

**Multi-agency Working in Sure Start**

**Coventry North East**

**by**

**Lucy Clarke, Sarah Dahl**

**and Carol Aubrey**

**April 2005**

Address for correspondence:

**Childhood Research Unit  
Institute of Education  
The University of Warwick  
Coventry CV4 7AL United Kingdom  
Tel: 024 7652 4486  
Fax: 024 7652 4177  
Email: c.aubrey@warwick.ac.uk**

## **Acknowledgements**

The research was undertaken as part of the evaluation of Sure Start Coventry and was funded by the four Sure Start Programmes in Coventry. Principal investigators were Chris Coe and Nick Spencer, with Maria Stuttaford as a named researcher. Carol Aubrey was a co-investigator, with Sarah Dahl as a researcher on the project. The study would not have been possible without the co-operation of the many respondents who agreed to participate.

# **Summary**

## **i) Overall survey results on multi-agency working for the four Coventry Sure Start Programmes**

- A survey of multi-agency working in four Coventry Sure Start programmes was carried out.
- The aim was to identify key success factors in and key challenges to effective practice.
- In total, eighty-three questionnaires were returned from team members in the programmes, the Accountable Body (that is, the city Primary Care Trust), Lead Agency (in this case, the City Council) and the Partnership Boards, including parents.
- Both quantitative and qualitative analysis was carried out.
- Views concerning the influence of local authority structures and boundaries were mixed with rather more respondents feeling they facilitated than hindered multi-agency working and with a sizeable minority reporting that they had no influence.
- The majority of respondents thought that resources in the form of staffing arrangements and time investment in Sure Start programmes facilitated multi-agency working.
- The vast majority of respondents thought that individuals' and Sure Start programme teams' high expectations and priorities affected multi-agency working.
- Aims and objectives of local Sure Start programmes were regarded by the vast majority as facilitative of multi-agency working.
- Views concerning the effect of confidentiality and information-sharing strategies between the various agencies on multi-agency working were mixed, with rather more respondents thinking they facilitated than hindered such work and a minority feeling they had no influence.
- The vast majority of respondents felt that a common language across professional groups facilitated multi-agency working in Sure Start local programmes.
- Views regarding the challenge that budgets and financial arrangements posed to Sure Start multi-agency working were mixed in respect of the impact of conflict within or between agencies providing Sure Start staff, concern about general lack of programme funding and sustainability of services and the creation of more effective use of resources by the reduction of repetition and overlap.
- The majority of respondents felt that issues around roles and responsibilities adopted by individuals working within Sure Start concerned understanding of the roles of others, conflicts over areas of responsibility and the need to go beyond existing roles to work in new ways.
- Respondents were mixed in view and were less certain whether or not aims of specific agencies competed with local Sure Start programme aims as a result of different Government targets, differences in target groups and different emphases on preventative versus crisis intervention.

- The vast majority of respondents felt that non-financial resources such as the allocation of time, provision of staff and physical space in which to work together effectively, created a challenge to multi-agency working.
- The majority of respondents felt that poor communication within and between agencies involved with Sure Start created problems between those working at different levels within agencies, could lead to different availability of professionals from different agencies and undermined successful multi-agency work through poor communication between different local government departments.
- Respondents' views on the effect of professional and agency culture on Sure Start practice were mixed. The majority felt that multi-agency working did not disrupt existing agency cultures, values and ways of working but did feel that specific policy and practice differences hindered shared practice. The vast majority felt that different data management systems affected information sharing and did impact upon shared practice.
- In terms of management strategy, the vast majority felt that multi-agency working was strongly supported and promoted at management level in order to remain credible at delivery level but were less sure whether management strategy drive was organised carefully in order to carry along the various participants from each agency. A majority did feel that the Sure Start management strategy encouraged like-minded individuals who sought new ways of working in order to meet shared goals and work across existing management structures.
- The vast majority believed that additional multi-agency training to meet the extended role of agencies would be helpful and shared an active desire to engage with other agencies at the delivery level. Views were mixed as to whether a 'bottom up' as well as 'top down' management approach to engaging with other agencies was desirable.
- The vast majority of respondents believed commitment and willingness of Sure Start team members to be involved in multi-agency work was sustained by an active desire to engage with other agencies at the management level and at the delivery level with an active desire to engage with other agencies by a 'bottom up' as well as 'top down' management approach.
- In terms of roles and responsibilities, the vast majority believed there was a need for a clear understanding of what was expected so that different agendas were not pursued. There was a need to understand the constraints on other agencies so that expectations were realistic and a need for mutual respect for the professional roles of other agencies and their contributions.
- The majority believed that common Sure Start aims and objectives were being achieved by the programmes through the recognition of a need for common ground and like-minded people, for a real purpose to joint working and a needs-led approach that replaced agency-specific agendas.
- The vast majority of respondents felt that communications and information-sharing within the Sure Start local programmes had been supported by opportunities for dialogue and open communication between agencies, personal relationship building and procedures and systems of information dissemination.
- The majority felt that leadership or drive of individual Sure Start Programme Managers demonstrated clear strategic direction, showed tenacity to overcome obstacles to progress and could bring together the Sure Start team in order to bring about change.

- Respondents' views were very mixed regarding the involvement of the right personnel from specific agencies on the Sure Start local programme, at the right level of responsibility to make the necessary decisions and activate the right services and with the right priority being given to the work of Sure Start by individual agencies.

## **ii) Specific survey results on multi-agency working by Sure Start North East**

At the time of the survey, there were 17 partnership board members and 10 staff at Sure Start North East.

- Unlike the main survey, SSCNE participants believed that local authority structures and boundaries facilitated multi-agency working.
- As in the main survey, SSCNE participants thought that resources in the form of staffing arrangements and time investment in Sure Start programmes facilitated multi-agency working.
- The vast majority of respondents in the main survey thought that individuals' and Sure Start programme teams' high expectations and priorities affected multi-agency working. In fact, in the case of SSCNE, all participants shared this view.
- Whilst the main survey views concerning the effect of confidentiality and information-sharing strategies between the various agencies were mixed, SSCNE participants felt these facilitated multi-agency working.
- Like the main survey, the vast majority of SSCNE participants felt that a common language across professional groups working in Sure Start local programmes facilitated multi-agency working.
- Views in the main study, regarding the challenge that budget and financial arrangements posed to Sure Start multi-agency working were mixed in some respects. For SSCNE participants, views concerning budgetary arrangements were mixed in respect of conflicts within or between agencies that provide Sure Start staff, general lack of programme funding, sustainability and, thus, uncertainty of funding and creating more effective use of resources by reducing repetition and overlap.
- The majority of main survey respondents felt that issues around roles and responsibilities adopted by individuals working within Sure start concerned understanding of the roles of others, conflicts over areas of responsibility and the need to go beyond existing roles to work in new ways. SSCNE participants, however, were mixed in view concerning conflicts over areas of responsibility.
- The majority of SSCNE participants believed that the aims of the specific agencies competed with Sure Start local programme aims through differences in target groups and different Government targets though were more mixed in view about the influence of a focus on preventative work versus crisis intervention.
- As in the main survey, the vast majority of SSCNE respondents felt that non-financial resources such as the allocation of time, provision of staff and physical space in which to work together effectively created a challenge to multi-agency working.

- As in the main study, SSNE participants felt that poor communication within and between agencies involved with Sure Start created problems between those working at different levels within agencies, could lead to different availability of professionals from different agencies and undermined successful multi-agency work through poor communication between different local government departments.
- Whilst the main survey respondents' views on the effect of professional and agency culture on Sure Start practice were mixed, the majority of SSCNE participants did not believe multi-agency working disrupted existing agency cultures, values and ways of working. The majority of SSCNE participants did believe that specific policy and practice differences hindered shared practice and all felt that different data management systems affecting information sharing impacted upon shared practice.
- As in the main survey, in terms of management strategy, the majority of SSCNE participants felt that multi-agency working was strongly supported and promoted at management level in order to remain credible at delivery level but were less sure strategy drive was organised carefully in order to carry along the various participants from each agency. A majority did feel that the Sure Start management strategy encouraged like-minded individuals who sought new ways of working in order to meet shared goals and work across existing management structures.
- As in the main survey, SSCNE participants believed additional multi-agency training to meet the extended role of agencies would be helpful and shared an active desire to engage with other agencies at the delivery level. Views were mixed as to whether 'bottom up' as well as 'top down' management approaches to engage with other agencies was desirable.
- As in the main survey, the majority of SSCNE participants believed commitment and willingness of the Sure Start team members to be involved in multi-agency work was sustained by an active desire to engage with other agencies at the management level and at the delivery level, and an active desire to engage with other agencies by a 'bottom up' as well as 'top down' management approach.
- In terms of roles and responsibilities, in the main study the vast majority believed there was a need for a clear understanding of what was expected so that different agendas were not pursued. There was a need to understand the constraints on other agencies so that expectations were realistic and the need for mutual respect for the professional roles of other agencies and their contributions. In the case of SSCNE participants, all participants held these views.
- As in the main study, the majority of SSCNE participants believed that common Sure Start aims and objectives were being achieved by the programmes through the recognition of a need for common ground and like-minded people, for a real purpose to joint working and a needs-led approach that replaced agency-specific agendas.
- As in the main study, the majority of SSCNE participants felt that communications and information-sharing within the Sure Start local programmes had been supported by opportunities for dialogue between agencies, personal relationship building and procedures and systems of information dissemination.

- As in the main survey, the majority of SSCNE participants felt that leadership or drive of individual Sure Start Programme Managers demonstrated clear strategic direction, showed tenacity to overcome obstacles to progress and bring together the Sure Start team in order to bring about change.
- As in the main survey, SSCNE participants were mixed in view regarding the involvement of the right personnel from specific agencies on the Sure Start local programme, at the right level of responsibility to make the necessary decisions and activate the right services, and with the right priority being given to the work of Sure Start by individual agencies.

### **iii) Interviews with representatives of the Leading Agencies**

The second stage of the investigation attempted to investigate the key factors of success and the key challenges facing multi-agency working in the four Sure Start local programmes by probing, in more depth, issues identified in the survey. These areas were related to participants' knowledge of the leading agencies, information regarding roles and responsibilities, knowledge of non-fiscal resources, issues relating to sharing information, data procedures and communication. Thirty-six in-depth, semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted with a sample of team members, Partnership Board members, from each of the four programmes and representatives of the Accountable Body and Lead Agency.

- Participants commented on the role of Coventry City (CC) and the Primary Health Care Trust (PCT) as ensuring that the financial details outlined in the local programme's plan were executed.
- A lack of capacity and, hence, a delay in prioritising support for Sure Start, at the strategic level within the PCT, was mentioned by both interviewees. This resulted in members of the finance team being employed on temporary contracts and in their becoming involved in issues outside of their remit, such as legal and estate management issues.
- One interviewee described the effect of the CC on the local programme as one of supporting and advising Programme Managers. The effect of the PCT was described by both participants as having a less positive effect on the local programmes in terms of the time taken to make decisions.
- The impact on local programmes of having two leading agencies was also thought to have added complexity and, hence, challenge.
- Both interviewees felt that Sure Start goals complemented those of their parent agencies but acknowledged that 'operational issues of one agency created particular challenges'.
- Both participants identified their priorities at a strategic and operational level as well as involvement in the Senior Sponsors Group.
- Both participants referred to the challenges posed by staff being employed by the PCT on temporary contracts.
- One participant acknowledged lack of office space as a challenge.
- Both participants mentioned challenges regarding information sharing between team members and the PCT.

- Both participants generally agreed that communication was hindered by being centrally located and that improved IT networks were needed.
- Challenges posed by team members who were used to working in different ways were also mentioned.
- Regular meetings with the Partnership Board and Programme Managers were considered to be successful ways to ensure effective communication.
- In terms of leadership style, it was reported that there was a real willingness to share, to learn and to take the lead and a strong personal commitment by Programme Managers was shown.
- Challenges posed at the strategic level in the authority were identified and lack of leadership from Sure Start national office with regard to constantly changing policies was mentioned.

#### **iv) Partnership Board Interviews**

- Four sample Board members representing the PCT, CC, an independent local charity and a parent were interviewed.
- In terms of knowledge of structures, participants varied in their level of understanding of the role of CC and PCT.
- Views regarding the effect the PCT and CC had on the local programme were mixed from positive, through 'no effect' to negative, though PCT and CC employees working together was regarded as positive by one participant.
- Participants' views of the effect of the CC and PCT on their own roles were similarly mixed.
- Three participants stated that Sure Start complemented the goals of their parent agency, however, it was felt by another that Sure Start duplicated services their agencies already offered.
- Three participants identified the complementary aims of Sure Start local programmes and their parent agencies.
- Priorities of individual participants included establishing and developing relationships between parents and the project, supporting and complementing the Sure Start programme, facilitating Programme Managers and working clearly within the Partnership Board terms of references.
- Indeed, it was stated that Sure Start complemented the goals of their parent agency in meeting the same government baseline targets though views were mixed as to whether services were duplicated or not.
- Three participants identified complementary aims of Sure Start local programmes and their parent agencies as impacting positively on client groups.
- With respect to staffing, the length of time taken to recruit a Programme Manager was mentioned by one participant that affected their parent agency. Another mentioned problems with recruiting health professionals. Yet another mentioned challenges concerning mainstreaming, changing professional practice and integrating different professionals from diverse disciplines.
- In terms of space, views were mixed regarding co-locating with another statutory department.

- All participants were unsure about the policies and procedures regarding data relating to Sure Start families though one mentioned difficulties that team members might face with different organisations having different arrangements.
- Three participants mentioned on-going challenges regarding the lack of information sharing of the PCT. They did acknowledge the issue was being addressed but not yet resolved.
- Availability of staff was raised, since there were a number of locations and a sizeable team.
- Jargon was acknowledged by one participant as a barrier to parent engagement though three participants indicated that formal Partnership Board meetings and informal face-to-face communication were successful and multi-choice communication channels was advocated by one.
- All participants had some knowledge of the ‘hard-to-reach’ strategies at individual and programme level.

## **v) Team Member Interviews**

Four team members of differing levels of seniority and positions were selected to be interviewed.

- Three of the four participants were aware of the strategic commitment of the CC but were less clear of the role of the PCT. They did identify the PCT’s role as the financial body.
- It was generally felt that as the leading agencies involved in Sure Start developed more effective ways of working in partnership things could be achieved ‘quicker and more efficiently’, however, it was not always apparent at operational level.
- Views about the impact of CC and PCT were mixed. Three participants declared that the CC did not affect them on a day-to-day basis but occasionally did impact on professional roles. One indicated a significant impact of CC on his/her role
- Two participants agreed that the PCT did not affect their working, one indicated that despite being a seconded PCT employee, she had no named PCT line manager. Another participant mentioned the absence of permanent PCT staff in the finance department.
- Participants held mixed views about the complementary aims of partner agencies and Sure Start. Two affirmed this, one felt his/her parent agency was ‘very mistrusting of any new initiative’ and a fourth felt her parent agency had little to do with Sure Start.
- With regard to the distinctness of aims of Sure Start, two highlighted the innovative approach that the programme offered, another indicated possible tensions between relative emphases on prevention and intervention that could impact on the parent agency.
- Views were divided as to individual priorities. Two felt confident about these and identified engaging with ‘hard-to-reach’ families, managing staff and working alongside existing programmes. One participant mentioned the impact of external influences such as changing priorities at Government level.

- Challenges in the staffing situation were evident and included feelings of isolation, lack of training and managing a diverse team. Notwithstanding this, the staffing situation, in general, was viewed positively.
- Despite two sites in close geographical proximity and a new building under construction, views were generally positive about the number of locations.
- Lack of procedures and protocols regarding data procedures and information sharing were identified as an issue.
- A strategy to place confidential information on shared hard drives was being reviewed. Identifying and accessing clients was regarded as a major challenge by two participants. The PCT and one parent agency were regarded as taking a controlling role. Reluctance of other agencies to share information was also highlighted.
- Views concerning communication strategies were mixed. The number of locations, under-use of IT systems, availability of part-time staff and different ways of working were regarded as challenges by two participants. Formal methods of communication considered successful and mentioned by all participants included the bi-weekly full team meetings, direct telephone line between locations, daily transfer of internal post, informal chats and social events.
- In terms of approaches to tackle ‘hard-to-reach’ groups, co-operative strategies such as trips to the seaside, parks and town as well as parties were mentioned by three participants. Saturday morning sessions to encourage dads to come along and other incentives were also highlighted. Alongside group strategies, individual strategies through a ‘little-by-little’ approach were also reported by one participant.
- It was concluded that in the light of the current political climate, where Sure Start local programmes were being rolled out into Sure Start Children’s Centres, there was going to be a continued emphasis on multi-agency working, in order to improve the life chances of children.
- In the words of one team member at Sure Start Coventry North – ‘how are these findings to be taken forward?’

# Contents

<b>Chapter 1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1    Social and political context .....	4
1.2    Sure Start .....	5
1.3    Sure Start Unit.....	6
1.3.1    ‘Expansion’ of Sure Start local programmes .....	7
1.4    Evaluation .....	8
1.4.1    Evaluation strategy for Sure Start local programmes.....	8
1.4.2    National evaluation .....	8
1.4.3    Local evaluation.....	9
1.4.4    Partnership effectiveness and team working .....	9
1.5    Research questions.....	10
<b>Chapter 2 Literature Review .....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1    Introduction .....	11
2.2    Policy.....	11
2.2.1    Health .....	12
2.2.2    Social Services .....	12
2.2.3    Education.....	13
2.3    Key factors of success and challenges of multi-agency working .....	14
2.3.1    Key factors of success.....	14
2.3.2    Challenges.....	15
2.4    Multi-agency working in early years settings .....	16
2.4.1    Centres of Excellence.....	16
2.4.2    Sure Start national and local evaluations.....	17
2.5    Survey .....	17
2.6 Conclusion .....	18
<b>Chapter 3 The Survey.....</b>	<b>20</b>
3.1    Introduction .....	20
3.2    Aims .....	20
3.3    Methodology.....	20
3.3.1    Participants.....	20
3.3.2    Materials .....	21
3.3.3    Procedures .....	21
3.3.4    Analysis .....	21
3.4    Results .....	22

3.5	Discussion .....	36
3.5	Conclusion .....	37
<b>Chapter 4 Interviews with Representatives of the Leading Agencies .....</b>		<b>39</b>
4.1	Introduction .....	39
4.2	Aims .....	39
4.3	Methods .....	39
4.3.1	Participants .....	39
4.3.2	Materials .....	40
4.3.3	Procedures .....	40
4.3.4	Analysis .....	40
4.4	Results .....	40
4.4.1	Knowledge of structures .....	40
4.4.2	Roles and responsibilities .....	41
4.4.3	Staffing and space .....	42
4.4.4	Data procedures and information sharing.....	43
4.4.5	Communication.....	43
4.4.6	Leadership style .....	43
4.5	Discussion .....	44
4.6	Conclusion .....	45
<b>Chapter 5 Partnership Board Interviews .....</b>		<b>46</b>
5.1	Introduction .....	46
5.2	Aims .....	46
5.3	Methods .....	46
5.3.1	Participants .....	46
5.3.2	Materials .....	46
5.3.3	Procedures .....	46
5.3.4	Analysis .....	47
5.4	Results .....	47
5.4.1	Knowledge of structures .....	47
5.4.2	Roles and responsibilities .....	49
5.4.3	Staffing and space .....	49
5.4.4	Data procedures and information sharing.....	50
5.4.5	Communication.....	51
5.4.6	Hard-to-reach strategies .....	51
5.5	Discussion .....	52
5.6	Conclusion .....	53

<b>Chapter 6 Team Member Interviews .....</b>	<b>54</b>
6.1    Introduction .....	54
6.2    Aims .....	54
6.3    Methods .....	54
6.3.1    Participants .....	54
6.3.2    Materials .....	54
6.3.3    Procedures .....	54
6.3.4    Analysis .....	55
6.4    Results .....	55
6.4.1    Knowledge of structures .....	55
6.4.2    Roles and responsibilities .....	57
6.4.3    Staffing and space .....	57
6.4.4    Data procedures and information sharing .....	58
6.4.5    Communication .....	59
6.4.6    Hard-to-reach strategies .....	60
6.5    Discussion .....	60
6.6    Conclusion .....	61
<b>Chapter 7 Conclusion .....</b>	<b>62</b>
7.1    Introduction .....	62
7.2    Research questions .....	62
7.2.1    How much is known about effective multi-agency working? .....	62
7.2.2    What are the key factors of success and challenges raised by multi-agency working in this particular Sure Start local programme? .....	63
7.2.3    What future lessons can be learned from multi-agency working for widespread dissemination? .....	64
7.3    The limitations of the study .....	66
7.4    Conclusion .....	67
<b>References .....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>APPENDIX A Evaluating Multi-Agency Working in Sure Start: Partnership Questionnaire.....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>APPENDIX B Evaluating Multi-Agency Working in Sure Start: Interview Schedule.....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>APPENDIX C Results of Pilot Interview Schedule .....</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>APPENDIX D Letter to Partnership Board Members .....</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>APPENDIX E Letter of Validation .....</b>	<b>87</b>

# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

### **1.1 Social and political context**

Children, child poverty and families have formed a crucial dimension of the political agenda since the arrival of the Labour Government in 1997 (Glass, 1999). The importance of children and families was apparent in their Manifesto (Labour Party, 1997). Since 1997, the Government has launched an ‘unprecedented’ effort to increase investment in families and young children and to develop a wide-ranging plan of action to expand and reform the early years system (OCED, 2001: 179). If anything, the significance of these issues has increased over the last few years with the Prime Minister’s commitment in 1999 to end child poverty by 2020 and the Chancellor’s pledge to halve child poverty by 2010 (Glass, 2001).

In 1997, a Comprehensive Spending Review was set up by the Government which looked at their priorities, pattern and level of public spending (HM Treasury, 1998). One of the most significant outcomes of this was the review of services for young children, involving both the Chancellor and the Treasury. The *Cross-Departmental Review of Provision for Young Children* acknowledged that a new approach to provision for young children was required (HM Treasury, 1998). As part of the Comprehensive Spending Review the Government announced a National Childcare Strategy. The aim of the strategy was to ensure good quality, affordable childcare for children aged 0 to 14 in every neighbourhood, including both formal childcare and support for informal arrangements (DfES, 1998). The National Childcare Strategy was to be implemented by locally-based Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCP) whose remit was to bring together different services at a local level. The National Childcare Strategy aimed to work in partnership with national and local government, other statutory agencies, employers, parents and private, public and voluntary sector childcare providers.

The Cross-Departmental Review of Provision for Young Children also reflected the view, by many Ministers, that current provision of services appeared to be failing those in greatest need. There was, at the same time, accumulating evidence from

programmes such as Head Start, in the USA, (a comprehensive child development programme serving children from birth to five, pregnant women and their families from low-income families) and the High Scope/Perry Pre-School Program, (which assisted low income, at-risk children in the community to gain a positive start at education and life) that investment in the early childhood could make the difference to a child's lifetime opportunities (Schweinhart, Barnes and Weikart, 1993; Kresh, 1998). The Review reported that children growing up in poverty did less well across a range of indicators such as health, education, employment, involvement in crime than their peers; existing services for young children were of mixed quality, patchy in provision, and often did not work collaboratively; integrated support in the very early years could make a lasting difference to child outcomes (HM Treasury, 1998). Therefore, as part of the National Childcare Strategy special funding for children and their families living in disadvantaged areas was to be allocated through the 'Sure Start' initiative, a new community-based programme (Glass, 1999).

## **1.2 Sure Start**

The Sure Start programme was introduced in England in April 1999. Sure Start was a Government-financed initiative for combating the effects of poverty and disadvantage for young children, aged under four years, and their families (Melhuish et al., 2002). It was designed to reduce the gap in outcomes between children growing up in poverty and the wider child population (Eisenstadt, 2002). As part of the Government's policy to prevent social exclusion, Sure Start local programmes aimed to improve the health and well-being of families and children, before and from birth, so children were ready to flourish when they start school (Sure Start Unit, 2000). Sure Start's four key objectives were to improve health, improve social and emotional development; to improve educational outcomes; and to strengthen families and communities (Sure Start Unit, 2000) thereby raising the physical, social, emotional and intellectual status of young children through improved services (Glass, 1999).

The Government intended to set up two hundred and fifty local programmes by 2001 to 2002, supporting approximately 18 per cent of children under four living in poverty (HM Treasury, 2000). The 2000 Spending Review included provision for a major geographical expansion of Sure Start, doubling the number of local programmes from two hundred and fifty to at least five hundred, reaching one third of children under four living in poverty by 2004 (HM Treasury, 2000). By reaching one-third of children living

in poverty, questions have to be asked about the provision or lack of provision for the existing two-thirds of children in similar circumstances. The targeting of specific geographical areas of disadvantage immediately excludes those children in poverty and their families who live outside the Sure Start boundary.

Each Sure Start local programme, ten years in longevity, was to be introduced in six rounds. Each programme, delivered by Partnership Boards, were established to work in partnership with parents, community organisations, statutory, private and voluntary service providers and all public sector professionals from the locality, ensuring that existing services worked well together in order to set up new services where gaps existed (Eisenstadt, 2002). Multi-agency working was at the heart of Sure Start, bringing together everyone who is concerned with children in the local community.

In summary, by co-ordinating the work of various agencies that were providing services for families and children, and by creating services specifically for the needs of a designated community, it was hoped that the effects of deprivation could be reduced so that children regardless of background could thrive when they reached school. This multi-agency approach seems idealistic with agencies from previous disparate services working hand in hand in an integrated manner. But since these agencies often have had different organisational cultures, career structures and working conditions, experience suggests that this relationship is often 'far from cosy' (Wiseman and Wakeman, 2002:40).

### **1.3 Sure Start Unit**

In December 2002, three years after the launch of Sure Start local programmes, the Sure Start, Early Years and Childcare Unit was launched to co-ordinate the work of the major ministries in favour of children. The Unit is an integral part of the Government's newly-formed Children, Young People and Families Directorate. The Unit, based in the Department for Skills and Education (DfES) and led by Baroness Cathy Ashton exemplified the Government's commitment to deliver good quality integrated services ensuring the best start in life for every child, providing good quality childcare and enhancing parental opportunities (Sure Start, 2003).

Building on the Sure Start local programmes, further integration was planned through the creation of Children's Centres (providing services to children under five and their

families, such as, early education integrated with full day care, parental outreach, family support, health services and effective links with Jobcentre Plus). These would enhance existing services and extend the benefits to more families and children up to the age of five, bringing an integrated approach to service delivery to areas where it was needed most (Sure Start, 2003). The majority of Children's Centres were developed from Sure Start local programmes, Neighbourhood Nurseries (which offered 45,000 new childcare places to support families in the most disadvantaged areas of England) and Early Excellence Centres which provided high quality 'one-stop shop' integrated education and day care for young children and services and opportunities for parents, carers, families and the wider community both directly and in cooperation with other providers (Sure Start, 2003).

### **1.3.1 'Expansion' of Sure Start local programmes**

Since commencing this study, a 2004 Spending Review has been published by the Treasury. *Stability, securing and opportunity for all: Investing for Britain's long-term future* sets out the Government's vision that every parent, wherever they live, should have access to affordable childcare and early years services their child needs (HM Treasury, 2004). Sure Start local programmes, initially intended to run for ten years, are now to be 'rolled out', within the next two years, into Sure Start Children's Centres. Under the 'guise' of expansion of Sure Start local programmes, Sure Start Children's Centres will provide services on 'Sure Start principles' which will be available to all (Glass, 2005: 2). The Government's *Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners* (DfES, 2004a) is to have a Sure Start Children's Centre reaching all children in the 20 per cent most deprived wards in England with an 'aim' for a Children's Centre in every community in those areas. The new Centres will be created by developing existing nursery schools, Sure Start programmes, Early Excellence Centres, family centres or community facilities (DfES, 2004a).

The *Children Act* (DfES, 2004b) gave a clear focus and new status to children's services. It established a duty on local authorities, giving them a particular leadership role in setting up the arrangements to promote co-operation between agencies, such as the Primary Care Trust and other appropriate bodies in order to improve children's well being (DfES, 2004b). This Act will affect Sure Start local programmes. In contrast to some Sure Start local programmes, new Sure Start Children Centre's will be managed by the local authority as opposed to a partnership between the local authority and the

community. Currently, Sure Start local programmes across the country are managed in a variety of ways, for example, some programmes are managed by national children's charities. Programmes in Coventry will not see such dramatic changes as they are already managed by the local authority.

## **1.4 Evaluation**

A central question that needs to be posed in relation to any initiative, such as Sure Start, concerns the extent to which it is adding, or is capable of adding 'extra capacity, value and positive impact on the existing design and delivery of services' (NESS, 2002:3). Large-scale investments such as Sure Start demand full and proper evaluation. The Government regards policymaking as a 'continuous, learning process, not as a series of one off initiatives' (Cabinet Office, 1999). They share how they intend to do this by evaluating programmes and policies.

'We will ensure that all policies and programmes are clearly specified and evaluated, and the lessons of success and failure are communicated and acted upon. (Cabinet Office, 1999:Section 2.6)

### **1.4.1 Evaluation strategy for Sure Start local programmes**

In light of this approach, there are two elements to the evaluation strategy for Sure Start local programmes. Firstly, a comprehensive, long-term, national evaluation of the impacts, implementation and economic cost of the programme as a whole; and secondly, a local level evaluation of individual Sure Start local programmes carried out by local programmes themselves and their evaluators (Sure Start, 2002).

### **1.4.2 National evaluation**

The National evaluation for Sure Start (NESS) aims to provide a substantial new source of data on the impact of early interventions and childhood deprivation. NESS's evaluation of the first four rounds began in January 2001 and measured the short, medium and long-term outcomes of Sure Start for children, families and communities (NESS, 2004). The evaluation of two hundred and sixty-two programmes focused on key themes and activities identified as a result of the first phase evaluation. It also considered changes in policy and sought to make a national assessment of the programmes' cost effectiveness (NESS, 2004). This raises the question: Will an evaluation lasting only six years (NESS, 2002) be long enough to provide evidence that the investment in this programme represented good value for money and that the programme itself had had a direct effect on family poverty through children?

### **1.4.3 Local evaluation**

The University of Warwick is evaluating four Sure Start local programmes in Coventry. The evaluation team is in itself multi-disciplinary involving health and education professionals. The local programmes vary in longevity from Round 6 to Round 2.

The programme managers in each of the four Sure Start areas during the consultation phase identified three areas on which the evaluation should focus: partnership effectiveness and team working; parental/family satisfaction; and speech and language service. In addition, each programme identified an area to be evaluated, unique to their situation: midwifery input; special needs provision; hard to reach strategies; and collaborative working with other local organisations.

### **1.4.4 Partnership effectiveness and team working**

Aspects of multi-agency working and the development of effective working practices were highlighted during the consultation phase with key Sure Start professionals. These discussions stimulated consideration in more detail of the ways in which the Sure Start local programmes were drawing together professionals from a wide range of agencies in partnership so as to provide better services for families in their area. The final plans for the four Sure Start local programmes document a commitment to working in a 'joined-up' way. Terms such as 'integrated working', 'working together in partnership', 'joined up thinking' and 'joined up working' described the vision and philosophy of the programmes. Multi-agency working was, according to the plans, to be achieved by working in response to the needs of the community. This was to be achieved by establishing Partnership Boards which would ensure the delivery of an effective Sure Start local programme. The Partnership Boards were to consist of representatives of community and voluntary groups, service providers, statutory agencies and parents (Coventry City Council, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003).

Team members, Partnership Board members, with representatives from the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and City Council (CC) took part in a survey which sought to investigate the successes and challenges of Sure Start multi-agency working (Dahl and Aubrey, 2004). The survey comprised a range of factual, closed questions with opportunities for participants to offer personal views and experiences as well. The

findings of the main survey will be discussed in Chapter 2 and the programme-specific findings for Sure Start Coventry North East (SSCNE) reported in Chapter 3.

The report will then present the interview stage that was planned as a follow up to the above survey.

## **1.5 Research questions**

In summary, this study is an attempt to investigate the key factors of success and the key challenges facing multi-agency working in four Sure Start local programmes by probing, in more depth, areas of ambiguity, inconsistency and conflict arising from the survey. The questions for this study are:

- How much do we really know about effective multi-agency working?
- What are the key factors of success and what are the challenges of multi-agency working in Sure Start local programmes?
- What future lessons can be learned from multi-agency working for widespread dissemination?

Using these three questions to identify relevant literature the next chapter will review the literature relating to multi-agency working, beginning by locating it in the political context in which it evolved.

# **Chapter 2**

## **Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews the literature relating to multi-agency working. It will discuss the Government's endorsement of multi-agency working, consider successes and challenges of multi-agency working and examine multi-agency working in an early years context.

Although there are definitions of the terms 'multi-agency working', 'partnership working', 'joined-up/joint working', 'inter-agency working' and 'multi-disciplinary working' it was identified that authors struggle with how best to define such terms (Thames Valley Family Practice Research Unit, 2003). Atkinson et al. (2001; 2002) found that there was an enormous variation in initiatives and practice that operate under the name 'multi-agency'. It appeared from the literature that these terms were used interchangeably to describe collaboration's between agencies or between professionals from different agencies. This review will refer to the most relevant literature published in the United Kingdom from 1997, the beginning of the Labour Government's tenure in office, to August 2004, when this study commenced.

### **2.2 Policy**

One of the central elements of the current Government's policy agenda has been to create a more 'joined-up' approach to strategy and service delivery (Pugh, 2003). As part of the Government's agenda of social inclusion, multi-agency working in the childhood field has in the twenty-first century seen a rapid growth. Despite the Government's approach, cooperation and 'joined-up' working between schools and education services, social services and health professionals, in the interests of vulnerable children, has been welcomed (Audit Commission, 1992a and b; 1994; 1996; 1998). A study conducted by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) (Atkinson et al., 2001; 2002) indicated both the complexity and the potential of joining up services.

### **2.2.1 Health**

In the field of health, the *Health Act* (Department of Health [DOH], 1999) and the White Paper *Our Healthier Nation* (DOH, 1998a) requires the National Health Service to strengthen partnerships with local authorities. The White paper *Working together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children* (DOH, Home Office and Department for Education and Employment [DfEE] 1999:vii) sets out how all agencies and professionals should work together to promote children's welfare and protect them from abuse and neglect. It is addressed to those

who work in the health and education services, the police, social services, the probation service, and others whose work brings them into contact with children and families. It is relevant to those working in the statutory, voluntary and independent sectors.

However, Victoria Climbié was failed by no less than thirteen professionals, from six different agencies, in a period of nine months prior to her death. This case highlights the challenges involved when agencies work together and the lack of communication between professionals. *Getting the Right Start: The National Service Framework for Children* (DOH, 2003) endorsed joined-up working as essential in order to improve the quality of young children's lives and their future life chances.

### **2.2.2 Social Services**

For Social Services, the *Children Act* (DOH, 1989), although published earlier than 1997, is significant in that it included a statutory requirement under Section 27 for 'increased efficiency' for interagency collaboration in order to coordinate the planning of local services for children. *Modernising Social Services* (DOH, 1998b) aimed to ensure a more effective coordination of services through improving joint working between health, social services, housing and other services. *Modernising Health and Social Services – National Priorities Guidance 99/00-2001/02* (DOH 1998c), was directed jointly, for the first time, at Health and Social Services, and urged inter-agency working.

The Green Paper *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2003:60) proposed a 'move towards multi-disciplinary teams that bring together the relevant professionals who can work together in place easily accessible to children and families.' It also acknowledged that Sure Start local programmes provided a model for the rest of the children's sector as it moved towards joint working. The consultation on the Green Paper showed broad support for

the proposals and the *Children Act* (2004) was produced in the light of the consultation. The *Children Act* (DfES, 2004:2), created a clear accountability for children's services and enabled better joint working.

Each children's service authority in England must make arrangements to promote co-operation between the authority, each of the authorities relevant partners and such other persons, or bodies as the authority considers appropriate, to improve children's well being and secure a better focus on safeguarding children.

### **2.2.3 Education**

The Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships have been established, as part of the National Childcare Strategy, to integrate care and education at a local authority level. The White Paper, *Excellence in Schools* (DfEE, 1998a), proposed that in every local authority an early year's forum should plan childcare and education for local needs. It planned for a network of Early Excellence Centres to be set up in order to distribute good practice in combining education and care for children under the age of five.

The White Paper, *Meeting Special Educational Needs: A Programme of Action* (DfEE, 1998b), required local authorities to improve the way agencies work together to strengthen support for children with special needs. The *Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice* (DfES, 2002a) required a working partnership with parents and other agencies. The *Education Act* (DfES, 2002b), Section 175 introduced, for the first time, a statutory element to the duty of both the Local Education Authority and the school in relation to child protection and highlighted the need for professionals to operate within a multi-agency framework.

Despite the policies, legislation and initiatives discussed above little attention has been placed on how multi-agency working should be executed. Anning (2001:2) argues that 'conceptual frameworks for setting up, managing and delivering 'joined-up' services are not provided' yet it is clear that Government rhetoric and policy promote and call for collaboration between agencies. It has been suggested that professionals have been 'simply instructed to collaborate and change working practices' with little or no training (Tomlinson, 2003:5).

## **2.3 Key factors of success and challenges of multi-agency working**

### **2.3.1 Key factors of success**

The key factors essential for successful multi-agency working identified in the literature are varied and wide-ranging. In the literature, certain factors were identified as being key to successful multi-agency working (Audit Commission, 1998; Jones, 2000; Atkinson et al., 2001:2002; Tomlinson, 2003). Firstly, the full strategic and operational level commitment required was deemed to be essential at all levels for those working together. Clearly commitment by those at an operational level or strategic level alone will not suffice, it is required by all. This highlights the importance of involving or employing the relevant personnel. Secondly, having a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of different agencies and individuals was another key factor. However, for this to be successful the roles and responsibilities need to be communicated, respected and understood by all involved.

A third factor was sharing aims and objectives. Although agencies aims may differ, it is vital that agencies are prepared to work together concerning common goals. This may be difficult to achieve as agencies do not always share or show they are prepared to share common goals. Communication was identified as key to successful multi-agency working. For example, dialogue between agencies and the need for staff at all levels to be open and honest was considered to be crucial. The dissemination of information was also raised in the literature reviewed. This included sharing information effectively to avoid the reduplication of services and ensuring everyone had access to necessary data. Although some agencies may be more willing to share than others therefore it is essential protocols are adopted at the beginning of new programmes. The leadership of those involved at a strategic level was acknowledged as a key factor for a programme's success. For example, the vision of those at a strategic level to ensure the clear direction and maintain the focus of an initiative is imperative. Finally, sharing funding of programmes was mentioned as being a key factor for ensuring its success. However, the distinction between pooled budgets, where one or more agency meets some, or all, of the costs and joint funding, where resources are provided by all on an equal basis created tensions with different agencies providing more resources than others.

Other factors identified within some of the studies included time, flexibility, location and training. However, Tomlinson states that 'there exists considerable good practice in

multi-agency working between education, social services and health, as well as voluntary organisations and client groups' (2003:23). Inter-agency cooperation was recognised as problematic with clashes between professional cultures, competitions between departments or agencies for funding, reductions in overall budgets and low morale being commonly cited as the main contributory factors (Webb and Vulliamy, 2001). These challenges will now be discussed.

### **2.3.2 Challenges**

For those working in a multi-agency context a range of challenges were identified which may hinder effective practice. The challenges identified reflected the complexities involved when professionals engage in multi-agency ventures (Webb and Vulliamy, 2001; Atkinson et al., 2001: 2002). Firstly, funding and resources were identified as the major challenge in any initiative, especially during the early stages of development. Concerns regarding conflict within or between agencies, lack of funding and sustainability all contributed to challenges posed by funding.

Another challenge included understanding the roles and responsibilities of others involved in the programme. For example, clarity was required regarding areas of responsibility and the need to move beyond existing roles. Although in practice personnel may be unclear as to their own role. Competing or different priorities of agencies and individuals were mentioned. For example, this may impact upon the involvement of professionals at a strategic and operational level. Non-fiscal resources, or the lack of them, were identified as an issue. For example, the challenges posed by lack of time may be due to the pressures personnel are under and amount of time required engaging with other agencies. Other examples included the resources of staff and staff shortages and finally, the physical space available to work together effectively (Atkinson et al., 2002).

Non-fiscal resources were essential both in developing and sustaining successful multi-agency initiatives. Communication or lack of communication was highlighted in the literature as a difficulty (Webb and Vulliamy, 2001; Atkinson et al., 2002). However, whilst expecting lack of communication between assorted agencies a lack of communication within individual organisations was also mentioned. Professional and agency cultures were mentioned in that multi-agency working disrupted and intruded upon existing agency cultures. For example differences between agencies policies and

procedures (Atkinson et al., 2002). Finally, it was clear that projects had to be seen to be strongly supported and promoted at a strategic level in order to remain credible at the delivery level (Webb and Vulliamy, 2001; Atkinson et al., 2002). The strong strategic management of any multi-agency initiative is essential for its success.

Other challenges less frequently mentioned in the literature included data collection and information sharing, training, and issues specific to the client group (Webb and Vulliamy, 2001; Atkinson et al., 2002). However these issues may be more challenging in different settings, for example where information sharing is a key element of an initiative.

## **2.4 Multi-agency working in early years settings**

Whilst these key studies provide an invaluable insight into key factors of the success and challenges of multi-agency working, they do not necessarily relate directly or solely to studies within an early years context.

### **2.4.1 Centres of Excellence**

Several studies have looked at some of the ‘difficulties and victories’ of integrated and joined up services in an early year’s context (Anning, 2001, 2002; Campbell, 2001; Wigfall and Moss, 2001). The challenges and successes encountered in these studies duplicate many of the issues already raised in this review, confirming that issues faced by those working as part of a multi-agency team are common to many. Challenges also included different legislative frameworks and conditions of service; preoccupations with different organisational issues; clashing professional values and priorities; dissimilarity of language and jargon; different training; pressures of time; huge complexities of different funding streams (Campbell, 2001; Wigfall and Moss 2001; Anning, 2002).

It appears that little attention has been paid by policy makers to how these groups of different workers share knowledge, gain understanding of each others’ beliefs and ways of working in order to present a shared vision of ‘joinedupness’ to their clients. However, Atkinson et al. (2001; 2002) provided examples of models of multi-agency working, drawn from a sample of thirty multi-agency initiatives. The research identified several models of joint working. They reiterated that multi-agency working is not easy nor easily achieved. The study highlighted a new ‘hybrid’ professional who had personal experience and knowledge of other agencies, such as their services, cultures,

structures and priorities. In order to achieve successful multi-agency working the evidence provided by Atkinson et al. (2001:2002) could be more widely applied to the workplace for those engaging in multi-agency work.

#### **2.4.2 Sure Start national and local evaluations**

Myers et al. (2004) drew together the findings of twenty-seven local Sure Start evaluations, at different stages of development, which have focused on, or included, the examination of partnerships and partnership working. The report looked at four areas of multi-agency working, including what constitutes successful partnership working. Responses included good communication between all members of the partnership, their organisations and the community; openness and transparency; receptiveness to others ideas; tolerance of different perspectives; strong management; clear objectives for the Partnership Board; wider representation on the board from the community, providers of services and statutory agencies; accessibility for parents and carers to be involved in the decision making process of the programme; knowledge of other professional roles.

It is interesting to note that participants were invited to consider what constitutes ‘successful’ partnership working, making an assumption that partnership working is, in general, successful. This report is based on a relatively small number of local evaluations and as such cannot be seen as a definitive explanation of how multi-agency working is operating in Sure Start local programmes.

### **2.5 Survey**

As part of this University’s evaluation of the four Sure Start local programmes in Coventry, outlined in Chapter 1, a survey was undertaken which sought to identify successes, challenges and issues of multi-agency working in these programmes. The key factors in effective practice and the kinds of challenges identified by the NFER (Atkinson et al., 2001: 2002) were used as the basis for designing a questionnaire to survey a range of professionals, which included team members, Partnership Board members and representatives of the leading agencies.

Areas covered in the survey included common aims and objectives, sharing and access to non-fiscal and fiscal resources, roles and responsibilities, communication and information sharing, professional and agency cultures, management and leadership,

training opportunities, willingness to be involved and involving relevant personnel and competing priorities.

On a positive note it was found that Sure Start local management strongly promoted multi-agency working and encouraged like-minded individuals to work in new ways to meet shared goals. The importance of the leadership role of individual Sure Start managers was also stressed. The vast majority of respondents believed that Sure Start facilitated multi-agency working in terms of staffing arrangements, teams' expectations and priorities and programme aims. Challenges were identified however, such as the allocation of time, provision of staff, and physical space to work effectively.

The survey highlighted areas of ambiguity, for instance, whether local authority structures and boundaries facilitated or hindered multi-agency working. Views were also mixed about the challenge of existing financial arrangements posed to multi-agency working, with concerns about avoiding conflicts between and within agencies. There was also a division in views as to whether existing information sharing and confidentiality strategies between agencies hindered or facilitated multi-agency working.

Despite the real enthusiasm of the Sure Start programme members, the respondents suggested that multi-agency working had not always been easy to achieve and this survey highlighted the complexity of the challenge facing Sure Start workers (Dahl and Aubrey, 2004). Despite the local Sure Start programmes vision and philosophy to work together in partnership as is documented in their final plans (Coventry City Council, 2000; 2001; 2002; 2003), findings from the survey indicated that there were still areas of ambiguity and uncertainty. This study, as indicated in Chapter 1, is intended to explore some of these issues in more depth. The areas to be investigated, in this study included participants' knowledge and structure of the leading agencies, information regarding roles and responsibilities of their parent agency, its aims and their personal priorities, non-fiscal resources including staff, time investment and accommodation, issues relating to sharing information and data procedures and finally communication within the programme and with other agencies.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

There is an assumption that practitioners in early years settings, such as Sure Start local programmes, which are funded to model multi-agency work, are coping with the

intricacy of new demands made on them by the shifts in policy (Glass, 2001). However, the literature presented in this chapter highlights the complexity of multi-agency working, in general, as well as for Sure Start local programmes in particular.

In order to investigate the issues raised by the survey, follow-up interviews were conducted with a sample of those involved. The following chapter, however, will first outline the survey findings for the particular programme concerned, SSCNE.

# **Chapter 3**

## **The Survey**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The first two chapters have set the context to the study. This chapter will report the survey that was carried out. It aimed to identify key factors in effective multi-agency practice and key challenges faced by a range of professionals from a variety of agencies working together in partnership in SSCNE, in order to provide better services for the families in their area.

During the evaluation consultation period, aspects of multi-agency working and the development of effective working practices were highlighted in discussions with key Sure Start professionals. This stimulated consideration in more detail of the ways in which the Sure Start programmes were drawing together professionals from a variety of agencies to work together. Key questions that emerged were:

- How much do we really know about effective multi-agency working in Sure Start local programmes;
- What are the key factors in their success and what kinds of challenges are raised?

Of particular interest at this stage of the study was comparison of the findings of the main survey with those of the particular programme concerned.

### **3.2 Aims**

Report of the programme specific element of the survey to be reported in this chapter thus aimed to:

- Consider in more depth the responses of SSCNE;
- Examine whether the key success factors and challenges raised by the overall survey were common to SSCNE.

### **3.3 Methodology**

#### **3.3.1 Participants**

At the time of the survey, 6 Partnership Board members and 8 staff responded from SSCNE. (Only those who identified themselves clearly as either a team member or a

Partnership Board member are included in this analysis. There were, in some cases, respondents who identified themselves as being from the Accountable Body, Lead Agency or a service provider. Although these were used in the analysis of the full data set, they were not used here, as it was not possible to ascertain whether they were, indeed, also a team member or a Partnership Board member.)

### **3.3.2 Materials**

Questionnaires were designed which drew upon reports from Atkinson *et al* (2001; 2002) and Tomlinson (2003) from an NFER study involving professionals from education, social services and health sectors of local authorities and focused on models of multi-agency activity, together with the challenges and the key factors for their success. A series of relevant fixed-choice questions was devised with opportunities for respondents to elaborate on their views. Areas covered included common aims and objectives, sharing and access to fiscal and non-fiscal resources, roles and responsibilities, communication and information sharing, professional and agency cultures, management and leadership, training opportunities, willingness to be involved and involving relevant personnel, and competing priorities. Participants were asked to identify their role within the Sure Start programme concerned and, if possible, to specify their role still further. Pilot questionnaires were distributed for comment to professionals with a number of different backgrounds, for instance, health, education and psychology and small adjustments were made (see Appendix C). The final draft questionnaires were then colour coded to allow for the possibility of comparing the responses of different programmes, as well as participants with different roles (see Appendix A).

### **3.3.3 Procedures**

The survey was introduced at Partnership Board meetings and team meetings in each of the four programmes and help was offered for those whom might find the content and terminology used less accessible. In the event, no requests for help were received.

### **3.3.4 Analysis**

The data were explored initially by recasting them in terms of frequency tables and the full data set were presented as histograms. For the purposes of the individual programme, frequency tables will be presented.

### 3.4 Results

#### Question 1: Local Authority (LA) Structures and boundaries

	<b>Facilitates</b>	<b>Doesn't influence</b>	<b>Hinders</b>
Team members	7	0	2
Partnership Board	3	0	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>

As for the full data set, views concerning whether or not LA structures and boundaries constituted a facilitating factor or hindrance for SSCNE, were mixed. However, more than twice as many respondents regarded them as facilitating as a constraint. This was a more positive response than was received from the overall survey.

#### Question 2: Staffing arrangements and time investment of Sure Start local programmes

	<b>Facilitates</b>	<b>Doesn't influence</b>	<b>Hinders</b>
Team members	8	0	1
Partnership Board	4	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

The vast majority of SSCNE thought staffing arrangements and time investment were facilitative of multi-agency working. Again, a more positive response was received from this programme than for the survey overall.

#### Question 3: Individual' and Sure Start local programme teams' expectations and priorities

	<b>Facilitates</b>	<b>Doesn't influence</b>	<b>Hinders</b>
Team members	9	0	0
Partnership Board	3	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Just as the overall survey showed, SSCNE believed that staff had a high expectation of working as a multi-agency team.

**Question 4: Aims and objectives of Sure Start local programmes**

	<b>Facilitates</b>	<b>Doesn't influence</b>	<b>Hinders</b>
Team members	9	0	0
Partnership Board	5	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

All in SSCNE agreed that Sure Start aimed to work in a multi-agency manner. Again, this was a more positive response than was received for the main survey.

**Question 5: Confidentiality and information sharing strategies between the various agencies involved**

	<b>Facilitates</b>	<b>Doesn't influence</b>	<b>Hinders</b>
Team members	6	0	2
Partnership Board	3	0	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>

As in the main survey, views were divided as to whether confidentiality and information sharing strategies between the various agencies facilitated or hindered multi-agency working. For SSCNE, twice as many felt that strategies were facilitative as thought them a hindrance.

**Question 6: The need for development of a common language across professional groups working in Sure Start local programmes**

	<b>There is a need</b>	<b>Makes no difference</b>	<b>There is not a need</b>
Team members	7	1	0
Partnership Board	4	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>

As in the main survey, the overwhelming majority of respondents felt that there was a need for a common language across professional groups.

**Question 7: In practice, budgets and financial arrangements create a major challenge to Sure Start multi-agency working through:**

a) Concern about conflicts within or between agencies that provide Sure Start Staff

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	4	2	3
Partnership Board	4	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>

In practice, views of SSCNE on financial arrangements were mixed, with more than half thinking they facilitated multi-agency working and the rest evenly divided between 'hindered' and 'does not influence'.

b) Concern about general lack of programme funding

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	3	4	2
Partnership Board	0	4	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>

Rather more than one half of SSCNE thought programme funding did not influence multi-agency working with the rest divided between 'facilitates' and 'hinders'.

c) Concern about sustainability of the services and, thus, uncertainty of funding

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	5	2	2
Partnership Board	1	1	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

Views concerning sustainability were mixed. Around one half did *not* feel that funding issues jeopardised the sustainability of services, and the rest were divided between those believing these issues to have no influence and those thinking they did jeopardise services.

d) Creating more effective use of resources (human and material) by reducing repetition and overlap

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	4	0	4
Partnership Board	3	0	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>

Views as to whether Sure Start created more efficient use of resources or not were divided in this programme.

**Question 8: Issues around roles and responsibilities adopted by individuals working within Sure Start concern:**

a) Understanding the roles of others

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	7	0	0
Partnership Board	3	0	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>

As with the main survey, the vast majority of SSCNE felt that understanding the role of others facilitated multi-agency working.

b) Conflicts over areas of responsibility

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	4	3	1
Partnership Board	0	4	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>

The vast majority felt that conflict over areas of responsibility did not influence multi-agency working.

c) The need to beyond existing roles to work in new ways

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	8	1	0
Partnership Board	5	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>

The vast majority of SSCNE thought that going beyond existing roles facilitated working in new ways.

**Question 9: The aims of the specific agencies compete with Sure Start local programme aims due to:**

a) Differences in the target group/s

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	6	1	1
Partnership Board	4	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>

Again, the vast majority of SSCNE thought differences in target groups served to facilitate multi-agency working.

b) Different Government targets

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	4	0	4
Partnership Board	4	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>

Two-thirds of SSCNE felt Government targets facilitated multi-agency working, with one-third thinking targets hindered this work.

c) A focus on preventative work versus crisis intervention

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	6	1	1
Partnership Board	1	2	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>

Just over one half of SSCNE thought a focus on preventative work was facilitated by multi-agency working, the rest were evenly divided between 'no influence' or 'hinders'.

**Question 10: Non-financial resources create challenges concerning:**

a) The allocation of time

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	7	0	1
Partnership Board	3	0	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>

In line with the main survey, SSCNE felt that allocation of time facilitated multi-agency working.

b) The provision of staff

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	5	1	3
Partnership Board	4	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>

In line with the main survey, again, SSCNE felt that provision of Sure Start staff facilitated multi-agency working.

c) Physical space in which to work together effectively

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	6	0	1
Partnership Board	5	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>

Again in line with the main survey, the vast majority of SSCNE felt physical space facilitated multi-agency working.

**Question 11: Poor communication within and between the agencies involved with Sure Start:**

a) Creates problems between those working at different levels within agencies

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	8	0	0
Partnership Board	3	2	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>

As in the main survey, the majority of SSCNE felt communication between agencies facilitated multi-agency working.

**b) Creates different availability of professionals from different agencies**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	6	0	3
Partnership Board	3	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>

The majority of SSCNE were in line with the main survey respondents feeling availability of professional agencies facilitated multi-agency working.

**c) Undermines successful multi-agency work through poor communication between different local government departments**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	7	2	0
Partnership Board	1	2	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>

As in the main survey, SSCNE felt successful multi-agency work was facilitated by good communication between local government departments.

**Question 12: The effect of professional and agency culture on Sure Start practice:**

**a) Multi-agency working disrupts existing agency cultures (values and ways of working)**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	3	5	0
Partnership Board	0	4	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>

In line with main survey, SSCNE felt that agency cultures did not adversely influence multi-agency working.

**b) Specific policy and practice differences hinder shared practice**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	5	2	1
Partnership Board	4	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>

Again in line with the main survey, the majority of SSCNE felt specific policy and practice was facilitating shared practice.

**c) Different data management systems which effect information sharing impact upon shared practice**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	9	0	0
Partnership Board	5	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Again, respondents felt different management systems that effect information sharing impacted upon shared practice.

**Question 13: The strategy of the management in the Sure Start local programme/s.**

**a) Multi-agency working is strongly supported and promoted at management level in order to remain credible at delivery level**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	6	1	1
Partnership Board	4	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>

Like the main survey, it was felt by the majority of participants that promotion at management level facilitated multi-agency working.

**b) Management strategy drive is organised carefully in order to carry along the various participants from each agency**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	4	1	3
Partnership Board	3	0	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>

Views of SSCNE regarding the management strategy were divided between those who thought it was organised to bring along participants from various agencies and those who did not know, in contrast to the respondents from the main survey who overwhelmingly reported that they did not know.

**c) Management strategy encourages like-minded individuals who seek new ways of working in order to meet shared goals and work across existing management structures**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	8	1	0
Partnership Board	2	0	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>

In line with the main survey, SSCNE felt that encouraging like-minded individuals to meet shared goals and work across structures facilitated multi-agency working.

**Question 14: Training opportunities for Sure Start team members**

**a) Additional multi-agency training to meet the extended role of agencies**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	9	0	0
Partnership Board	5	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Like the main survey respondents, SSCNE felt additional training facilitated the extended role of agencies.

**b) Training to enhance knowledge and understanding of other agencies**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	8	0	0
Partnership Board	5	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

All of SSCNE felt that training would enhance the knowledge and understanding that staff had of other agencies.

c) Professional 'single-agency' development delivered at the home 'base' of the agency

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	3	3	2
Partnership Board	2	0	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>

Like the main survey respondents, SSCNE were mixed in their response to need for professional development to occur at the parent agency of each professional within the Sure Start team.

**Question 15: Commitment and willingness of Sure Start team members to be involved in multi-agency work is sustained by:**

a) An active desire to engage with other agencies at the management level

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	6	2	0
Partnership Board	4	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>

In line with the main survey, SSCNE felt an active desire to engage with other agencies at management level facilitated multi-agency working.

b) An active desire to engage with other agencies at the delivery level

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	9	0	0
Partnership Board	4	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>

Again, in line with the main survey, participants felt an active desire to engage with other agencies at the delivery level facilitated multi-agency work.

c) A commitment/active desire to engage with other agencies by a 'bottom up' as well as 'top down' management approach

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	7	0	1
Partnership Board	3	0	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>

Once more, in line with the main survey, respondents felt that a ‘bottom up’ as well as ‘top down’ management approach facilitated engaging with other agencies.

#### **Question 16: Understanding the roles and responsibilities of others**

- a) The need for a clear understanding of what is expected so that different agendas are not pursued

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	8	0	0
Partnership Board	5	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Again in line with the survey, participants felt that an understanding of other agency agendas facilitated multi-agency working.

- b) The need to understand the constraints on other agencies so that expectations are realistic

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	8	0	0
Partnership Board	5	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Yet again, participants felt understanding constraints of other agencies facilitated multi-agency working.

- c) A need for mutual respect for the professional roles of other agencies and their contribution

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	9	0	0
Partnership Board	5	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Staff felt that mutual respect for professional roles of other agencies facilitated multi-agency working.

**Question 17: Common Sure Start aims and objectives have been achieved by the programme/s through:**

a) Recognition of the need for common ground and like minded people

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	6	0	2
Partnership Board	4	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>

Staff felt Sure Start aims and objective had been achieved through a recognition of the need for like-minded people.

b) Recognition of the need for a real purpose to joint working

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	8	0	0
Partnership Board	5	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Staff felt that recognition of the need for a real purpose to joint working facilitated multi-agency working.

c) A needs-led approach which replaces agency-specific agendas

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	8	0	1
Partnership Board	2	1	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>

The majority of respondents felt a needs-led approach facilitated multi-agency working.

**Question 18: Communications and information sharing within the Sure Start local programme/s has/have been supported by:**

a) Opportunities for dialogue/keeping open communication between agencies being achieved

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	7	1	1
Partnership Board	4	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>

As in the main survey, the majority of respondents felt open communication between agencies facilitated multi-agency working.

**b) Personal relationship building (communication skills, listening skills, the capacity for negotiation and compromise)**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	8	0	0
Partnership Board	1	4	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>

The majority of participants felt personal relationship building facilitated multi-agency working though a third of SSCNE felt it did not influence such work (rather more respondents than in the main survey).

**c) Procedures and systems of communications and information dissemination (such as circulating meeting minutes) being in place**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	5	2	1
Partnership Board	5	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>

Like the main study respondents, the vast majority of SSCNE felt communication and information dissemination procedures facilitated multi-agency working.

**Question 19: Leadership or drive of individual Sure Start Programme Manager/s:**

**a) Show/s clear strategic direction**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	3	1	2
Partnership Board	5	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>

Like the main survey respondents, SSCNE felt leadership of the individual programmes facilitated multi-agency working.

**b) Has/have the tenacity to overcome obstacles to progress**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	3	1	2
Partnership Board	5	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>

Like the main study respondents, the majority of SSCNE felt tenacity to overcome obstacles facilitated multi-agency working.

**c) Can bring together the Sure Start team in order to bring about change and overcome obstacles**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	6	0	2
Partnership Board	5	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>

Like the main study respondents, SSCNE felt bringing together the Sure Start team to overcome obstacles facilitated multi-agency working.

**Question 20: Involving the right personnel on the Sure Start local programme/s has led to:**

**a) The right personnel from specific agencies being involved**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	3	0	3
Partnership Board	4	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>

Like the main study respondents, participants were mixed in view about the influence of the right personnel from specific agencies in facilitating multi-agency work.

**b) Personnel at the right level of responsibility to make the necessary decision and activate the right services being involved**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	3	1	3
Partnership Board	2	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>

Again like the main study, respondents were mixed in view about the influence of personnel at the light level of responsibility influencing multi-agency working.

c) Priority being given to the work of Sure Start by individual agencies

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	1	1	4
Partnership Board	1	1	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>

As in the main survey, the majority of respondents from SSCNE were of the view that the priority given to the work of Sure Start by different agencies could be a hindrance to multi-agency working.

### 3.5 Discussion

The respondents to the questionnaire in SSCNE were, for the most part in line with those of the main study, for example, in believing that Sure Start facilitated multi-agency working in terms of staffing arrangements, teams' expectations and priorities, and programme aims. An overwhelming majority agreed that there was a need for the development of a common language across professional groups in Sure Start local programmes.

If anything, the responses of SSCNE were more positive. They were less likely to see local authority structures and boundaries serving as a constraint and, overwhelmingly, felt that staffing arrangements and time investment of Sure Start local programmes facilitated multi-agency working. As in the main survey, views were divided as to whether confidentiality and information sharing strategies between the various agencies facilitated or hindered multi-agency working but twice as many SSCNE felt that strategies were facilitative as regarded them a hindrance.

As with main study, the vast majority of SSCNE felt that understanding the role of others facilitated multi-agency working and going beyond existing roles facilitated working in new ways. They did not feel conflict over areas of responsibility influenced multi-agency working and, like respondents to the main study, felt that understanding the role of others facilitated such activity. The role of personal relationship building in order to

facilitate multi-agency working was acknowledged by the majority, though a third of SSCNE felt that it did not facilitate such work.

As in the main study, views were quite mixed about the challenge existing financial arrangements posed to multi-agency working, though rather more than one half of participants at SSCNE felt they facilitated such work. They were more divided about whether or not Sure Start created more efficient use of resources. In line with the main study, SSCNE felt that provision of staff, allocation of time and physical space all facilitated multi-agency working. One half of respondents felt a focus on preventative work was facilitated by multi-agency working and two-thirds thought Government targets facilitated such work whilst one-third believed this work was hindered.

As in the main study, it was recognised by SSCNE that availability of professional agencies and communication between agencies and local government departments facilitated multi-agency working. However, views regarding the management strategy to bring along participants from various agencies to facilitate multi-agency work were mixed in the main survey, with respondents in SSCNE more evenly divided between reporting the strategy facilitated or hindered such work.

Finally as in the main study, it was felt by SSCNE that local management strongly promoted multi-agency working and encouraged like-minded individuals to work in new ways to meet shared goals. The importance of the leadership role of individual managers was also stressed.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

In general, a more positive picture emerged from responses of SSCNE than from the main survey. However, views were divided as to whether or not confidentiality and information sharing strategies between the various agencies facilitated multi-agency working. They were quite mixed in view about the challenge existing financial arrangements posed to such work and were more divided about whether Sure Start created more efficient use resources. Such responses provided the stimulus to the next stage of the research that will be reported in Chapter 4.

Significantly, as to whether the management strategy to bring along participants from various agencies to facilitate multi-agency work, SSCNE were divided in view. This is a point that will be revisited in the final chapter.

# **Chapter 4**

## **Interviews with Representatives of the Leading Agencies**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Chapters 1 to 3 have introduced the study's origins, aims and the context of the study. The following three chapters will report the results of the interviews conducted with representatives of the leading agencies who have a strategic overview of all four Sure Start local programmes and sample team members and Partnership Board members from SSCNE.

This chapter will report the findings from the interviews with representatives of the leading agencies and will seek to identify and expand on the themes emerging from the data.

### **4.2 Aims**

The overall aim of all the interviews was to explore, in depth, issues which were identified in the survey of multi-agency working, reported in Chapter 3, and to investigate the key factors of success and challenges of multi-agency working in the same context. The specific aim of the interviews reported in this chapter was to elicit a strategic overview of Sure Start local programmes in the City. The interviews attempted to gain factual information, as well as the views and interpretations of key figures at this level.

### **4.3 Methods**

#### **4.3.1 Participants**

Two people, involved to varying degrees and in different capacities with the leading agencies for the Sure Start local programmes, were interviewed. Interviewee 1 represented the City Council (CC) and Interviewee 2 represented the Primary Care Trust (PCT). Interviewee 1 was a senior administrator and Interviewee 2 was a financial adviser.

### **4.3.2 Materials**

An interview schedule was generated from responses to the survey. The interview schedule was intended to probe, in more depth, ambivalent, interesting and conflicting responses identified by the survey, discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. The interviews used semi-structured open-ended questions (Appendix B).

### **4.3.3 Procedures**

The researcher contacted each participant by telephone to arrange a mutually convenient date for a telephone interview and to explain the purpose of it. Interviewee 1 asked for the interview to be face-to-face, selecting the time and venue.

A tape recording of the interview was made, with the consent of each interviewee. In addition, key comments and responses to the questions were noted as the interview proceeded. Once transcribed, transcripts of the interviews were sent to the participants for validation (Appendix E).

### **4.3.4 Analysis**

Themes were identified in the survey to be explored in more depth. Questions used in the interview schedule emerged from the survey, thereby providing the first layer of analysis. After transcribing a qualitative analysis software package, NVivo, was used to code transcripts, identifying key themes, issues and surprises.

## **4.4 Results**

### **4.4.1 Knowledge of structures**

#### 4.4.1.1 Role of the CC and PCT

Both participants commented on the role of the CC as a ‘major’ employer of staff in the programmes. Interviewee 1 identified the strong involvement of the CC, stating that they ‘drive most of the issues Sure Start was trying to achieve’ but they were not concerned in directing the project or making decisions regarding budgets. However, Interviewee 2 stated that the involvement of the Council in some areas have appeared to have been, ‘for the good of the Council rather than for Sure Start’.

Interviewee 1 identified the PCT’s role as ensuring that the financial details outlined in each of the local programme’s plan were executed. A lack of capacity and, hence, a delay in prioritising support for Sure Start, at a strategic level, within the PCT, was

mentioned by both interviewees. This resulted in members of the finance team, employed on temporary contracts, becoming involved in issues outside of their remit, such as legal and estate management issues.

#### 4.4.1.2 Effect of the CC and PCT on the local programme

Interviewee 1 described the effect of the CC on the local programme as one of supporting and advising the programme managers, encouraging initial involvement and contributing to the planning. Their role as an 'employer' was also mentioned.

However, the effect of the PCT was described by both participants as having a less positive effect on the local programme.

[The] Regional [Sure Start Office] are not very happy that we have three temporary contracted people responsible for our finance and that's because the PCT are not prepared to go the formal route which impacts for Sure Start and it costs us more money.

Interviewee 2 identified the length of time it took for decisions to be made, which was not suitable for this type of programme, which is to last ten years.

Sure Start is something that needs to react and react quickly to serve their clients effectively.

The impact on the local programmes of having two leading agencies involved in Sure Start was also thought to have added complexity and, hence, challenge.

It does actually slow things down quite dramatically ...

#### 4.4.1.3 Effect of CC and PCT on own role.

Concern was expressed by Interviewee 2 regarding the impact of the PCT's initial lack of capacity to offer strategic support within Sure Start. This was exacerbated by the lack of permanent staff. Temporary staff were working well beyond their job description.

### **4.4.2 Roles and responsibilities**

#### 4.4.2.1 Complement or contradict goals of parent agency

Sure Start was felt to complement the goals of, and work closely with, other departments within Interviewee 1's parent agency. Interviewee 1 stated that Sure Start local programmes offered 'additionality' to services already offered by his/her parent agency. Interviewee 2 also identified the complementary goals of his/her parent agency but indicated operational issues of his/her agency in relation to Sure Start, created particular challenges.

As far as fundamental goals are concerned I don't think there is a conflict.  
It's the actual operational issues that cause the problems.

#### 4.4.2.2 Individual's priorities

Both participants identified his/her priorities at a strategic level, with their involvement in the Senior Sponsors Group and at an operational level. Interviewee 1 stated,

My role is very much about supporting the programme managers in terms of recruitment, training, health and safety and looking at sharing the learning because that is really key for us.

Interviewee 2 identified their priority as effective budget management. However, comments made on the breadth of the job, such as, 'having to get involved in a lot of areas which are really nothing to do with finance' resulted in a 'broader job than the title would suggest'.

### **4.4.3 Staffing and space**

#### 4.4.3.1 Staffing

Regarding staffing both representatives referred to the challenges posed by the fact that some staff employed by the PCT were on temporary contracts.

Permanency of positions would ... (have been) nice. It's the uncertainty really and although I have had some extremely good people working for me as soon as a permanent position comes up for them they are out of here. They are bound to be. So you spend a month training them and then they are gone.

Within local programmes Interviewee 1 expressed concern regarding vacancies, changes to the job titles and job descriptions of some programme managers and whether services would be mainstreamed in the future.

It would be the biggest shame in the world if having spent all of this money for all of these years we don't have learning from it that made a difference. We knew it wouldn't have an outcome within two or three years. You know at the beginning, we were told ten to make a difference.

#### 4.4.3.2 Space

Interviewee 2 identified lack of office space as a challenge.

One of my people came in to find somebody sat at their desk.

Interviewee 2 suggested a strategy to overcome challenges to office space which would allow them to spend more time in each local programme, facilitating the relationship between those at an operational level and those at a strategic level.

If we could actually have offices out in the projects, my day-to-day management and assistance basis that would be extremely good. But at the end of the day we have to have access to PCT's accounting system

to produce the accounts... We can't have that access unless we are actually on a PCT site.

#### **4.4.4 Data procedures and information sharing.**

Both participants mentioned challenges regarding sharing information between team members and the PCT. Interviewee 1 stated the length of time taken for Sure Start to receive information, if at all, had stopped local programmes reaching the targets set by the government.

The Sure Start Unit are frustrated because at the end of the day if we can't have the birth data, or only part of it, then our reach figures which are the national agenda of how many families you are reaching can't be met.

However, a letter sent from the senior administrator who has access to PCT records to a Sure Start family was mentioned as one strategy to share information.

We've agreed a path that is acceptable that the data goes to the senior administrators who are employed by the PCT. They then write the original letter of invitation to the person. So the letter goes from the project to the new birth. Asking if they can have a visit. And on the response 'yes' to the letter we can send anybody out. It's that initial 'yes I agree'.

#### **4.4.5 Communication**

Both participants generally agreed that communication was hindered by being centrally located and that improved Information Technology (IT) networks were needed. Interviewee 1 identified challenges posed by team members who are used to working in different ways. This was being addressed by the introduction of training sessions for team members. Ensuring dialogue with outside agencies, such as the local hospital Trust, from the onset of new appointments was identified as one way of improving communication.

Regular meetings with the Partnership Board and programme managers were considered successful ways of communicating with each other. These meetings provided opportunities for regular dialogue and information dissemination.

#### **4.4.6 Leadership style**

Interviewee 1 identified individuals, specifically the programme managers and city councillors as having 'a real willingness to share with each other, to learn and to take the lead on things' with regard the leadership style. The innovative style of one

programme manager was highlighted by Interviewee 2. The personal commitment of the programme managers was strongly identified by both participants.

You are asking them to be an excellent communicator, an excellent multi-task manager for lots of agents and people who've never worked together.

They've got a real willingness to share with each other to learn and are also willing, I think, to take the lead on things.

In terms of empowerment for parents they're very sensitive, very thoughtful, very caring.

The 'enormous challenges' programme managers faced were also raised. Regarding negative approaches in leadership, the 'biggest single problem' was identified as the 'insular approach' at strategic level within the CC and PCT. The lack of leadership from the Sure Start national office, with regard to constantly changing policies was mentioned by one participant.

## 4.5 Discussion

Since the inception of the first of the four local Sure Start programmes in the City, four years ago, overcoming obstacles between those at a strategic level have been evident and are as yet, not entirely resolved. The working of two leading agencies in Sure Start local programmes was a recurrent theme throughout the interviews. Indeed the initial lack of capacity of the PCT and, thus, delay in prioritising involvement of the PCT was highlighted by their temporary employment of finance staff, employed to manage the Sure Start budget, and lack of office space for that finance team.

The differing nature and levels of involvement of the leading agencies towards Sure Start local programmes also affected those at an operational level. Employing staff from several differing agencies to work together in Sure Start local programmes created tensions such as different pay scales, holiday entitlement, terms and conditions and ways of working. One of the major consequences of this related to information sharing strategies. Pressure came from Central Government for Sure Start local programmes to meet targets, as part of the National Evaluation, yet the unwillingness of the PCT to share data concerning clients with non-PCT employees, had not facilitated the process. This issue may be at the point of resolution, although it has taken four years to get to this position.

Clearly the relationship between the participants and the programme managers is essential in ensuring successful multi-agency working, at all levels, within the organisation. Both participants indicated their confidence and trust in the working relationship established between themselves and the programme managers. However, changes in personnel, within the leading agencies or amongst programme managers, could still pose a challenge to the development of such positive working relationships.

## 4.6 Conclusion

The results highlighted the complexity of the challenge facing those involved with Sure Start local programmes at a strategic level. In this case, attitudes of senior management within leading agencies, particularly the PCT, created tensions which have affected both those working at a strategic level and those working at an operational level. The results highlight the need for the clarification of roles and responsibilities of the leading agencies and their representatives from the outset of such programmes. At a strategic level there is a strong desire for success. One participant stated:

It's a great idea in theory but we have too many people with their own agenda who are not prepared to throw their agenda away for the common good. I think that's the biggest single problem we have throughout. We do have a lot of people who will do that but they are not necessarily in a position of authority to enable it to happen.

Perhaps it has been unfortunate that, in practice, the nature of local authority decision-making at strategic level does not always appear to facilitate the working of personnel at an operational level towards the true agenda of Sure Start local programmes.

The next chapter will describe the results from interviews with selected SSCNE Partnership Board members.

# **Chapter 5**

## **Partnership Board Interviews**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Interviews were conducted with sample members of the SSCNE Partnership Board. This chapter will report these findings from these interviews and will seek to identify and expand on the themes emerging from the data.

### **5.2 Aims**

The overall aim of all the interviews, as previously outlined, was to explore, in depth, issues emerging in the survey of multi-agency working and investigate the key factors of success and challenges of multi-agency working in the same context. The specific aim of the interviews reported in this chapter was to explore how Partnership Board members as representatives of different organisations, community ventures and programme users worked together as part of a multi-agency team. The interviews attempted to gain factual information as well as the views and interpretations of Partnership Board members.

### **5.3 Methods**

#### **5.3.1 Participants**

The four sample board members interviewed represented the PCT, CC, an independent local charity and a parent.

#### **5.3.2 Materials**

An interview schedule was generated from responses to the survey reported in Chapter 3. The interview schedule was intended to probe, in more depth, ambivalent, interesting and conflicting responses identified by the survey. The interviews used semi-structured open-ended questions as described in the previous chapter (Appendix B).

#### **5.3.3 Procedures**

The researcher contacted the Senior Administrator of the programme who in turn contacted each participant. Letters were sent out via the Senior Administrator to the participants giving information about the content of the interview (Appendix D).

Arrangements were made for telephone interviews to take place at a time convenient to them.

During the interview the researcher noted key comments in answer to the questions. A tape-recording of the interview was also made with the consent of the interviewee. Once transcribed, transcripts of the interviews were sent to the participants for validation (see Appendix E).

### **5.3.4 Analysis**

As previously mentioned, themes were identified from the survey, to be explored in more depth. Questions used in the interview schedule emerged from the survey, thereby providing the first layer of analysis. After transcribing, a qualitative analysis software package, NVivo was used to code transcripts identifying key themes, issues and surprises.

## **5.4 Results**

### **5.4.1 Knowledge of structures**

#### 5.4.1.1 Role of the CC and PCT

One participant was not sure of role the CC played in Sure Start. One mentioned his/her role as an employer and one stated that s/he assisted in a multi-agency approach to service delivery.

One participant was not clear as to the role of the PCT. Two identified its role as the Accountable Body. One identified the lack of commitment at a strategic level.

I think they are very committed to it but I don't feel that it has the strategic priority that probably under the regeneration initiative ought to have.

I think there is a lot of commitment from individuals but I have to say organizationally it isn't embedded as part of the PCT strategy.

The challenge posed by the differing policies and procedures of the CC and PCT was mentioned by one participant.

#### 5.4.1.2 Effect of the CC and PCT on the local programme

Views were mixed regarding the effect the PCT and the CC had on the local programme. One participant stated both agencies had no effect. One felt that PCT and

CC employees working together was a positive experience which had resulted in health professionals having an understanding of education services and vice versa.

Workers at grass roots level are beginning to develop this understanding of what other services can offer and do offer.

The allocated person who had responsibility for the programmes in the city, employed by the CC was mentioned by one participant. One participant felt that the CC had been effective in ensuring Sure Start maintained a presence in the area.

[The CC] has delivered quite a few programmes within the Sure Start area that at times have actually kept the programmes for Sure Start going. For example, there were times that because they hadn't recruited a programme manager Sure Start really lost a great deal of direction in this particular neighbourhood.

One participant felt that the PCT had not dedicated as many staff to the project as the CC and drew on the experience of another authority.

[The other authority] have actually funded a post that straddles across more than one Primary Trust to focus on Sure Start and I think that seems to work better.

An example of the negative effect of the PCT's ordering system on the local programmes highlighted the lack of procedures and amount of time taken regarding the purchase of resources.

It has been frustrating for them [the programme managers]. So they circumvent the PCT and order [computers] through the CC which means it doesn't get into the PCT processes until much later. So it actually makes the whole thing very complicated. Well, they can do it through the PCT but it is a little bit more time consuming.

#### 5.4.1.3 Effect of CC and PCT on own role.

One participant stated that the two agencies did not have any effect on their role as a member of the Partnership Board. One stated that as a CC employee their involvement in Sure Start had been 'quite heavy' with the delivery of their particular service in the Sure Start area. One identified the effect of their employer, the PCT, at a senior level, highlighting the different levels of involvement of the two leading agencies.

In the early days, it felt like the whole thing was being led by the CC and because we hadn't got PCT involvement at senior level we were out of balance really. We are still a little bit out of balance.

## **5.4.2 Roles and responsibilities**

### 5.4.2.1 Complement or contradict goals of parent agency

Three participants stated that Sure Start complemented the goals of their parent agency. Specifically, one mentioned how their service and Sure Start complemented each other as both had to meet the same government base line targets. Another explained how the complementary nature of their programmes had led to joint ventures between Sure Start and their service, which had resulted in mutual benefits.

It was suggested that people get together and actually map out what others are doing in the area. So that we are not repeating we are not doing the same.

However, two participants felt that Sure Start duplicated services their agencies already offered in the locality. It was felt that Sure Start local programmes did not offer any services that the CC already provided.

### 5.4.2.2 Specific aims of Sure Start differing from other agencies

Three participants identified the complementary aims of Sure Start local programmes and their parent agencies, and how this impacted positively upon the client group.

[Our aims are] pure in the intervention strategy strain. So there is no sort of disparity between ourselves and Sure Start.

### 5.4.2.3 Individuals priorities

Each participant knew his/her priorities on the Partnership Board. These included developing and establishing relationships between parents and the project, supporting and complementing the programmes Sure Start ran, facilitating programme managers through complexities arising from the PCT and working clearly within the Partnership Board Terms of Reference.

## **5.4.3 Staffing and space**

### 5.4.3.1 Staffing

The length of time taken to recruit the programme manager was mentioned by one participant, which affected their partner agency.

At times we did more work for Sure Start to keep it going, our service did, than we could have actually justified in terms of our funding formula.

Another mentioned problems recruiting health professionals, citing changes in the health visiting profession, suitability of candidates and timing of advertising. Other

challenges mentioned concerned mainstreaming, changing professional practice and the integration of different professionals from such diverse disciplines.

The whole philosophy of Sure Start is around changing practice and mainstreaming. But what the PCT board would say is we would need real strong evidence to demonstrate that working in this different way is really going to make a difference. I am not convinced that some of the stuff that we have got at the moment is strong enough to convince us.

It would seem that the PCT require some firm evidence before they share the CC's vision regarding changing professional practice and mainstreaming services. However such quantitative data are not yet available.

#### 5.4.3.2 Space

Views were mixed regarding co-locating with another statutory department. One respondent indicated that it has been a positive experience in sharing office space with another agency. Another was less positive and speculated that Social Services had occupied the building 'for ever and a day' and might feel that Sure Start have 'taken over the building'.

#### **5.4.4 Data procedures and information sharing.**

##### 5.4.2.1 Data procedures

All participants were unsure as to the policies and procedures regarding data relating to Sure Start families. One gave an example of the difficulties team members may face, in that, they are employed by different organisations who have different polices and procedures to adhere to.

Sure Start staff, whether they are health seconded or whether they are CC seconded, actually work to the Sure Start arrangements around information and their policies. The dilemma they may have sometimes is if they are also linked into the PCT they also have to make sure that the Sure Start ones are almost identical to the PCT.

##### 5.4.4.2 Information sharing

Three participants mentioned the on-going challenges regarding the PCT not sharing information. They did, however, acknowledge that this issue was being addressed, but not as yet resolved.

We have not been able to release certain elements of information to Sure Start. [You] can't give information unless you have told your service users you are doing that. In the early stages we didn't know that we were

going to be asked to give information to Sure Start on the births. So we have had a new information-sharing policy written and it has not gone through all the organisational routes. So I am sure that if you spoke to people in Sure Start they would say, 'oh still frustrated because we still can't get the information on new births from PCT.'

#### **5.4.5 Communication**

The availability of staff, the number of locations and size of team was mentioned by two participants as a challenge, which one felt would be exacerbated as the programme developed.

As the team grows that's when it becomes difficult and you end up with some Sure Start teams at three or four different sites which will certainly happen in our programme. I think that's when the communication becomes more difficult.

The use of 'jargon' was acknowledged by one participant as a barrier when engaging with parents on the Partnership Board and that a solution was required to encourage their participation.

Three participants indicated that formal Partnership Board meetings and informal face-to-face communication were successful methods of communication. However, one advocated the use of 'multi-choice' communication channels, in that board members should not wait for or rely solely on Partnership Board meetings to communicate with each other. A forum to meet with team members was advocated by one participant.

From the boards perspective it's important that we meet with the staff. At the moment we haven't done because we are very new in terms of forming. Secondly there hasn't been a huge number of staffing posts. But I think it is important that we set that in place, two or three times a year, we make sure that we do meet with them and hear from them how things are going and make them feel valued and part of the process.

#### **5.4.6 Hard-to-reach strategies**

All participants had some knowledge of the hard-to-reach (those living within the programme boundaries who are entitled to the services offered but do not access it) strategies used in the local programme. The use of incentives, free transport and trips, was mentioned by one participant. The individual hard-to-reach strategies of team members were highlighted by three participants who identified the success of adopting a 'one-to-one' approach.

I certainty know that individual workers are going out to individual families and I think that's helpful. I think trying to get people in on a group basis all the time doesn't work.

## 5.5 Discussion

Despite the infancy of this programme, Partnership Board members were aware of the tensions between the PCT and CC. The PCT's lack of commitment and attitude towards the programme compared to the positive commitment of the CC was a recurrent theme throughout the interviews. However, at an operational level, having two leading agencies allowed professionals, for the first time in such an organised manner, to share knowledge and establish new ways of working.

Whilst participants felt that Sure Start complemented the aims of other organisations, it emerged that Sure Start duplicated services already provided by the CC and voluntary organisations in the same area.

My only problem is setting up another organisation. It might have been better, say, to have funding for Sure Start but to do it in another way. Like have a very small commissioning group across the city who commissioned the different services to work in a way that the parents and carers wanted if you could engage them if you could get that information from them.

As mentioned, perhaps the implementation of a uniform system, across the board without full recognition of the varying characteristics of communities living in this city will not work successfully and that there needs to be more opportunities for communities to define their requirements.

Despite all participants answering the questions posed in the interview schedule, it was clear from the responses of the parent representative that whilst attending Partnership Board meetings s/he had little knowledge of the leading agencies or strategic direction of the programme. However, this participant was the only member of the Partnership Board who had regular contact with team members. This highlights the importance of training for parent representatives and emphasises the important role they play in linking the Partnership Board and Sure Start team members.

Sure Start makes you consult with the local community about how you get at the services and for me that's the strongest benefit of Sure Start. You know you can't implement things without having the parents with you and that's the best thing about it really. Because it makes us listen to what people want.

With the *Children Act* (2004) stressing the importance of services working together effectively, communication between those who deliver services and those who manage the programme should have been established from the outset of the programme.

## 5.6 Conclusion

These results highlight the difficulties for those involved on the Partnership Board, including the PCT's initial lack of commitment to the programme through lack of capacity and duplication of existing services. Dialogue between all stakeholders is essential in ensuring successful multi-agency working.

The whole philosophy of Sure Start is to try and break down organisational barriers and facilitate integrated working. I think that you have to have that commitment at all levels to make that happen.

Parent representatives on the Partnership Board are the only people who have regular contact between team members, Sure Start parents and other Partnership Board members. The role these parents play should not be underestimated.

The next chapter will describe the results from interviews with selected team members of the local programme.

# **Chapter 6**

## **Team Member Interviews**

### **6.1 Introduction**

Selected team members were interviewed. This chapter will report the findings from these interviews and will seek to discover and develop the themes emerging from the data.

### **6.2 Aims**

The overall aim of all the interviews was to explore, in depth, issues which were identified in the survey of multi-agency working, reported in Chapter 3, and to investigate the key factors of success and challenges of multi-agency working in the same context. The specific aim of these interviews was to gain an insight into the operational workings of team members. The interviews attempted to gain factual information as well as the views and interpretations of team members.

### **6.3 Methods**

#### **6.3.1 Participants**

Four team members of differing levels of seniority and positions were selected to be interviewed.

#### **6.3.2 Materials**

An interview schedule was generated from responses to the survey. The interview schedule was intended to probe, in more depth, ambivalent, interesting and surprising responses identified by the survey. The interviews used semi-structured open-ended questions as described in Chapter 4 (see Appendix B).

#### **6.3.3 Procedures**

The researcher contacted the Senior Administrator of the programme who in turn contacted each team member identified to be interviewed. Arrangements were made for telephone interviews to take place at a time convenient to them.

A tape-recording of the interview was made with the consent of the interviewee. In addition, key comments and responses to the questions asked were noted as the interview proceeded. Once transcribed, transcripts of the interviews were sent to the participants for validation (see Appendix E).

#### **6.3.4 Analysis**

As previously mentioned, themes were identified in the survey to be explored in more depth. Questions used in the interview schedule emerged from the survey, thereby providing the first layer of analysis. After transcribing a qualitative analysis software package, NVivo, was used to code transcripts identifying key themes, issues and surprises.

### **6.4 Results**

#### **6.4.1 Knowledge of structures**

##### **6.4.1.1 Role of the CC and PCT**

One participant was not clear as to the role of the CC. One identified their role as an employer. The commitment of the CC at strategic level was mentioned by three participants.

The local authority seem to take it much more on board and they do seem very happy to run the project and most of the staff are employed by the CC so I suppose they have got more commitment there, more involvement.

Three participants identified the PCT's role as the financial body and one was unclear as to their role. A lack of commitment at a strategic level within the PCT but commitment of staff in the finance team was highlighted by two participants.

On paper they [the PCT] should be playing quite a large part in the project. ... It's obviously an important role but there doesn't seem to be as much commitment from the PCT side of it.

##### **6.4.1.2 Effect of the CC and PCT on the local programme**

It was generally felt that as the leading agencies involved in Sure Start developed more effective ways of working in partnership things could be achieved 'quicker and more efficiently', however, it was not always apparent operational level.

Working on the ground we don't see the PCT and CC.

The positive and 'dramatic' effect the CC has on the local programme was mentioned by two participants.

They've taken on board they've taken ownership of Sure Start. It must be much better for the programme to have some positive input than to have an indifferent attitude.

One participant was not sure of the effect the CC had on the local programme and other mentioned their involvement in the delivery of services.

The PCT's lack of commitment at a strategic level which filtered down to the local programme was highlighted by two participants.

They [the PCT] don't seem to have taken any interest [in the programme] at all.

One participant was unclear as to the effect, if any, the PCT had on the local programme whilst the other participant mentioned their role as his/her employer.

#### 6.4.1.3 Effect of CC and PCT on own role.

Three participants stated that the CC did not affect them on a day-to-day basis, but occasionally did impact upon them. One participant indicated that the CC had a significant impact on his/her role.

It [the CC] affects decisions I have to make, and I'm making decisions on a daily basis and if I haven't got the information then, yes, that obviously makes a big difference as to what I can do.

Two participants agreed that the PCT did not regularly affect them. One indicated a problem, in that despite being a seconded PCT employee s/he had no named line manager in the PCT. The absence of permanent staff in the finance department at the PCT was mentioned by one participant.

It makes us vulnerable because the staff turnover is quite high, staff can leave at a weeks notice. This means that work that may be half way through just doesn't get done and then its having to explain to the next person, and wait for the next person to be inducted and get up to speed before they can do the work. It does mean that work that I perhaps asked for 6 months ago I'm still waiting for.

## **6.4.2 Roles and responsibilities**

### 6.4.2.1 Complement or contradict goals of parent agency

The complementary aims of partner agencies and Sure Start were mentioned by two participants. However, reaching a stage of shared objectives was, it was felt by one participant, being hindered by his/her parent agency who is 'very mistrusting of any new initiative'. One felt that her parent agency had little to do with Sure Start.

It does not have any aims or goals or aspirations as to what the project should produce.

### 6.4.2.2 Specific aims of Sure Start differing from other agencies

Difficulties with regard to the emphasis on clinical work within one participant's parent agency and the emphasis on preventative work in the programme was felt to impact on their own role and on clients. The innovative approach the programme offered, compared to other agencies was highlighted by two participants.

I think we are very much about prevention, we're not a crisis-led agency at all. Obviously we are here to set, to complement and to work in different ways and I think as workers we have the ability to be more creative and more imaginative.

### 6.4.2.3 Individuals priorities

Views were divided with regard to priorities. One was unclear, despite being in post nearly twelve months. Two felt confident that they knew their priorities, which included engaging with hard-to-reach families, managing staff and working alongside existing programmes.

One of my main priorities is forging good working links with other three Sure Starts so that we do more multi-working within the four teams.

External influences such as Government guidelines which resulted in constantly changing priorities were mentioned by one participant.

## **6.4.3 Staffing and space**

### 6.4.3.1 Staffing

Challenges in the staffing situation were evident and included feelings of isolation, lack of training and managing a diverse team.

The main challenge is people coming from different environments you know coming in working in different ways, having a lot more autonomy than they're probably used to.

Notwithstanding the above, the staffing situation was generally viewed positively.

Everyone has such a positive attitude and is so committed to what Sure Start's all about. The commitment of the staff who works here is one hundred per cent.

Indeed, working as part of a multi-agency team had enabled one participant to have a greater knowledge as to what other professionals did.

#### 6.4.3.2 Space

Despite two sites in close geographical proximity and a new building under construction, views were generally positive about the number of locations. Having more than one location, one participant felt, allowed staff to have a wider knowledge of others roles thereby gaining skills.

We don't look upon ourselves as being two separate venues.

Three participants mentioned their early reservations with regard to sharing office space with another agency. However, this too was viewed positively.

Sharing a building has resulted in a lot of joint working, a lot of sharing and a lot of understanding of other peoples needs.

This, in turn, was seen to benefit families.

Families can see us all working together and all working for them and talking to each other and keeping the lines of communication with them and with each other. This will ultimately benefit the children.

Two participants had differing views regarding office space, one stated there were no problems whilst another said that they knew there would be a bit of 'desk hopping'.

#### **6.4.4 Data procedures and information sharing.**

##### 6.4.4.1 Data procedures

Protocols for data procedures were identified by two participants as hindering multi-agency working. There appeared to be no continuity in the way data were stored with participants following different procedures.

We haven't looked at how we access that or who accesses that at the moment.

Two participants identified that lack of procedures and protocols regarding data were a result of bad practice, lack of training and lack of uniformity across existing programmes.

Other programmes all seem to have different systems and I don't think anybody quite took a handle on it really and said 'right this is what we are going to do'. It frustrates me because I think we are the last Sure Start. You know, it feels like we have had to reinvent the wheel a little bit.

#### 6.4.4.2 Information sharing

Some team members stated that they were not sharing information as they were not clear as to what information could be shared with whom, highlighting a need for training. Indeed, a mixture of confidential paper files and IT files were being kept by individuals. A strategy to place the confidential information on shared hard drives was being reviewed.

Identifying and accessing the clients, was mentioned by two participants, as a major challenge. The PCT and one partner agency were identified as controlling these data, thereby, hindering this procedure. The reluctance of other agencies to share information was also highlighted. However, a balance was identified acknowledging that 'only the information that needs to be shared is shared'.

A strategy to overcome sharing information about clients within the team was outlined by one participant. This involved asking clients at the initial registration whether their information could be shared with other team members. This has since been followed up by a meeting between key professionals in the team to share information about clients.

#### **6.4.5 Communication**

The number of locations, under use of IT systems, availability of part-time staff and different ways of working mentioned by two participants were felt to hinder communication. Conversely, the other two participants felt that communication was not a challenge. Indeed, having two locations and sharing a building with another agency was seen as facilitating communication.

I think that good communication solves all problems....that can only lead to good interagency working.

Formal methods of communication, considered successful and mentioned by all participants, included the bi-weekly full team meetings.

The meetings we have on a fortnightly basis are more an information sharing as opposed to problem solving because I think problem solving goes on as part of people's day to day working life.

Other successful methods mentioned included a direct telephone line between locations, the daily transfer of internal post, informal chats and social events. Strategies for good practice included the recent employment of two members of staff to work part-time in both locations.

#### **6.4.6 Hard-to-reach strategies**

Individual's strategies for example, a 'little-by-little' approach, adopted by one employee and co-operative strategies such as trips to the seaside, parks, towns and parties both used to engage hard-to-reach families were mentioned by three participants. The centrally-located shop was also highlighted.

I think our shop has been a great asset for that [reaching the hard-to-reach] because it does not make anybody feel that it's an official building that you are walking into. It's very accessible with posters all over the windows saying 'are you pregnant, come in and find out what we can do for you'.

Forthcoming new strategies to engage with hard-to-reach families were also mentioned.

We're also about to start doing a lot of work with Dads and we're starting to do Saturday morning sessions to encourage dads to come along, and we give quite a lot of incentives to try and encourage people to come.

### **6.5 Discussion**

This programme, established just over twelve months ago, was the last of four Sure Start local programmes to be established in the city. Three of the four participants had been involved directly, or indirectly, with other Sure Start programmes, both locally and nationally, in their previous employment. All were experienced practitioners bringing much expertise and knowledge with them to the team.

At a strategic level, apparent differences between the two leading agencies in structures, processes as well as relationships towards the local programmes were identified. The level of commitment and positive attitude of the CC was in some contrast to that of the PCT. At the operational level, the enthusiasm of the team members suggested that multi-agency working whilst not always easy to achieve was successful. This was also perhaps due to the level of commitment of the staff and their knowledge of the geographical area. Indeed, team members showed innovation in the ways in

which they worked, providing solutions and strategies to overcome problems which were yet to be resolved in the other Sure Start local programmes.

A recurring theme running through the interviews was the positive view held by team members of working alongside other professionals from differing organisations for the good of the clients.

If we don't all work together then we're not going to be doing justice to these families.

In fact, this 'coming together' of different professionals, at a delivery level, facilitated by sharing office space with another statutory organisation and having more than one location, resulted in staff sharing knowledge, breaking down organisational barriers and forming personal friendships.

However, multi-agency working with organisations, as opposed to professionals from these organisations coming together, was not as successful. In particular, multi-agency working with parent agencies was mentioned as a challenge. Some team members indicated that it was difficult for them to work in a Sure Start local programme as their parent agency did not yet fully share the Sure Start vision. In this respect, it seemed that some staff working in Sure Start local programmes felt that they had more independence of action than others.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

Despite the complexity of the challenge facing those working in such settings, multi-agency working, at an operational level, was successful. Uniformity of procedures across programmes such as data gathering procedures and information-sharing policies was still to be standardised. However, this team was seeking to establish strategies to overcome such difficulties. Finally, the results served as a reminder of the importance of the commitment of the individuals who delivered the service.

# **Chapter 7**

## **Conclusion**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This final chapter seeks to draw together the various elements of this study. The aims of the study were to explore, in depth, issues that were identified in the earlier survey of multi-agency working (Dahl and Aubrey, 2004) and to investigate the key factors of success and the challenges of multi-agency working.

The opportunity to research multi-agency working in SSCNE arose from the University's local evaluation of the four Sure Start local programmes in Coventry, of which multi-agency working represented one factor. This study was conducted part way through the Government's ten-year childcare strategy, of which Sure Start local programmes formed one element. However, as mentioned in Chapter 1, since commencing this study it has been announced that Sure Start local programmes will cease to exist, in their current form, as they will be 'rolled out' to become Sure Start Children's Centres within the next two years (Glass, 2005:2).

### **7.2 Research questions**

The research questions arising from this study, as set out in Chapter 1, were:

- How much is known about effective multi-agency working?
- What are the key factors of the success and what are the challenges of multi-agency working in Sure Start local programmes?
- What future lessons can be learned from multi-agency working for widespread circulation?

Each of the questions will be addressed in the light of the literature and empirical work presented in this study.

#### **7.2.1 How much is known about effective multi-agency working?**

Since the arrival of the Labour administration in 1997, one key element of the Government's policy agenda has been to create a 'joined-up' approach to strategy and service delivery. The literature reveals that as part of the Government's agenda of

social inclusion, multi-agency working in the area of early childhood has seen a rapid growth.

Despite the number of initiatives introduced by the Government in the last eight years, the literature demonstrates that little attention has been paid to how multi-agency working can be achieved. Atkinson et al., (2001:2002) highlighted both the complexity and potential of working in multi-agency settings. Their study emphasised the investment needed, in financial resources and in time and commitment of the staff at delivery level, to develop new ways of working and also the attitudinal shift required by those at all levels to provide a successful initiative.

It appears from the results of this study that, perhaps through an initial lack of capacity, the PCT seemed to have provided insufficient support for the Sure Start local programmes. This, in turn, affected decisions at strategic and operational levels and team members within the programme. Notwithstanding this, the individuals employed by the PCT to work with team and Partnership Board members, were committed to the programme. At an operational level the dedication of the staff was evident through their positive responses and enthusiasm.

### **7.2.2 What are the key factors of success and challenges raised by multi-agency working in this particular Sure Start local programme?**

The literature reveals that there is a lack of research into multi-agency working in the context of early year's settings. Only a couple of studies identified related directly, or solely, to multi-agency working in a Sure Start context. However, despite the small number of studies which have looked at the key factors of success and challenges raised by multi-agency working, the literature revealed that regardless of the context, these key factors are similar.

The interviews revealed that the representatives of the leading agencies, Partnership Board representatives and team members, offered differing insights and perspectives with regard to what they believed to constitute the key factors of success and challenges raised by multi-agency working in this particular programme. Generally, multi-agency working at a delivery level was seen positively, whilst at a strategic level, inevitable delays in local authority decision-making was viewed less positively. In fact, this has been highlighted in a recent press report, which stated that working in a 'joined-

up' way turned out to be problematic at higher levels, whilst at local levels it 'often worked very well' (Glass, 2005:2).

At a delivery level, several challenges of multi-agency working, noted in the literature, were regarded as benefits in this programme. For example, communication, the number of locations and sharing a building with another agency were felt to contribute to the success of this programme. However, personnel at a delivery level interviewed from the other three Sure Start local programmes in the area did not share this view. These programmes had been running for longer and, perhaps, had had more exposure to the problems mentioned above.

Whilst successes were mentioned, predominately by team members, there were many challenges to be faced. Despite Sure Start local programmes being present in the city for four years, the main challenge identified by all respondents was having two leading agencies involved, specifically the apparent indifferent attitude and lack of commitment of staff at a senior management level within the PCT. This, in turn, affected staff working at both strategic and operational levels. Having two leading agencies, creating many tensions, did not provide an effective model of multi-agency working for others in less senior positions to adopt.

Several issues, pertinent to this programme, but not identified as key challenges in the literature, were noted as being significant in the empirical results. Challenges particular to this programme included frustrations with sharing information and access to client details and, fairly or unfairly, the PCT was regarded as the source of these difficulties.

Whilst the literature identified the key factors for the success and the challenges raised by multi-agency working, few solutions and strategies were identified to overcome such challenges. However those working at a delivery level did, such as establishing a strategy for data procedures and sharing information.

### **7.2.3 What future lessons can be learned from multi-agency working for widespread dissemination?**

Clearly, co-locating staff from partner agencies to work together when still employed by a parent agency created tensions for those working as team members, for those involved on the Partnership Board and for the representatives of the leading agencies.

However from the very outset of Sure Start, the concept of 'joined-up' working appeared to have been challenging. Initially, Sure Start was a programme involving several Government Departments such as the Treasury, the DOH and DfES where a Health Minister took the day-to-day lead. It then reverted solely to DfES control, to be run jointly by the DfES/Department for Work and the Pensions Minister. From this time, the role of the DOH, 'never Sure Start's most devoted fan, faded even further into the background' (Glass, 2005).

Eight years after announcing the arrival of Sure Start local programmes, the Government has announced the dismantling of its 'much-lauded' 550 Sure Start local programmes and their replacement by 3,500 Sure Start Children's Centres (Glass, 2005: 2). Sure Start Children's Centres, however, will require the continuing and even extended commitment of the two agencies in working together. Indeed, Hodge (2005a) confirmed that the local authority would also take over the financial management of such programmes, thereby confirming the withdrawal of the PCT's involvement. The *Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners* stated that it would, however, be twelve months before full details of how these reforms would be realised (DfES, 2004a).

Perhaps the community aspect and the partnership with parents is one of the most positive features of Sure Start local programmes. The programmes were to be 'owned' by local communities, parents and those who worked in the programme, in order for those for whom the programme was supposed to benefit could help shape the programme to work for them. Moreover, the empirical results highlight the role parents play in Sure Start and the importance of stakeholders to be engaged and involved in decision making

It appears that multi-agency working, heralded as a success by Government, seen in Sure Start local programmes will be a feature of the new Children's Centres. Interviews conducted with the other three programmes participating in this study highlight that the mainstreaming of some services is already beginning to happen across the City, for example speech and language services offered within Sure Start.

A striking theme recurring through all the interviews is the amount of time needed to work successfully as part of a multi-agency team at all levels, in addition to the time taken to ensure the trust of local communities and parents. Effective multi-agency

working, without clear guidelines as to how this is to be achieved, is going to take time to establish, at least ten years according to the Government's initial announcement (Glass, 1999). Alistair Darling, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury posed the question, before the programme was launched, 'How can you assure me that this programme will not lead in ten year's time to a lot of boarded-up, fly-blown family centres such as I have seen in my own constituency and elsewhere?' (Glass, 2005). In October 1999, there were only two local projects up and running yet, by July 2000, the programme was extended to five hundred and fifty local projects. Sure Start local programmes were perhaps expanded too quickly on a national scale before evidence, based on real experience of running it, had been accumulated.

### **7.3 The limitations of the study**

The period given to collect data was governed by time constraints of the local evaluation of the four Sure Start local programmes. In some instances, personnel failed to keep appointments for interviews, although every effort was made to reschedule interviews at their convenience. This resulted in the data gathering taking place over a longer period of time than anticipated.

The time allowed for this study, therefore, resulted in focusing on personnel working within the programme. Whilst this provided valuable information, other stakeholders' views did not feature. A further study might seek to elicit the views of those working in partner agencies and outside agencies, regarding multi-agency working in the context of working with Sure Start. This would provide an overview of how multi-agency working is viewed by all stakeholders and the impact it has had in different sectors. This leads us back to a particular finding in Chapter 3 related to the survey: SSCNE were divided in view as to whether the management strategy to bring along participants from various agencies facilitated multi-agency work. Moreover, it serves as a reminder that by focusing on participants' perceptions of multi-agency working (strategic and operational) it may have under-estimated a very important aspect of the way any team operates, that is, its management. Øvretveit *et al* (1997) suggest that there are two specific challenges to creating management structures in multi-disciplinary teams. First is the challenge of establishing management which allows members from different professions appropriate autonomy. Second, there is a need to establish responsibility for managing the total resources of the team. Øvretveit *et al* describe five types of management structure for teams: *profession-managed*, where practitioners are managed within their professions

by line managers; the *single manager*, who manages all practitioners regardless of their professional discipline, including ‘clinical’ supervision, advice and management monitoring; *joint management*, which is a mixture of the two previous types; *team manager-contracted*, where has a budget and ‘contracts in’ the services of different professionals; and *hybrid management* based on characteristics of the other four types. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this piece of research to investigation the relationship between the type of management that has evolved in Sure Start, further pieces of evaluation might look specifically at the relationship of the particular management type adopted and the extent to which this facilitates multi-agency work from particular agencies.

## 7.4 Conclusion

This study highlights the complexity of the challenge facing those working in Sure Start local programmes. With the recent statement announcing the end of the ten year Sure Start local programmes it can only be hoped that Sure Start principles are established and embedded in Sure Start Children’s Centres. However, there is no evidence that new organisations such as local authority Children’s Trusts can bring into the mainstream the Sure Start multi-agency approach of early intervention and prevention. The involvement of the health service is imperative for the success of such programmes, yet their framework does not oblige it to co-operate with other local agencies.

Meanwhile, with £1.8 billion per year pledged to help build a nationwide network of 3,500 new Children’s Centres, Margaret Hodge (Hodge, 2005b:1), the children’s minister has said:

It is early days and we have always said this was a long-term programme but it is true some of the early targets were not sensible. But if you look at Sure Start together with early education and the new concept of children’s centres, I think we are powerfully on the route to witnessing a stunning transformation of the life chances of this generation of children.

## References

- Anning, A. (2001) 'Knowing who I am and what I know: developing new versions of professional knowledge in integrated service settings.' British Educational Research Association, University of Leeds, 13-15 September. <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educo/documents/00001877.htm>. Accessed 15/09/2004.
- Anning, A. (2002) 'Investigating the impact of working in integrated service delivery settings on early years practitioners' professional knowledge and practice: strategies for dealing with controversial issues'. British Educational Research Association, University of Exeter, 12-14 September. <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educo/documents/00002160.htm>. Accessed 27/09/2004
- Atkinson, M., Wilkin, A., Stott, A. and Kinder, K. (2001) *Multi-agency Working: an Audit of Activity* (LGA Research Report 17). Slough: NFER.
- Atkinson, M., Wilkin, A., Stott, A., Doherty, P. and Kinder, K. (2002) *Multi-agency Working: a Detailed Study* (LGA Research Report 26). Slough: NFER.
- Audit Commission. (1992a) *Getting in on the Act. Provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs*. London: HMSO.
- Audit Commission. (1992b) *Getting the Act together. Provision with pupils with Special Educational Needs*. London: HMSO.
- Audit Commission. (1994) *Seen but not heard: Co-ordinating community child health and social services for children in need*. London: HMSO.
- Audit Commission. (1996) *Misspent youth. Young people and crime*. London: Audit Commission.
- Audit Commission. (1998). *A Fruitful Partnership: Effective Partnership Working*. London: Audit Commission.
- Cabinet Office. (1999) *Modernising Government*. London: The Stationery Office. <http://www.archive.official-documents.co.uk>. Accessed 10/01/2005.
- Campbell, A. (2001) 'Developing and evaluating Early Excellence Centres in the UK: some difficulties, dilemmas and victories in promoting integrated and joined up services.' British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, University of Leeds, 13-15 September. <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educo/documents/00001863.htm>. Accessed 10/09/2004.
- Coventry City Council. (2000) *Final Plan for Sure Start Coventry South East*. Coventry: Coventry City Council.
- Coventry City Council. (2001) *Final Plan for Sure Start Coventry West* Coventry: Coventry City Council.
- Coventry City Council. (2002) *Final Plan for Sure Start Coventry North*. Coventry: Coventry City Council.
- Coventry City Council. (2003) *Final Plan for Sure Start Coventry North East*. Coventry: Coventry City Council.
- Dahl, S. and Aubrey, C. (2004) 'Multi-agency working in Sure Start projects: Successes and Challenges'. British Educational Research Conference, University of Warwick, June.

- Department for Education and Employment. (1998a) *Excellence in Schools*. London. DfEE.
- Department for Education and Employment. (1998b) *Meeting Special Educational Needs: A Programme of Action*. London: DfEE.
- Department for Education and Skills. (1998) *Meeting the Childcare Challenge: A Framework and Consultation Document*. London: DfES.
- Department for Education and Skills. (2002a) *Special Educational Needs: Code of Practice*. London: DfES.
- Department for Education and Skills. (2002b) *Education Act*. London: DfES.
- Department for Education and Skills. (2003) *Every Child Matters*. London: DfES.
- Department for Education and Skills. (2004a) *Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners. Putting people at the heart of public services*. London: The Stationery Office. <http://www.dfes.gov.uk>. Accessed 10/02/2005.
- Department for Education and Skills. (2004b) *Children Act*. London: The Stationery Office.
- Department of Health. (1989) *Children Act*. London: The Stationery Office.
- Department of Health. (1998a) *Our Healthier Nation*. London: The Stationery Office.
- Department of Health. (1998b) *Modernising Social Services*. London: The Stationery Office.
- Department of Health. (1998c) *Modernising Health and Social Services – National Priorities Guidance 99/00-2001/02*. London: The Stationery Office.
- Department of Health. (1999) *Health Act*. London: The Stationery Office.
- Department of Health. (2003) *Getting the Right Start: The National Service Framework for Children*. London: The Stationery Office.
- Department of Health, Home Office and Department for Education and Employment. (1999) *Working together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children*. London: The Stationery Office.
- Eisenstadt, N (2002) 'Sure Start – a good beginning'. *Interplay, Autumn*, pp.20-25.
- Glass, N (1999) 'Sure Start: The Development of an Early Intervention Programme for Young Children in the United Kingdom'. *Children and Society*, Vol. 13, pp.257-264.
- Glass, N. (2001) What Works for Children – the Political Issues. *Children and Society*, Vol. 15, pp.14-20.
- Glass, N. (2005) 'Surely some mistake?' The Guardian, 5 January.
- HM Treasury. (1998) *Modern Public Services for Britain: Investing in Reform. Comprehensive Spending Review: New Public Spending Plans 1999-2002. Cross Departmental Review of Provision for Young Children*. London: The Stationery Office. <http://www.archive.official-documents.co.uk> Accessed 28/08/2004.
- HM Treasury. (2000) *Spending Review 2000. New Public Spending Plans for 2001-2004. Prudent for a Purpose: Building Opportunity and Security for all*. London: The Stationery Office. <http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk>. Accessed 10/02/2005.
- HM Treasury. (2004) *Spending Review 2004. Stability, security and opportunity for all: investing for Britain's long-term future*. London: The Stationery Office. <http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk>. Accessed 10/02/2005.

- Hodge, M. (2005a) 'Future of Sure Start'. *The Today Programme*, Radio 4. January 8 2005.
- Hodge, M. (2005b) cited by Fran Abrams 'Labour Sure Start falters. *The Times Educational Supplement*, 15 April, p. 1.
- Jones, H. (2000) 'Partnerships: a common sense approach to inclusion?' SCUTREA, 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, University of Nottingham, 3-5 July. <http://leeds.ac.uk/edocol/documents/00001456.htm>. Accessed 14/09/2004.
- Kresh, E. (1998) The effects of Head Start: What do we know? *National Head Start Association Research Quarterly*, Vol 1, pp.112-123.
- Labour Party Manifesto. (1997) *Because Britain Deserves Better*. London: The Labour Party.
- Melhuish, E et al., (2002) 'Asking the right questions'. *Interplay*, Autumn, pp.26-31.
- Myers, P., Barnes, J. and Brodie, I. (2004) *Partnership Working in Sure Start Local Programmes: Synthesis of Early Findings from Local Programme Evaluations*. London: National Evaluation of Sure Start.
- National Evaluation of Sure Start Evaluation Team. (2002) *Early Experiences of Evaluating Sure Start*. London: DfES
- National Evaluation of Sure Start Evaluation Team. (2004) The National Evaluation of Sure Start Local Programmes in England. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health Vol*, 9, No. 1, pp.2-8.
- OECD. (2001) *Starting Strong: Early Childhood Education and Care*. Paris: OECD.
- Oppenheim, A.N. (2001) *Questionnaire Design, Interviewing and Attitude Measurement*. London: Continuum.
- Øvretveit, J., Mathias, P. and Thompson, T. (1997) *Interprofessional Working for Health and Social Care*. London: Macmillan.
- Pugh, G. (2003) 'Early Childhood Services: Evolution or Revolution?' *Children and Society*, Vol.17, pp.184-194.
- Schweinhart, L., Barnes, H.V. and Weikart, D.P. (1993) *Significant Benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study through age 27*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.
- Strauss. A. and Corbin, J. (1998) *Basics of qualitative research: techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. London: Sage.
- Sure Start. (2002) *A Guide to Planning and Running your Programme. Round 6 Wave Guidance – Evaluation*. London: Sure Start.
- Sure Start. (2003) <http://www.surestart.gov.uk/surestartservices.htm>. Accessed 08/10/04.
- Sure Start Unit. (2000) *Sure Start. A Guide for Third Wave Programmes*. London: Sure Start Unit.
- Thames Valley Family Practice Research Unit. (2003) *Teamwork and Teambuilding: A Report to the Ontario Family Health Network, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care*. <http://www.uwo.ca.fammed/tvfpru/>. Accessed 11/02/05.
- Tomlinson, K. (2003) *Effective interagency working: a review of the literature and examples from practice* (LGA Research Report 40). Slough: NFER.

- Webb, R and Vulliamy, G. (2001) 'Joining up the Solutions: the Rhetoric and Practice of Inter-agency Cooperation'. *Children and Society*, Vol. 15, pp.315-332.
- Wiseman, P and Wakeman, A. (2002) 'Learning from experience'. *Interplay, Autumn*, pp.40-44.
- Wigfall, V. and Moss, P. (2001) *More than a sum of its parts? A study of multi-agency childcare network*. London: National Children's Bureau.

# APPENDIX A

## Evaluating Multi-Agency Working in Sure Start: Partnership Questionnaire

Sure Start (SS) local programmes aim to draw together a range of professionals, from the various agencies that they work for, and have them all working together, in partnership, in order to provide better services for the families in their area. This partnership working, commonly referred to as multi-agency working, is what Sure Start is about. This questionnaire seeks to investigate the challenges and the key factors of success of Sure Start multi-agency working. It is drawn from the research of Mary Atkinson *et al* (2002a & b)<sup>1</sup> at the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER).

Please identify your role within Sure Start by ticking the appropriate box.

<b>Official use only</b>
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18

Accountable Body (PCT)	
Lead Organisation (CCC)	
Area coordination	
Programme manager	
NESS Regional Support Officer	
Sure Start Regional Office	
SS team member	
Agency from which SS team member came	
Steering group member	
Partnership Board member	
Sub-group member	
Parents' forum member	
Service provider – Voluntary sector	
Service provider – Statutory sector	
School/Nursery manager (outside of Sure Start)	
School/Nursery worker	
Playgroup/Crèche manager	
Playgroup/Crèche worker	

If possible please specify your role further:

<sup>1</sup> Atkinson, M., Wilkin, A., Stott, A. and Kinder, K. (2002a) *Multi-agency Working: An Audit of Activity*. Slough, Berks: NFER.

Atkinson, M., Wilkin, A., Stott, A. Doherty, P. and Kinder, K. (2002b) *Multi-agency Working: A Detailed Study*. Slough, Berks: NFER.

# PARTNERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE

For each of the following statements please tick ONE box that most closely reflects your view.

Official  
use only

1. Local authority structures and boundaries:

Facilitate Sure Start multi-agency working		1 2 3
Don't influence Sure Start multi-agency working one way or the other		
Hinder Sure Start multi-agency working		

Can you say more about this?

2. Staffing arrangements and time investment of Sure Start local programme/s:

Please tick the appropriate box

Facilitate Sure Start multi-agency working		1 2 3
Don't influence Sure Start multi-agency working one way or the other		
Hinder Sure Start multi-agency working		

Can you say more about this?

3. Individuals' and Sure Start local programme teams' expectations and priorities:

Please tick the appropriate box

Facilitate Sure Start multi-agency working		1 2 3
Don't influence Sure Start multi-agency working one way or the other		
Hinder Sure Start multi-agency working		

Can you say more about this?

4. The aims and objectives of Sure Start local programme/s:

Facilitate Sure Start multi-agency working		1
Don't influence Sure Start multi-agency working one way or the other		2
Hinder Sure Start multi-agency working		3

Can you say more about this?

5. Confidentiality and information-sharing strategies between the various agencies involved:

Facilitate Sure Start multi-agency working		1
Don't influence Sure Start multi-agency working one way or the other		2
Hinder Sure Start multi-agency working		3

Can you say more about this?

6. The need for development of a common language across professional groups working in Sure start local programmes.

This is a need		1
This would make no difference		2
There is no need		3

Can you say more about this?

**For EACH of the following statements please circle yes, no or don't know.**

7. In practice, budgets and financial arrangements create a major challenge to Sure Start multi-agency working through:

a.	Concern about conflicts within or between agencies that provide Sure Start staff	Yes	No	Don't know
b.	Concern about general lack of programme funding	Yes	No	Don't know
c.	Concern about sustainability of the services and, thus, uncertainty of funding	Yes	No	Don't know
d.	Creating more effective use of resources (human and material) by reducing repetition or overlap	Yes	No	Don't know

1	2	3
1	2	3
1	2	3
1	2	3

Can you say more about this?

8. Issues around roles and responsibilities adopted by individuals working within Sure Start concern:

a.	Understanding the roles of others	Yes	No	Don't know
b.	Conflicts over areas of responsibility	Yes	No	Don't know
c.	The need to move beyond existing roles to work in new ways	Yes	No	Don't know

1	2	3
1	2	3
1	2	3

Can you say more about this?

9. The aims of the specific agencies compete with Sure Start local programme aims due to:

a.	Differences in the target group/s	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3
b.	Different Government targets	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3
c.	A focus on preventative work versus crisis intervention	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3

Can you say more about this?

10. Non-financial resources create challenges concerning:

a.	The allocation of time	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3
b.	The provision of staff	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3
c.	Physical space in which to work together effectively	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3

Can you say more about this?

11. Poor communication within and between the agencies involved with Sure Start:

a.	Creates problems between those working at different levels (management and delivery levels) within agencies	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3
b.	Creates different availability of professionals from different agencies	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3
c.	Undermines successful multi-agency work through poor communication between different local government departments	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3

Can you say more about this?

12. The effect of professional and agency culture on Sure Start practice:

a.	Multi-agency working disrupts existing agency cultures (values and ways of working)	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3
b.	Specific policy and practice differences (for example, different personnel and referral systems) hinder shared practice	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3
c.	Different data management systems which effect information sharing impact upon shared practice	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3

Can you say more about this?

13. The strategy of the management in the Sure Start local programme/s.

a.	Multi-agency working is strongly supported and promoted at management level in order to remain credible at delivery level	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3
b.	Management strategy drive is organised carefully in order to carry along the various participants from each agency	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3
c.	Management strategy encourages like-minded individuals who seek new ways of working in order to meet shared goals and work across existing management structures.	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3

Can you say more about this?

14. Training opportunities for Sure Start team members – there is a need for:

a.	Additional multi-agency training to meet the extended role of agencies	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3
b.	Training to enhance knowledge and understanding of other agencies	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3
c.	Professional 'single-agency' development delivered at the home 'base' of the agency	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3

Can you say more about this?

15. Commitment and willingness of Sure Start team members to be involved in multi-agency work is sustained by:

a.	An active desire to engage with other agencies at the management level	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3
b.	An active desire to engage with other agencies at the delivery level	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3
c.	A commitment/active desire to engage with other agencies by a 'bottom up' as well as 'top down' management approach	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3

Can you say more about this?

16. Understanding the roles and responsibilities of others:

a.	The need for a clear understanding of what is expected so that different agendas are not pursued	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3
b.	The need to understand the constraints on other agencies so that expectations are realistic	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3
c.	A need for mutual respect for the professional roles of other agencies and their contribution	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3

Can you say more about this?

17. Common Sure Start aims and objectives have been achieved by the programme/s through:

a.	Recognition of the need for common ground and like minded people	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3
b.	Recognition of the need for a real purpose to joint working	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3
c.	A needs-led approach which replaces agency-specific agendas	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3

Can you say more about this?

18. Communications and information sharing within the Sure Start local programme/s has/have been supported by:

a.	Opportunities for dialogue/keeping open communication between agencies being achieved	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3
b.	Personal relationship building (communication skills, listening skills, the capacity for negotiation and compromise)	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3
c.	Procedures and systems of communications and information dissemination (such as circulating meeting minutes) are in place	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3

Can you say more about this?

19. Leadership or drive of individual Sure Start Programme Manager/s:

a.	Show/s clear strategic direction	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3
b.	Has/have the tenacity to overcome obstacles to progress	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3
c.	Can bring together the Sure Start team in order to bring about change and overcome obstacles	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3

Can you say more about this?

20. Involving relevant personnel on the Sure Start local programme/s has lead to:

a.	The right personnel from specific agencies being involved	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3
b.	Personnel at the right level of responsibility to make the necessary decisions and activate the right services being involved	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3
c.	Priority being given to the work of Sure Start by individual agencies	Yes	No	Don't know	1    2    3

Can you say more about this?

21. Is there anything more you wish to add?

# APPENDIX B

## Evaluating Multi-Agency Working in Sure Start: Interview Schedule

### Main aim of the interview

- To investigate the key factors for success and key challenges in Sure Start multi-agency working;
- To consider in more depth areas identified in the previous survey of Sure Start multi-agency working.

### Background information and introduction to the interview

- Thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed and for your support for this research.
- As a follow-up to the recent survey by The University of Warwick of multi-agency working in four local Sure Start programmes, we are seeking further information and deeper insights into the key factors underpinning success and challenges in multi-agency working. Consequently, your views and insights are very much appreciated.
- The interview will take between 30 and 45 minutes.
- We should appreciate being able to tape record the interview.
- Individual responses will be treated as confidential and will be anonymous in that your name will not be used in any subsequent report that is prepared.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. How long have you been involved with Sure Start?
2. What role/s have you had in Sure Start? (**PROMPT:** different roles; different Sure Start programmes; in/out of the area; full/part-time; seconded-employed by whom; involved in action plan?)  
.....

### KNOWLEDGE OF STRUCTURES AND BUDGETS

3. How would you describe the role the i) LA; ii) PCT play in Sure Start?
4. How, if at all, do you think these roles affect the local programme/s? (**PROMPT:** in terms of sustainability; financial implications; staffing; time; precariousness of funding.)  
.....
5. How would you say the overall involvement of the LA and PCT affects your day-to-day working as a part of a multi-agency team, if at all?  
.....

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

6. How or to what extent would you say the local Sure Start programmes complement (or contradict) the fundamental goals of your ‘parent’ agency/individual agencies? (**PROMPT:** Are Sure Start goals linked to specific agency plans, policies or statutory responsibilities? To what extent are goals common?)
  7. Do you feel that specific aims of local Sure Start programmes differ from those of individual agencies, for instance, in terms of the emphasis placed on preventative strategies rather than clinical intervention?
  8. Do you feel that you know what *your* priorities are as part of this Sure Start team/the Sure Start programmes? If yes, what are they? (*Individual's expectations*)
- 

## **STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS AND TIME INVESTMENT**

9. What do you see as the key challenges in the current staffing situation, if any, in your/ local programme/s? (**PROMPT:** Staff shortages; changes in personnel; appointing staff with commitment/compatibility at all levels; lack of time to work with other agencies.)
  10. What challenges have there been, if any, in terms of shared space (office space, private space for interviews, meeting space, informal/common room space? (**PROMPT:** How are these issues being addressed? Is there enough available space suitable for different purposes?)
- 

## **INFORMATION SHARING AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

11. What procedures (actual mechanisms) are in place for Sure Start team members, as representatives of specific agencies, for gathering, storing, retrieving and using data related to Sure Start families? (**PROMPT:** Can you give examples of good practice and challenges that you feel are being addressed?)
  12. What are the key challenges to information sharing for Sure Start team members, as representatives of specific agencies? What strategies and systems are needed to overcome these?
- 

## **COMMUNICATION**

13. What are the challenges, if any, to day-to-day communication between Sure Start team members who are, at the same time, representatives of specific agencies? (**PROMPT:** Differential access to methods of communication, different availability for different people and different levels of communication.)
  14. What strategy/strategies is/are needed to overcome these?
  15. What methods of communication, if any, are successful?
  16. Do you think that it is unsettling to specific agencies if their existing working practices are challenged? If so, why?
-

## **LEADERSHIP – REPRESENTATIVES OF THE LEADING AGENCIES ONLY**

17. Considering the experience you have had with Sure Start can you identify up to three features of positive Sure Start leadership? Can you identify up to three features of Sure Start leadership that may be less helpful?

---

## **FINALLY**

18. What strategies or approaches have been used/have you used in order to reach 'hard to reach' Sure Start families? (**PROMPT:** Give examples of successful and unsuccessful approaches/strategies)

19. Considering your experience and involvement in Sure Start can you say up to three positive things that contribute to successful multi-agency working and up to three negative things that hinder successful multi-agency working?

20. Do you have any further comments or issues you would like to raise regarding multi-agency working?

---

**Thank you for your time.**

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Results of Pilot Interview Schedule**

*Evaluating Multi-Agency working in Sure Start: Interview Schedule* was piloted in two local Sure Start programmes between 21<sup>st</sup> July and 13<sup>th</sup> August 2004. In total five team members were interviewed, at different levels of seniority, positions and with differing employers, and one Partnership Board Member.

Participants stated that they felt the schedule is too long, some questions too wordy and complicated and there is some repetition of questions. Despite these comments each interviewee was able to give a considerable amount of feedback from most of the questions posed and felt that the schedule covered key areas relating to multi-agency working.

The schedule was given to a Senior Researcher at the University and two professionally qualified personnel to look at the clarity of the questions and to ensure that the questions fulfilled the aims of the study. All three stated that if the schedule is to be completed in half an hour the number of questions and probes would need to be reduced.

In light of the pilot I would recommend the following:

- Shorten question three to read, “How would you describe the role of the i) LA; ii)PCT?”
- Delete question 6 as the participants stated that the overall goals are the same for each SS project and that they could spend half an hour discussing the goals!
- Re-word question 7 to state “How or to what extent would you say the local SS programmes goals complement .....” and possibly reduce the number of probes.
- Each participant felt that they did not understand question 9 as it is too long and as a result did not answer it. Could this be deleted?
- We could delete question 11 as if it is an issue it would come out in question 12 – (which it did in the pilot) and add it as a probe to question 12.
- It was felt that question 13 and 14 were repetitive. Could we delete question 14 and add it as a probe to question 13?

- Question 15 could be deleted as this issue is dealt with in questions 16 and 17.
- During the pilot I did not have time to use all of the probes due to the time constraints. I think that we could cut out all but the most essential probes and then use the others as a starting point for analytical headings for coding the responses afterwards.

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Letter to Partnership Board Members**

Dear

As a follow-up to the recent survey by The University of Warwick of multi-agency working in four Coventry Sure Start programmes, which highlighted many interesting findings, we are now seeking further information and deeper insights into the key factors underpinning success and challenges in multi-agency working.

The survey is being followed up by telephone interviews which will allow us to explore in more depth your personal views and opinions about multi-agency working. The interview will cover the following issues: knowledge of structures and budgets; roles and responsibilities; staffing arrangements and time investment; information sharing and confidentiality and communication.

The interview should last approximately half an hour and appointments will be made at your convenience. Individual responses will remain anonymous, be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be identifiable in any subsequent report that is prepared.

If you have any queries or questions relating to the interview please contact me on 02476 524412 or email me at [Lucy.clarke@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:Lucy.clarke@warwick.ac.uk).

Many thanks

Lucy Clarke  
Researcher, University of Warwick

## **APPENDIX E**

### **Letter of Validation**

Dear

#### **Evaluation of Sure Start local programme – Multi-agency Interviews**

Many thanks for taking time to be involved in the above research. Your comments have been most valuable.

I am writing to inform you that the analysis of the interview you gave has now taken place. Major themes have been identified and a draft report is currently being collated. Some carefully chosen statements will be selected to be included in this report. However, as assured when the interview took place confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured in the report. Attached is a copy of the transcript of your interview. Should you have any concerns please let me know as soon as possible.

Again, many thanks for taking part in this research.

Yours sincerely

Lucy Clarke

Researcher, University of Warwick

Tel: 02746524412