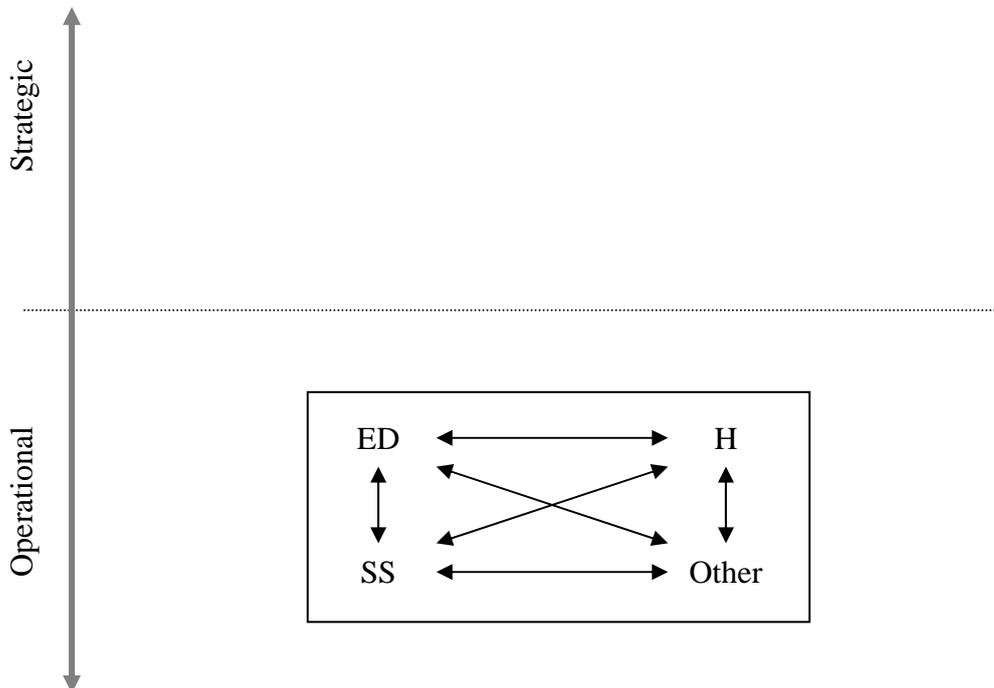


Figure 5 Operational-team delivery



Source: Atkinson et al., (2002).

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