

**Multi-agency Working in Sure Start**

**Coventry West**

by

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# 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 for Sure Start Coventry West programme**

At the time of the survey, there were 11 partnership board members and 29 staff in total at SSCW.

- As in the main survey, views of SSCW participants concerning the influence of local authority structures and boundaries were mixed, though whereas rather more of the main survey respondents felt they facilitated multi-agency working, one half of SSCW respondents felt that they hindered multi-agency working.
- As in the main survey, the majority of SSCW respondents thought that the resources in the form of staffing arrangements and time investment in Sure Start programmes facilitated multi-agency work, though more than one-third thought they were a hindrance or had no influence.
- As in the main survey, the majority of SSCW respondents thought that the resources in the form of staffing arrangements and time investment in Sure Start programmes facilitated multi-agency working.
- As in the main survey, the vast majority of SSCW respondents thought that individuals' and Sure Start programme teams' high expectations and priorities affected multi-agency working.
- As in the main survey, aims and objectives of local Sure Start programmes were regarded by the vast majority of SSCW respondents as facilitative of multi-agency working.
- As in the main survey, SSCW participants' views concerning the effect of confidentiality and information-sharing strategies between the various agencies on multi-agency working were mixed. Rather more respondents thought that they facilitated than hindered such work and a minority felt that they had no influence.
- As in the main survey, the vast majority of SSCW participants felt that a common language across professional groups working in Sure Start local programmes facilitated multi-agency working.
- As in the main survey, views of SSCW participants regarding the challenge that budgets and financial arrangements posed to Sure Start multi-agency working were mixed. This was in respect of the impact of conflict within or between agencies providing Sure Start staff, concern about general lack of programme funding, sustainability of services and creation of a more effective use of resources (human and material) by reducing repetition and overlap.
- As in the main survey, the majority of respondents felt that issues around roles and responsibilities adopted by individuals working with Sure Start concerned understanding the roles of others, conflicts over areas of responsibility and the need to go beyond existing roles to work in new ways.

- As in the main survey, SSCW participants were mixed in view and 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.
- As in the main survey, the majority of SSCW participants 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 main survey showed the majority of respondents to feel 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. SSCW participants, however, were more mixed in views concerning the impact of poor communication within and between agencies.
- As in the main survey, SSCW participants' views on the impact of professional and agency culture on Sure Start practice were mixed.
- As in the main study, the majority of SSCW participants felt that multi-agency working did not disrupt existing agency culture but did feel that specific policy and practice differences hindered shared practice. Like the main study, the majority of SSCW respondents also felt that different management systems which effected information sharing did have an impact on shared practice.
- In terms of management strategy, as in the main study, the majority of SSCW 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 whether or not management strategy drive was organised carefully in order to carry along the various participants from each agency. Like the main study, a majority of SSCW participants felt 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 structure.
- As in the main study, the vast majority of SSCW participants 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.
- The majority of SSCW participants also felt a commitment to engage with other agencies by a 'bottom up' as well as 'top down' management approach was desirable, whereas the main study participants were more mixed in response to this.
- As in the main study, the vast majority of SSCW participants believed that 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.
- As in the main study, the majority of participants in SSCW 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 SSCW participants felt that communication and information-sharing within the Sure Start local programmes had been supported by opportunities for dialogue between agencies, person relationship building and procedures and systems of communication and information dissemination.
- The majority of the main study participants 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. In the case of SSCW participants responded in the same direction.
- As in the main study, SSCW respondents' views were mixed regarding the involvement of the right personnel from specific agencies on the Sure Start programmes, 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 by Sure Start 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 interviews represented the PCT, the CC and a parent.

- All four representatives felt that the role of the CC was wider than just being the Lead Agency and 'built into a wider, strategic plan'.
- Along with the PCT, the CC's involvement ensured that relevant professionals became involved at operational level.
- On a positive note, one person noted that having both organisations involved in the programme increased the variety of staff that were working within the project.
- It was viewed by respondents, however, that the two organisations did not work together closely enough and that this impacted on the programme.
- Generally, it was not felt that CC and PCT involvement had a specific effect on the role of participants within the organisation, though information sharing and 'joint works' occurred when appropriate.
- Overwhelmingly, participants felt that Sure Start complemented the goals of the parent agencies.
- It was felt that many agencies were trying to achieve the same outcomes with different client groups in the communities they served.
- Participants had personal reasons for becoming involved with Sure Start, be these their own interests or those of the agencies they were representing.
- The largest challenge for staffing was their operation under different guidelines, terms and conditions, dependent upon their parent agency.
- A new agreement for staff employed, regardless of organisation, with common terms and conditions was put forward as a solution.

- It was acknowledged by all participants that the programme was blighted by problems with accommodation from the very start. The situation had since improved and it was thought by one to be easing as more buildings were operating.
- On the whole, the participants were unsure whether the data procedures in place in the programme were operational but assumed that staff worked within data protection guidelines.
- There was a belief that the situation of sharing between agencies had improved over the life of the programme.
- Communication was considered at different levels by the participants from Senior Sponsor group to parental involvement.
- Strategic partnership between the Partnership Board and the Senior Sponsor group was questioned as was the impact of this on the role of the Programme Manager. However, there was thought to be a reasonable relationship between the Partnership Board and Programme Manager.
- Generally, it was thought that team relationships and communication were good.
- The level of parents' confidence in expressing themselves fully in Partnership Board meetings was raised. However, it was felt that links between staff and parents using the services was strong and progress was being made in getting Sure Start known within the community.
- Participants recognised the challenge that 'hard to reach' groups posed but there was agreement that building secure relationships with more receptive groups in the community provided a sound foundation upon which to extend into the community.

## **v) Team Member Interviews**

Five members of differing levels of seniority and position were selected to be interviewed. These were a mix of part- and full-time employees within the project.

- Four of the five participants identified the CC as being the Lead Agency, responsible for the 'overall management of the programme'. The role of the PCT was seen as being in charge of the finances for the project. Some participants felt that there was 'limited support' for the project.
- All participants noted that having two agencies involved created a lot of bureaucracy that could create delays for the programme. All respondents indicated that there had been many attempts at resolving strategic issues that had an impact on staff at operational level. This was frustrating. Four of the five team members interviewed believed that accessing funding was very slow and had a negative impact on the programme.
- The perceived effect of CC and PCT on individual professional roles varied according to whether or not the leading agencies constituted the professional lead. The impact of delays in resolving financial matters and staff contracts was raised again and demonstrated the frustration that was felt about this.
- Overwhelmingly, staff reported that the goals of parent agencies complemented those of Sure Start since Sure Start attempted to do something 'in addition' to what other agencies did. The focus of Sure Start on preventative work in order to

stop some families needing intervention-type support was expressed by participants. Indeed, working for Sure Start created a new sense of identity.

- All staff members were aware of their own responsibilities that related to their job specifications and participants viewed their Sure Start roles as more varied than equivalent roles with parent agencies.
- In terms of staff recruitment, it was not felt that there were real issues. Working to different rules and regulations with some roles appearing undervalued and underpaid could cause friction at times but overall staff had coped well with 'a lot of setbacks'.
- One of the largest problems faced by the programme was gaining accommodation and operating from split sites was a challenge. Whilst three sites would mean there was a Sure Start base in each of the communities, in terms of information sharing, there was more potential for misunderstanding and misinformation.
- Views concerning available office space and storage were mixed with one participant regarding the situation as acceptable and others less satisfied.
- Staff described various mechanisms for collecting and storing data. A new registration form was viewed positively as it meant that staff members could be informed regarding services offered/given to families before engaging themselves.
- Being able to share information across professionals working within the project was viewed very positively by all participants. This allowed fast access to a range of professionals. Frustration within the programme related to protocols that had been set up and signed but which had not led to information sharing from the PCT. It was acknowledged that the four programmes were working with the CC to rectify this situation.
- A number of good communication strategies among staff members were identified. Team meetings occurred once a month, leaving other weeks free for sub-team meetings. Team briefs could occur on a weekly basis. Meetings were also held at a strategic level that involved Programme Managers and this allowed external information to be shared with the teams.
- Problems of lack of communication were thought to have increased as the team had grown in size and the need for co-ordination were identified by several respondents. Split sites increased the challenges as did part-time employment. ICT facilities were deemed inadequate by everyone. Despite a large investment in infrastructure to provide a network of computers for all staff, two years into the programme's operations there was still only one computer with internet and email facilities. Team members identified the Coventry Sure Start Programme Managers group that shared information on good practice and strategies for reaching families who were not easy to engage with.
- There was also the hope, an identified need, for the creation of a Community Development Worker's post.
- 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>5</b>
1.1 Social and political context .....	5
1.2 Sure Start .....	6
1.3 Sure Start Unit.....	7
1.3.1 'Expansion' of Sure Start local programmes.....	8
1.4 Evaluation .....	9
1.4.1 Evaluation strategy for Sure Start local programmes.....	9
1.4.2 National evaluation .....	9
1.4.3 Local evaluation.....	10
1.4.4 Partnership effectiveness and team working .....	10
1.5 Research questions.....	11
<b>Chapter 2 Literature Review .....</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	12
2.2 Policy.....	12
2.2.1 Health .....	13
2.2.2 Social Services .....	13
2.2.3 Education.....	14
2.3 Key factors of success and challenges of multi-agency working.....	15
2.3.1 Key factors of success.....	15
2.3.2 Challenges.....	16
2.4 Multi-agency working in early years settings .....	17
2.4.1 Centres of Excellence .....	17
2.4.2 Sure Start national and local evaluations.....	18
2.5 Survey .....	18
2.6 Conclusion .....	19
<b>Chapter 3 The survey .....</b>	<b>21</b>
3.1 Introduction .....	21
3.2 Aims .....	21
3.3 Methodology.....	21
3.3.1 Participants.....	21
3.3.2 Materials .....	22
3.3.3 Procedures .....	22

3.3.4	Analysis .....	22
3.4	Results .....	23
3.5	Discussion .....	39
3.6	Conclusion .....	39
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>Interviews with representatives of the lead agencies .....</b>	<b>41</b>
4.1	Introduction .....	41
4.2	Aims .....	41
4.3	Methods .....	41
4.3.1	Participants .....	41
4.3.2	Materials .....	42
4.3.3	Procedures .....	42
4.3.4	Analysis .....	42
4.4	Results .....	42
4.4.1	Knowledge of structures .....	42
4.4.2	Roles and responsibilities .....	43
4.4.3	Staffing and space .....	44
4.4.4	Data procedures and information sharing .....	45
4.4.5	Communication .....	45
4.4.6	Leadership style .....	45
4.5	Discussion .....	46
4.6	Conclusion .....	47
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>Partnership Board Interviews .....</b>	<b>48</b>
5.1	Introduction .....	48
5.2	Aims .....	48
5.3	Methods .....	48
5.3.1	Participants .....	48
5.3.2	Materials .....	48
5.3.3	Procedures .....	48
5.3.4	Analysis .....	49
5.4	Results .....	49
5.4.1	Knowledge of structures .....	49
5.4.2	Roles and responsibilities .....	50
5.4.3	Staffing and space .....	52
5.4.4	Data procedures and information sharing .....	54
5.4.5	Communication .....	55
5.4.6	Hard-to-reach strategies .....	57

5.5	Discussion .....	57
5.6	Conclusion .....	59
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>Team Member Interviews .....</b>	<b>60</b>
6.1	Introduction .....	60
6.2	Aims .....	60
6.3	Methods .....	60
6.3.1	Participants .....	60
6.3.2	Materials .....	60
6.3.3	Procedures .....	60
6.3.4	Analysis .....	61
6.4	Results .....	61
6.4.1	Knowledge of structures .....	61
6.4.2	Roles and responsibilities .....	64
6.4.3	Staffing and space .....	65
6.4.4	Data procedures and information sharing .....	67
6.4.5	Communication .....	68
6.4.6	Hard-to-reach strategies .....	71
6.5	Discussion .....	72
6.6	Conclusion .....	73
<b>Chapter 7</b>	<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>74</b>
7.1	Introduction .....	74
7.2	Research questions .....	74
7.2.1	How much is known about effective multi-agency working? .....	74
7.2.2	What are the key factors of success and challenges raised by multi-agency working in this particular Sure Start local programme? .....	75
7.2.3	What future lessons can be learned from multi-agency working for widespread dissemination? .....	76
7.3	The limitations of the study .....	78
7.4	Conclusion .....	79
<b>References</b> .....	<b>80</b>	
<b>APPENDIX A</b>	<b>Evaluating Multi-Agency Working in Sure Start: Partnership Questionnaire .....</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>PARTNERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE</b> .....	<b>85</b>	
<b>APPENDIX B</b>	<b>Evaluating Multi-Agency Working in Sure Start: Interview Schedule .....</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>APPENDIX C</b>	<b>Results of Pilot Interview Schedule .....</b>	<b>96</b>

**APPENDIX D Letter to Partnership Board Members ..... 98**  
**APPENDIX E Letter of Validation ..... 99**

# 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 West (SSCW) 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, SSCW.

# 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 SSCW, 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 SSCW;
- Examine whether the key success factors and challenges raised by the overall survey were common to SSCW.

### 3.3 Methodology

#### 3.3.1 Participants

At the time of the survey, 4 Partnership Board members and 24 staff responded from SSCW. (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	3	10
Partnership Board	1	1	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>

Views concerning the impact of LA structures and boundaries were rather mixed in SSCW with some uncertainty as to whether they facilitated, hindered or had no influence on multi-agency working. This finding was in line with the main study.

#### 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	11	2	7
Partnership Board	4	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>

The majority of SSCW felt that staffing arrangements and time investment of local programmes facilitated multi-agency working, as in the main study.

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

	<b>Facilitates</b>	<b>Doesn't influence</b>	<b>Hinders</b>
Team members	16	1	2
Partnership Board	3	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>

The vast majority of SSCW thought that individuals' and programme team's expectations and priorities facilitated multi-agency working. Again, this was in line with the results from the main study.

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

	<b>Facilitates</b>	<b>Doesn't influence</b>	<b>Hinders</b>
Team members	19	1	0
Partnership Board	4	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>

The vast majority of SSCW agreed that aims and objectives of local programmes facilitated multi-agency working.

#### 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	10	3	8
Partnership Board	3	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>

Views of SSCW were very mixed concerning the impact of confidentiality and information sharing strategies between agencies involved. Around one half felt they facilitated and one third thought they hindered multi-agency working. The rest were not sure such strategies had an influence.

#### 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	16	1	2
Partnership Board	2	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>

The vast majority of SSCW agreed that there was a need for development of a common language across professional groups working in local sure Start programmes.

**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**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	10	1	12
Partnership Board	3	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12</b>

Views in SSCW concerning conflicts within and between agencies in relation to budgets and financial arrangements were very mixed, with nearly a half reporting a concern about conflicts and just a few less saying that they did not know. Two participants did not express a concern about such conflicts.

**b) Concern about general lack of programme funding**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	11	2	9
Partnership Board	1	2	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>

Views concerning general lack of programme funding were mixed. Just less than one half expressed a concern about general lack of programme funding, more than one third reported that they did not know and four participants did not experience concern about funding.

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

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	13	2	6
Partnership Board	4	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>

Two thirds of SSCW expressed concern about sustainability of the services and, thus, uncertainty about funding. A quarter said that they did not know. Two were not concerned.

**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	11	1	10
Partnership Board	2	0	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>12</b>

Half of SSCW felt that budgets and financial arrangements in local programmes created more effective use of resources (human and material) by reducing repetition and overlap. The same proportion of participants either reported that they did not know or did not think effective use was being made of resources.

**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	12	4	5
Partnership Board	3	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>

Nearly two thirds of SSCW thought that there were issues around understanding the roles and responsibilities of others. The rest of participants were equally divided between those stating that they did not know and those saying there were no issues.

**b) Conflicts over areas of responsibility**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	7	8	7
Partnership Board	2	2	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>

Views concerning conflicts over areas of responsibilities in SSCW were mixed.

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

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	16	1	5
Partnership Board	3	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>

The majority of SSCW participants agreed that there was a need to go beyond existing roles to work 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	3	6	12
Partnership Board	2	2	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>

Views of SSCW concerning whether or not aims of specific agencies competed with local programmes because of differences in target groups were mixed. Nearly one half reported that they did not know, a third did not think this was the case whilst one fifth thought it was so.

**b) Different Government targets**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	4	3	13
Partnership Board	0	2	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>15</b>

Nearly two third reported that they did not know whether or not different Government targets caused the aims the specific agencies to complete with local Sure Start programme aims. The rest were evenly divided between agreeing and disagreeing.

**c) A focus on preventative work versus crisis intervention**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	4	1	15
Partnership Board	0	3	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>16</b>

Two thirds of SSCW reported that they did not know whether a focus on preventative work versus crisis work in specific agencies competed with local Sure Start aims. The rest were evenly divided between agreeing and disagreeing.

**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	13	4	6
Partnership Board	1	2	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>

Half of SSCW participants felt that allocation of time created a challenge to local programme working. Nearly one third did not know and one fifth did not feel time allocation created a challenge.

**b) The provision of staff**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	12	2	7
Partnership Board	3	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>

Nearly two thirds of SSCW felt that provision of staff did create a challenge. The rest reported that provision of staff did not create a challenge or that they did not know.

**c) Physical space in which to work together effectively**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	15	1	6
Partnership Board	3	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>

Two thirds of SSCW felt that physical space in which to work together effectively created a challenge. The rest either replied that it did not or that they did not know.

**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	13	4	5
Partnership Board	4	1	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>

Views of SSCW were rather mixed concerning poor communication being created between those working at different levels within agencies. More than one half thought that poor communication within and between agencies created problems between those working at different levels within agencies. The rest either did not or stated that they did not know.

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

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	8	4	10
Partnership Board	1	1	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>12</b>

Views of SSCW were rather mixed concerning whether or not poor communication was created by different availability of professionals from different agencies. Nearly one half stated that they did not know, one third thought that poor communication did ensue and nearly one fifth did not think so.

**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	11	3	9
Partnership Board	0	3	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>

Again, views of Coventry Sure Start West were mixed concerning whether not poor communication between different local government departments undermined successful multi-agency work.

**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	5	10	6
Partnership Board	1	3	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>6</b>

One half of SSCW participants did not feel that multi-agency working disrupted existing agency cultures, the rest were evenly divided between those thinking that multi-agency was disrupted and those not knowing.

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

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	10	5	6
Partnership Board	2	2	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>

One half of SSCW participants did think that specific policy and practice differences hindered shared practice. The rest either did not think practice was hindered or did not know.

**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	12	1	8
Partnership Board	3	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>

More than half of SSCW participants thought that different data management systems impacted on information sharing and, hence, shared practice. Most of the rest stated that they did not know.

**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	12	2	8
Partnership Board	4	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>

Nearly two thirds of SSCW thought that multi-agency working was strongly supported and promoted at management level in order to remain credible at delivery level. Nearly one third reported that they did not know.

**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	6	3	12
Partnership Board	1	2	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>13</b>

Half of SSCW said that they did not know if management strategy drive was organised to carry along participants from each agency. The rest were divided between those thinking that management strategy was organised carefully to do this and those thinking that it was not.

**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	9	4	7
Partnership Board	3	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>

Half of SSCW thought management strategy encouraged like-minded individuals to seek new ways of working in order to meet shared goals, one third stated that they did not know and the rest said that the management strategy did not encourage such work in order to meet shared goals.

## 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	13	4	5
Partnership Board	2	0	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>

More than one half of Coventry Sure Start West agreed there was a need for additional multi-agency training to meet the extended role of agencies. More than one quarter stated that they did not know. The rest disagreed.

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

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	16	2	5
Partnership Board	3	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>

In line with the main survey, the majority of SSCSE felt that training would enhance the knowledge and understanding 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	11	2	9
Partnership Board	2	0	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>11</b>

Like the main survey respondents, SSCW were mixed in their view concerning the need for professional development to occur at the parent agency of each professional within the Sure Start team. Half thought that it was important and almost half did not know; 2 participants thought that it was not important.

**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	14	0	8
Partnership Board	4	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>

Two thirds of SSCW agreed that commitment 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. A third did not know.

**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	15	2	5
Partnership Board	4	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>

The majority of SSCW felt that a commitment of Sure Start members to be involved in multi-agency work was sustained by an active desire to engage with other agencies at the delivery level.

**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	14	1	7
Partnership Board	4	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>

The majority of SSCW thought that an active to desire to engage with other agencies by a 'bottom up' as well as 'top down' management approach sustained multi-agency work.

### 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	22	0	1
Partnership Board	4	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>

The vast majority of SSCW felt the need for a clear understanding of what was expected so that different agendas were not pursued.

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	22	0	1
Partnership Board	4	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>

The vast majority of SSCW agreed that there was a need to understand the constraints on other agencies so that expectations were realistic.

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	21	0	2
Partnership Board	4	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>

The overwhelming majority of SSCW participants expressed a need for mutual respect for the professional roles of different agencies and their contribution.

**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**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	15	0	6
Partnership Board	3	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>

The majority of SSCW recognised the need for common ground and like minded people in order to achieve common Sure Start aims and objectives. Rather less than one third reported that they did not know.

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

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	17	1	3
Partnership Board	3	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>

The vast majority of SSCW recognised the need for a real purpose to joint working.

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

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	14	1	7
Partnership Board	2	0	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>

Rather less than two thirds of SSCW agreed that a needs-led approach which replaced agency-specific agendas was supported by common Sure Start aims and objectives. Most of the rest of participants reported that they did not know.

**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**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	15	1	7
Partnership Board	4	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>

The majority of SSCW thought that opportunities for keeping open communication between agencies supported information sharing.

**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	15	2	5
Partnership Board	4	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>

The majority of SSCW felt that personal relationship building supported information shared. Most of the rest reported that they did not know.

**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	17	2	4
Partnership Board	4	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>

The majority of SSCW agreed that procedures and systems of communications being in place supported communication and information sharing.

**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	9	5	6
Partnership Board	4	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>

One half of SSCW felt that the leadership of individual Programme Manager showed clear strategic direction. The rest were divided between not thinking so or stating that they did not know.

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

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Team members	9	2	10
Partnership Board	4	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>

One half of SSCW thought that leadership of the individual Programme Manager showed tenacity to overcome obstacles to progress. Most of the rest reported that they did not know.

**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	11	6	5
Partnership Board	4	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>

Just over one half of SSCW thought that the Programme Manager could bring together the Sure Start team in order to bring about change and overcome obstacles. The rest were evenly divided between those not thinking that the individual Manager could bring together the Sure Start team and those who did not know.

**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	8	3	11
Partnership Board	2	0	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>13</b>

Half of SSCW did not know the right personnel from specific agencies had been involved on local Sure Start programmes. A third thought that they had and the rest did not.

**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	5	2	15
Partnership Board	2	0	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>17</b>

Two thirds of SSCW did not know whether personnel at the right level of responsibility had been involved on individual Sure Start programmes. A quarter did think so and the rest did not.

**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	4	6	11
Partnership Board	1	1	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13</b>

The majority of SSCW either did not know or did not think that priority had been given to the work of Sure Start by individual agencies. The rest agreed that priority had been given to such work.

### **3.5 Discussion**

The majority of SSCW were in agreement that programme teams' expectations and priorities facilitated multi-agency work. They also recognised a need for common language across professional groups, an active desire to engage with other agencies and to work in new ways. The need to understand the roles and responsibilities of other at the management level and at the delivery level, by 'bottom up' as well as 'top down' approaches was acknowledged. Common Sure Start aims and objectives, it was thought, had been achieved through a recognition of the need for common ground and like-minded people as well as the need for a real purpose to joint working. Moreover, communication and information sharing was supported by opportunities for dialogue between agencies, personal relationship building and having procedures and systems of communication in place.

On the other hand, views concerning the role of Local Authority structures and boundaries, confidentiality and information sharing strategies, budget and financial arrangements, general programme funding and effective use of resources were quite mixed. Non-financial resources such as allocation of time and lack of physical space, it was thought, created a challenge and issues around roles and responsibilities of other individuals within Sure Start were identified. Views were also mixed concerning whether differences in target groups and different Government targets competed with Sure Start programmes aims and objectives. Views were mixed concerning the impact of poor communication within and between agencies, at different levels within agencies, with different availability of professionals from different agencies and different local government departments. Finally, views concerning the drive of individual Sure Start Programme Managers were also mixed.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

Overall, the findings for SSCW were similar to those obtained for the main survey. In some areas, they were more mixed and less positive, such as, in the area of staffing arrangements and time investment of Sure Start local programmes, in terms of understanding the roles of others, availability of different professionals and allocation of time and, significantly, in the strategy of management in the Sure Start local programme to bring together the Sure Start team in order to generate change and overcome

obstacles. The opportunity to consider such responses in more depth through interview will be presented in Chapters 4 and 6.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Interviews with representatives of the lead 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 SSCW.

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 unwilling 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 SSCW Partnership Board members.

# Chapter 5

## Partnership Board Interviews

### 5.1 Introduction

Interviews were conducted with sample members of the SSCW 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, the CC 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

All four representatives felt that the role of the CC, as they had taken it on, was wider than just being the Lead Agency. One person explained how SS was "built into a wider, strategic plan". Another explained that their role involved:

trying to make significant differences in how the families of this particular age group can give the best possible start to young people and children.

Along with the PCT, the CC's involvement ensured that relevant professionals became involved at operational level.

The PCT were identified as managing the financial side of SS. One person noted that because the PCT were involved it made the venture a partnership. This was thought to be positive.

We need to share our concerns and ideas together so that we are all working in partnership.

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

On a positive note, one person noted that having both organisations involved in the programme increased the variety of staff that were working within the project. Another

spoke of how they were both essential to the project; "it's all about partnership". Another identified how the two organisations brought expertise to the project. they were used to running endeavours and were able to provide people for the Partnership Board. It also meant that these contacts could lead to further contact s and useful information.

It was viewed by most respondents that the two organisations did not work closely enough and that this impacted on the programme. One person identified how there needed to be a shared responsibility and that the PCT needed to take on more responsibility of the financial aspects of the project and they didn't. Another person expressed the view that the PCT had not sorted out various aspects initially so SS were having to "play catch up" at the moment.

One person explained how, at times, there were delays when attempting to implement a service or buy a resource and the leading agencies were not always proactive in dealing with the problem. Another concurred with this view, explaining that "there (was) much frustration". It was perceived that people were thinking from the standpoint of their own organisations, rather than thinking about what was best for the SS local programme.

My problem is the bureaucracy because they are quite bureaucratic agency so they have their own rules of working and brining those two together umm you know its just one whole load of red tape really.

Finally, there was the opinion held by one member that, for all of the programmes in Coventry, "the Programme Managers don't have much authority".

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

Board members did not consider there to be any specific affect on their own role within the organisation. One person did comment that when setting up the project it was a large responsibility and quite time-consuming. This was no longer thought to be the case. Another member explained that his/her 'home organisation' and SS did joint works together and shared information where appropriate.

### **5.4.2 Roles and responsibilities**

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

Overwhelmingly, members thought that SS complemented the goals of the parent agencies. If there was ever a conflict, however, there was a hope, by one member, that the SS goals would be the ones that were followed.

One member expressed the view that SS was an extra dimension of the main service. This person continued:

We are now able to offer ... supplementary stuff and also Sure Start are part of the package that we offer.

One respondent explained that they were "all signed up to the same objectives" and that there was a need to understand that no one was in competition with anybody else. Another participant explained that SS did not contradict but "assist[ed] in delivery. It assists in making a difference". In this person's opinion, the whole point of all the organisations was:

to try and address that gap so we can actually start to deliver a more equitable process in delivering educational services and get more in tune with what parenting is all about

One Partnership Board member expressed his/her delight in SS. Speaking as an agency representative the following statement was made:

All I can say is that when we ask for support from Sure Start we get it.

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

Due to the view that many agencies were trying to achieve the same outcomes with different client groups in the communities they served, one person expressed the view that all of these agencies should be able to work together in order to support the families in the area.

I think Sure Start is one agency among many that can meet together to decide how we are going to support the family.

An example was given whereby SS could work with an agency that worked with older children, in order to meet the needs of the whole family.

Another member talked of the benefits of sharing similar goals. It enabled organisations to work together in order to provide a better service for children and families.

Partnerships can make such a difference than trying to do it on an individual basis. Partnership is so important and once we have got used to working with each ... we can deliver a better service

This person continued. There needed to be a "better understanding between the agencies so [that they] are all 'singing off the same hymn sheet'".

### 5.4.2.3 Individuals priorities

All Partnership Board members had personal reasons for becoming involved with SS, be it their own interests or those of the agencies they were representing).

One board member felt that his/her job was to ensure that services were meeting the needs of parents and children. This person expressed the view that they were still learning and this meant that they would become more and more effective in meeting the needs of the community.

We are trying to improve our priorities all the time and recently we talked about what our priorities should be: whether we are contacting all the people that need to be engaged with Sure Start, how we encourage more engagement, are we doing the right things, are we going in the right directions. But it's a learning curve and the more experience we gain, the more opportunities there are to address the problems that exist.

The parent representative explained that his/her priority was to make sure that the project was something that was going to last, in order to benefit his/her children.

Another member explained that having the strategic overview, by being part of SS Partnership Board, the main concern was to attempt to reach families and support them before they were referred to statutory agencies and had no choice but to be supported in a statutory manner.

## **5.4.3 Staffing and space**

### 5.4.3.1 Staffing

The largest issue related to staffing was the fact that staff were operating under different guidelines, dependent upon their parent agency. As staff were employed by different organisations their terms and conditions were different. Even though they were all working for Sure Start, they were treated differently which was thought to affect staff morale. One member expressed the opinion that "neither side (that is the CC and PCT) [were] willing to change so ...things run smoother". This person continued:

They just need to let go a bit more and come up with a whole new way of working down in writing so that everybody is on the same contract and everybody is on the same rules and its all equal. ... It's got to be done in order for it to be a smooth flow.

The way for this situation to be eased, allowing staff members to know where they stood, was to create a new agreement for staff employed, through any organisation, to work within SS so that they were all working to the same terms and conditions.

Again, the bureaucracy of at least one of the leading agencies left some staff unclear and uncertain about their posts continuing.

The contracts weren't on time and some people weren't told whether or not their contract was going to be renewed.

This situation meant that team members looked for other forms of employment which was a great loss for SS.

One respondent proffered that there appeared to be more job security for some members, they were recruited on longer contracts. This led to a consistency in team membership, which was positive for the programme.

#### 5.4.3.2 Space

It was acknowledged by all participants that the programme was blighted by problems with accommodation from the very start. The situation had since improved and was thought, by one, to be easing as more buildings were opening.

The new site for the programme, as part of a new school, had been held up because of reasons beyond the control of SS. This meant that aspects viewed as simple became more complicated. Employing staff, for example, and making sure that they start at the correct time so that they were most effective became harder.

The new building ... seems to be taking for ever. ... So that's been a frustration really. Even down to simple things like getting qualified staff in place at the appropriate times so that we can start making head way.

Temporary accommodation had to be sought on two occasions and, indeed, one site was still temporary. This was a worry to the board as they did not want to waste money but, as it turned out, the site was less temporary than was first thought so it was a good decision. Frustration at waiting for things to happen, outside of their control, regarding accommodation, was expressed by one member.

Regarding one of these temporary accommodations, one member explained that the conditions under which the staff had to work were extremely cramped.

They were actually based in [a] school, they had no permanent building. ... They had a very tiny, it was almost like a cupboard, and they were employing more and more staff but had less space. You had to book an appointment of when to use an office almost and obviously that created a lot of tension between people.

Staff found the situation very difficult and there was a serious lack of storage space as well. This person explained that, regarding the staff, "most of them were very professional" and they put up with the situation.

After the initial upset of moving into a building and then having to evacuate, one respondent explained how the programme was fortunate as they were able to convert a building for their own purpose. The new building, attached to a new school, would also hopefully be purpose-built for SS. In spite of this, one person intimated that there was a serious lack of office space now that the programme was in the building. One person, however, expressed the opinion that "you get that anyway though, there is always a difficulty with staff space". This wasn't a situation unique to this programme.

At the time of interview there was satisfaction, expressed by one person, that the programme was already operating in two of the three communities they covered and had just secured a facility in the third area.

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

##### 5.4.2.1 Data procedures

On the whole, the Partnership Board representatives were unsure of the data procedures in place in the programme but assumed that the staff worked within the data protection guidelines. Another member highlighted the complexity of the situation because of the variety of staff working within the programme, originating from different parent agencies.

One member explained how board members received a summary of data for each Partnership Board meeting.

##### 5.4.4.2 Information sharing

In relation to information from the programme, one respondent explained that any information required was readily available.

In terms of making information sharing a reality, one person highlighted the need for there to be mutual respect from all agencies and representatives. Another person intimated that the situation of sharing between agencies had improved over the life of the programme. Yet another participant explained that steps had been made in order to improve the situation and it is an area that still needed attention.

One member explained that it was imagined that there would be a confidentiality agreement but was surprised that it had not been set out in a Partnership Board meeting. This was particularly pertinent for the parents on the board who were not used to working in a professional environment that would rely on confidentiality.

One person stated that sharing information with parents was an area that "could be better".

#### **5.4.5 Communication**

Communication issues were talked about at different levels. Firstly, communication between the Partnership Board and the senior sponsor group, consisting of representatives of the two leading agencies, it was felt by one board member that there was no way for the board to give or receive information from this group.

They have a strategic partnership that looks at Sure Start but [we] have no way of feeding up to that at all and they don't feed down to [us] either.

Related to communication amongst the Partnership board it was felt by one participant that parents found it hard to express themselves clearly and fully during Partnership Board meetings. Also, generally, one member explained their view that SS did not appear to be a priority to most board members. Indeed, the recent 'Away Day', at the time of interview, was very poorly attended, in spite of there being a lot of notice given to the members. Whilst there was no way for this member to know individual circumstances surrounding why certain members did not attend, there was an element of frustration.

The Partnership Board is not bad, we have been [on an] Away Day about three or four weeks ago and there was only ... the chair, [a representative from the Lead Agency] and a parent. ... the Away Day went very well and the parent got a lot out of it but I was very disappointed as I gave up a day for that. ... They certainly didn't see it as important enough to make sure that they were there, everybody had a lot of warning for it so it

wasn't as if they had another appointment and, you know, they gave priority to the other thing.

Regarding communication between the Partnership Board and staff, it was felt by one person that it was easy to contact the staff team. The Programme Manager was thought to have responsibility for the day-to-day running of the programme and there was a reasonable relationship between the Partnership Board and the Programme Manager so issues could be discussed if needed.

One respondent expressed confusion as to the role that the Programme Manager had. This member felt that the Programme Managers decisions were influenced by the Lead Agency yet was under the impression that he was employed to work directly with the Partnership Board in a more independent manner.

... I mean, ... the programme manager, I thought he was independent but he is actually employed by the council. I think that sometimes affects the decisions that are made because ultimately he has to answer to somebody else. I thought he was employed specifically for working with the board members.

In terms of team communication, one member was unsure of any challenges facing them on a day-to-day basis. Another person explained that, generally, relationships between staff were good, allowing for the expected tensions because of personalities but another person explained how staff at an operational level felt they were not always able to communicate with those at a strategic level.

One person explained that Sure Start staff were able to share with the wider providers in the City. There was a City-wide network that met approximately monthly that provided an opportunity "for Sure Start to be heard and to understand what's going on".

Links between staff and parents using services were thought to be strong by one member. In getting Sure Start known within the community, progress was being made. One member explained how word-of-mouth was the most effective way to communicate so that parents understood what Sure Start was about but it was a slow process. There was the possibility of an advertising campaign, as explained by one member, whereby information would be taken into libraries, schools and other areas where parents were likely to be, in order to promote the services offered by Sure Start.

Infrastructure, in general, was viewed as poor within the programme. This hindered methods of communication. There was only one computer that had internet and email facilities. This was the Programme Manager's and was not always accessible to others.

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

Various strategies, it was explained by one member, were used to reach families. Informal trips that were open to all of the community, along with a community parents' initiative that works with parents that are new to the area..

Along with real success stories of reaching people and supporting them, there was a sense that there were families that were unknown and, therefore, unreachable, in the opinion of one person.

There is still a lot of people out there who don't know anything about it and I honestly don't know how to get to those people.

This person continued; there were probably families that they did not hear about, who don't want anybody else to be part of their family. In conclusion this person explained the only strategy, or opportunity, open to people in order to reach these people:

I have no idea how to reach 'unreachables', maybe we never will. The only thing is that it starts right at the beginning, with the midwife. I think that's how it has to be, that those are the links to make right at the beginning.

Participants recognised the challenge that 'hard to reach' groups posed but there was agreement that building secure relationships with more receptive groups provided a sound foundation upon which to extend into the community.

## **5.5 Discussion**

Participants were aware of the essential role and shared responsibility of the CC and PCT but felt that the two leading agencies did not work closely enough together. They also recognised that new ways of working took time to establish and demanded reciprocity on both sides.

I think it's the way forward, it's the way it's got to be ... Everything happened really quickly and did not fulfil what we wanted to do.

The project has given opportunities to local people and this is very important for the PCT as a major employer. We have supported some to get trained and get qualifications ... This is working quite well.

It was felt that, overwhelmingly, Sure Start complemented the parent agencies involved though co-ordination was needed in order for the community to benefit. Participants were unified in their view that the main purpose was to support children and families in the community.

Partnerships can make such a difference ... Partnership is so important and once we have got used to working with each other and learning each other's strengths and weaknesses ... we can deliver a better service.

I am a big advocate of multi-agency working. Over the years, it's a proven track record in Coventry. Partnership makes all the difference. We are not reinventing wheels, we are pulling together making that difference and scoring where it counts ... that's where we need to be spending our time and money ...

Basic differences between staff salaries and conditions of service created tensions that could affect morale and impact on the development of the programme. It was acknowledged, however, that basic conditions of work, whether these arose from employment by the CC or PCT were not open to change or renegotiation. More seriously, it was felt that CC and/or PCT bureaucracy appeared to slow down response to the need, for instance, to renew contracts so job insecurity as well as lack of contract renewal led to staff losses.

Similarly, accommodation, problems and frustrations at building delays created the need to use temporary accommodation that led to serious lack of storage space. At the same time, satisfaction was expressed that such problems had been resolved in two of the three areas of work.

In terms of communication, it was generally agreed that information sharing strategies between the senior sponsor group and the Partnership Board as well as between the Partnership Board and Sure Start staff were poor. It was recognised, however, that the complexity originated in the co-ordination of many different agencies and, anyway, information sharing was improving. The role of the Programme Manager in liaising with the leading agencies and the Partnership Board was stressed. Staff relationships were generally regarded as good and team communication effective though it was felt that communication at the strategic level was not so easy. Moreover, it was noted that Partnership Board members did not know about data procedures and information sharing matters.

With respect to reaching out to the communities, the multi-agency approach seemed the way to engage those families regarded as 'hard to reach' with the midwife being followed by the health visitor and succeeded by the early years team and specialist services such as speech therapy being involved, where necessary.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

There is a sense in which the Sure Start local programme has provided a service to the local community and major employment opportunities as well as training opportunities to the lead agencies. There is a general agreement that multi-agency working is the way forward that must be 'right at the chalk face really right where the communities live'. At the same time the changes have happened really quickly and, inevitably, learning from each other's difficulties as well as their gains will lead to the delivery of a better service.

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

Five team members of differing levels of seniority and positions were selected to be interviewed. These were a mixture of part- and full-time employees within the project.

#### 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

Four of the five respondents identified the CC as being the Lead Agency, responsible for “the overall management” of the programme. One person explained that the CC had control over his/her salary. Another person identified that the CC had joint responsibility of the project with the PCT. The PCT’s role was seen as being in charge of the finances for the project.

The CC was said, by one person, to provide support, mainly in the form of a “link person”. This person conjectured that the CC was keener to get involved with the project than the PCT were.

One team member noted that beyond the Finance Manager, who was a temporary appointment from an agency, the PCT provided “very limited support” for the project. Unlike the CC, this person explained, “there doesn’t seem to be anybody who does an overall role there”.

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

Regarding the two leading agencies, one member thought that at an operational level there was little influence, as experienced by staff but at strategic level the influence was probably more.

I presume they have influence at board level. ... But ... I'm not aware of a day to day influence.

All respondents noted that having two agencies involved in the project created a lot of bureaucracy for it. This led to delays for the programme.

It just seems to be sometimes there's a battle between Sure Start, CCC and the PCT, and sometimes things just don't get moved which is frustrating.

This opinion was common. One person went on to question whether two leading agencies could work together.

I don't always think the PCT and the CCC can work together.

A couple of the interviewees explained that there were policies and regulations to follow from each of the leading agencies and it became an issue where they did not agree, leaving staff unsure about which ones to follow.

One member noted that certain issues were not resolved at a strategic level and this meant that staff at an operational level were left to try and resolve issues which proved hard as the team members did not have any authority to do so; "because obviously people don't listen to the likes of [them] on the ground".

Staff on the ground work extremely well together but find it extremely frustrating that things can't be resolved.

All respondents identified that there had been many attempts at resolving certain issues but still they were facing problems. In some cases this was in spite of agreements being met.

One participant expressed the view that the leading agencies, in some instances, took on more responsibility for the programme than was considered necessary. The CC was felt to take final decisions in areas that should be the responsibility of the Partnership Board, acting on behalf of the community.

When I joined the programme I had the impression ... that CCC and PCT ... were going to help and support ... the local programme and the Partnership Board to take the lead and be in the driving seat. ... I wanted CCC and the PCT not to be seen as watching over your shoulder. ... It seems to me this is their baby, but I believe it should be the Partnership Board's baby, and the community's baby.

The PCT was felt by this person to control how the funding for the programme was spent, acting beyond their remit merely holding funds for the programme.

The government office is saying is that the PCT should behave like a back up, but in reality they don't behave like a back up, they behave like it's their money and they can do anything. We have to satisfy ... them [rather than the community or Partnership Board].

Four of the five team members interviewed believed that accessing the funding was very slow and resulted in initiatives and stock replenishment taking longer than thought reasonable. An example given by a couple of the respondents was the sensory room for the Jardine Crescent site. Equipment was ordered and it took over six months for the money to be released. One reason given for this was that the PCT's systems were "so antiquated".

The actions of the PCT were summed up by one person as having a negative impact on the programme.

Nine out of ten times they will use their leverage to decelerate rather than accelerate what we are doing.

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

In relation to the effect that the two leading agencies had on team members' own roles, one person noted that one of the agencies was his/her professional lead. This meant that contact was kept and profession-specific matters were discussed with a representative of the agency.

Two people said that they felt they had a lack of control over their own role. The larger influence was said to be the PCT, where financial matters were out of their charge, even though they felt they ought to have some input at least. Having to spend time in negotiations over finances led one person to state that it was a waste of his/her time, when having to justify him/herself over and over again. This appeared all the more frustrating for both employees when they were accountable for the funds at some level.

Finally, one person explained that some staff, namely PCT employees, were working on fixed-term contracts. This led to uncertainty on the part of those employees; there was no job security for them.

## **6.4.2 Roles and responsibilities**

### 6.4.2.1 Complement or contradict goals of parent agency and other agencies

When asked whether Sure Start complemented or contradicted the goals of other agencies, including their own parent agency, staff overwhelmingly stated that the two were complementary. The reason for this was that it was considered that what SS tried to do was in addition to what other agencies did.

One person explained that initial concerns from staff in the main agency they were related to faded as they realised that SS were not going to take over from them. This meant that they had to work slowly and educate other professionals about what SS aimed to do.

Because we've just taken things gently they now acknowledge that my role is quite different and I can do things that they haven't got time for.

The focus of SS was on preventative work, expressed by most interviewees. One member felt that although in the main agencies have goals regarding preventative work, they never really get the opportunities to do so because "you have to deal with the acute stuff and the preventative stuff is the stuff people just don't have time for". SS was able, therefore, to fill that gap and hopefully stop some families needing intervention-type support. One person did explain that, at times, SS did get involved in intervention-type work, where needed.

Relating to parent agencies and a sense of identity, one person explained that they did not view themselves as still belonging to their parent agency, but they worked within SS and, therefore, this was the agency they now worked for.

Well I don't see the PCT as my parent agency, I see Sure Start as my parent agency. I just see the PCT as the channel through which money goes.

### 6.4.2.2 Individuals priorities

All staff members were aware of their own responsibilities which were connected to their job specifications. Several members noted that the roles were they fulfilled within SS were more varied than equivalent roles within the parent agencies.

One staff member noted that, although happy to take on a more varied role, at times the responsibilities left to this person were beyond what they were trained for. This person

expressed the view that their appeared to be a lack of support, sometimes, when it was felt to be needed in order to complete certain tasks.

When you actually do need some support in some major decision making there doesn't seem to be people around.

### **6.4.3 Staffing and space**

#### **6.4.3.1 Staffing**

In term of recruitment it was felt that there were no real issues. Indeed, one member expressed the view that in spite of some staff leaving, they had “a very good team”. There was believed to be the need for a new post, related to communicating with parents and the community.

One team member highlighted the long-standing problem of some roles being undervalued and underpaid and, although in SS they were able to attract the best possible staff to these positions by offering higher salaries than normal and also opportunities for promotion, this issue remained inherent with certain other professions. One member felt that staff morale was sometimes low because people were not acknowledged for the diverse roles that they carried out within the project.

One person expressed the view that was a certain amount of staff turn-over which, not necessarily a bad thing, was expected in such a project. Staff that were attracted to such a project were those willing to try new things and once they had reached the end of their ability/desire to do so, or once they felt that the programme had no more to offer in terms of new experiences, they would look to leave. Compounding this issue was the fact that the project was only temporarily funded. Therefore, contracts were not guaranteed in the long term and so people would need to look for other employment.

In any project that's new, people come full of enthusiasm. Often the sort of people who come, they want to be doing things new all the time and there's a point at which you can't, or you get tired of always doing new things. So there's an issue of retention which I don't [think] is a bad thing, that everybody changes because new people bring new ideas, but you don't want to feel that everybody's going. [Also], the fact that it's short term funding and people have had problems guaranteeing their contracts ... has made people feel insecure and some of those issues aren't resolved yet. So if people think their contract is not going to be renewed they obviously start thinking about moving on to other jobs.

As noted previously, working to different rules and regulations, despite all working for SS (e.g. different holidays; different hours; different pay; different health and safety

guidelines), caused friction within the team at times. The solution was felt, by one person, to be that one organisation take responsibility for each of the relevant areas. The problem being that “they can’t reach a common agreement” but they need to in order to improve the situation.

Overall, one member expressed the view that staff, having coped with a lot of setbacks, were very good.

[Staff are] brilliant because they have coped with lots of unknowns and very challenging things. ...They have been through an extremely difficult time.

#### 6.4.3.2 Space

One of the largest problems faced by the programme was gaining accommodation. Although a building was gained by the project early on there became major health and safety problems with it and it could not be used for a long time. This left the growing staff team working in extremely cramped conditions; it was a real setback.

We had quite a few staff there and we decided to, one part of the building we would start decorating, so that at least the parents and children could come and use them and we found out that we’d been exposed to asbestos and so we had clear the building immediately, and everything that was in it.

One person noted that the team was currently split over two sites which took some time to get used to, after originally being all based together. The importance of all working together and, hence, not allowing multiple team locations hinder that was expressed.

It’s very important to all work together because we are quite individual, and I think if we don’t all work together, you get fragmentation and people not knowing what each other is doing.

Two respondents explained that the project had just managed to secure a third site. This meant that there would be a SS base in each of the communities within the SS programme. Further to the issue above, this meant that there was even more potential for misunderstandings and misinformation, or even lack of information, to be passed on.

One team member stated that this issue became all the more critical when it was considered that also, some staff were part-time within the programme so it was “quite hard to keep a handle on what everybody [was] up to”. This person expressed the opinion that, as a team, they were “not terribly well coordinated” which made things harder.

Views regarding office space were mixed. One respondent felt that it was acceptable. Two others felt there was a distinct lack of space. This problem was magnified when staff from one site needed to work at the other site for some time. They had no personal space at this time and had to work in a small room.

They are very cramped. ... They have to carry everything that they need with them

Storage was felt to be an issue for one team member. There was thought to be a distinct lack of storage space for all the resources that the team had to work with.

We're forever trying to stack stuff away and store things round our desk and all rest of it. ... It's something that doesn't seem to have been identified at an early stage.

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

##### 6.4.4.1 Data procedures

Staff described various mechanisms for collecting and storing data. It was explained that all members of SS completed a registration form and these details were kept centrally. This was viewed as positive as it meant that all staff members could be informed as to what services had been offered/given to families before they engaged any further with them.

They're common records for all staff to enter any work they do with families.

One member expressed frustration over the lack of direct access to these files because there was central network within the programme. Access was only possible through one computer. Some files were not for common view but relevant staff were allowed access.

One person noted that procedures that were followed by the programme were a mixture of their own, CC and PCT procedures and protocols.

##### 6.4.4.2 Information sharing

Being able to share information across professionals working within the project was viewed very positively by all participants. It allowed fast access to a range of professionals.

Having that immediate contact without having to go on a roundabout of phone calls and being passed from one person to another person.

The largest problem within the programme related to receiving information from the PCT. The four programmes, one person explained, were working with the CC in order to attempt to rectify this situation with the PCT. Frustration was expressed by this person because protocols had been set up and signed but they were not getting the problem resolved. The impact on the programme was a lack of delivery of services.

Despite the effort from various people at a citywide level we're not really there, ... and I think this is another constraint which is holding [back] Sure Start [from] deliver[ing] the services they've identified. ... It is an area where I believe the project was let down and there's no way we could have access to the base line data to monitor our part. ... We are not in a position to have the information to communicate with people living in the Sure Start area ... As a result we became a victim of not being able to deliver the services that we wish to deliver and which we expect to deliver. And that has a tremendous impact and has limited our reach targets.

The other issue that's fairly striking is that the PCT has signed a data sharing agreement but we don't get routinely other information from the PCT. We've not yet been able to access lists of new births in the area, so we've no idea who's having new babies and so on. It's very much word of mouth.

One person identified how people were still uncomfortable with these sorts of issues and highlighted how different agencies appeared to hold different views regarding the subject.

One person thought that once parents' permission had been given then they were able to share the information with any other relevant staff members, regardless of their parent agency.

The issue with the PCT feeling unable to share information with SS was viewed as an area specific one. One member explained that other PCTs felt able to share the relevant information with the SSs in their areas.

I think it's depending on which PCT you're linked to, depends whether you get the information or not.

#### **6.4.5 Communication**

In relation to communication, sharing information amongst staff members, one person stated, enabled a better understanding of how each different professional contributed to the team; where the expertise lay.

Sharing information we've been very aware of what people can do and what they can contribute, respecting each other's abilities and good communication.

Good communication strategies were identified. Talking face-to-face and on the telephone were identified by several members as being effective ways of communicating with others in the team. Two team members described a mechanism known as circulation. Important information was sent around both of the SS sites in an attempt to inform every staff member.

Team briefing sessions occurred once a month, with time made available during other weeks in the month for sub-team meetings. The team brief, it was explained, used to occur on a weekly basis. One team member explained how this arrangement made it harder to attend and now that it was monthly every member made a concerted effort to attend. Another member noted that now it was monthly it meant that the sessions were more focused; less trivial matters were discussed and people were more focused. This meeting gave everyone an opportunity to contribute to the agenda if they so desired.

Meetings were also held at a strategic level. Information from these was said, by one member, to be passed on to the rest of the team by the Programme Manager.

One person explained that, as they were a new organisation, several different mechanisms for team communication had been tried. This process had created some teething problems which were now, on the whole, thought to be sorted out.

There have been some because as a new organisation you do try and test what works and what doesn't work and I believe we tried and tested and now I believe ... we're in an organisation that has managed to sort out our mechanism and our communication style and ways, to fulfil and be as effective as we would but I'm not necessarily saying that we have the world's best communications strategy and mechanisms in place.

Problems of lack of communication were thought to have increased as the team has grown in size. The need for someone to coordinate all of the team was identified by several respondents. One member thought that this role was currently not fulfilled by anyone on the team.

We're not terribly well co-ordinated as a team, we tend to pull together but there's nobody with the responsibility of co-ordinating us really.

This person continued. The team had overcome some of the problems related to this perceived lack of coordination.

Over the 2 years we have realised as a team that things need to be done to make us work together. So as time's gone by we've got planning cycles set up and there are other things set up but it rather happened because we realised we weren't doing it properly rather than because somebody did it in the first place.

In spite of this there were still cases where certain members did not feel that they knew all that they should.

As noted above, problems not only increased due to the sheer number of team members but also because they were spread over two sites and some were working part-time within the programme.

Because people work part time and in different places, it's quite hard to keep a handle on what everybody's up to.

Indeed, some part time members only work during the school term time dates. One member explained how this could become a disadvantage within a multi-agency team because, potentially, you could have to wait the whole of the summer in order to speak to a certain agency representative.

One respondent explained that the particular sub-team that he/she worked within all worked on the same days, as far as possible. This enhanced communication at that level.

Information Technology facilities were deemed inadequate by every team member. It was identified, at the time of interview, that despite making a large investment in the infrastructure to provide a network of computers for all staff, two years into the programme's operations there was still only one computer with internet and email facilities. This problem was said to be in the process of being rectified.

The network service is within the building but it's just never been linked to anything

When asked why this had taken so long, several members laid referred once more to "bureaucracy".

In terms of communication with the community several mechanisms were described. Newsletters, flyers and information on notice boards were all used to inform the community. One member noted that further methods were on their way.

We're sorting out regularly to mail out to our Sure Start members.

There was also the hope, an identified need, for the creation of a Community Development Worker's post. This would provide clear communication channels between the SS team and the community they worked in. The lack of this post from the beginning of the programme was thought to be an oversight by one respondent.

Most Sure Starts had a post for communication, a dedicated person to look at the communication side, we didn't have any.

One team member noted that it was sometimes difficult for families to know who to speak to within the multi-agency team as they were never sure what each team members' role was. This created a challenge to the staff who, it was felt, needed to be able to say that they were unsure but could signpost the family to a relevant member of staff. This also enabled each team member to maintain their identity.

You've got to be prepared to say 'I don't know anything about this but I know somebody who does' and not try and take on everybody else's role.

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

All team members explained that one of the formal process for looking at the area of families considered hard-to-reach was a group, involving all four Sure Starts in Coventry. This group was said to meet regularly. The idea was that the group shared information regarding good practice and strategies for reaching families that were hard to engage with: what they "identified as working or not working".

Although this process was viewed as a start, one team member felt that the area had not yet been adequately addressed. Concurring that they "probably [hadn't] really tackled how [to] get to grips with the people who aren't engaging with [the programme]", One team member explained that there were plans to employ a Community Development Worker which would provide a facility for recruiting parent volunteers who could perhaps engage with the people within their communities.

One member did point out the largest barrier to reaching families in the Sure Start area was the lack of information they had on the families.

The biggest problem we do have is not getting the data from the PCT to see where these families are ... because until we know that we've got no way of reaching them.

One respondent advocated having time to spend with families, building relationships with the, was the best approach to engaging with people.

## **6.5 Discussion**

Rightly or wrongly, participants, in general, did not feel that there had been much interest/commitment from the PCT in the early stages of programme development and a finance team that was contracted in to support the local Coventry Sure Start programmes. There was a sense of an overall lack of coordination and issues relating to the bureaucracy of CC and PCT. That said, the more holistic way of multi-agency working was experienced by team members as to be the way to pull everyone together.

The positive thing about Sure Start is the multi-agency nature of work is very positive and we manage to bring a lot of different professionals under one roof that is a one-stop service area.

Staff working in such a way – that is providing different services yet with the same families – demanded a great need for coordination to keep track of everyone, keep everyone informed and feeling part of the bigger picture and, ultimately it was hoped, leading to a better service delivery. Sharing of data was fundamental to this process and the role of the management strategy in this regard was critical otherwise staff could feel stranded and had to take the onus for keeping themselves together as a team. The co-ordinating role was stressed as fundamental to effective multi-disciplinary team.

Poor IT facilities had been experienced for a long time. The network in place, it was felt, had been expensive to install, yet it had been sitting unused for a long time and, thus, no benefits were reaped for the programme.

One member noted that working outside of the conventional staff remit could prove morale lowering, not because staff were not prepared to work in different ways, more because they could be, as was described, 'dumped on'. Another noted that working in different ways was necessary for multi-agency approach and not doing so could jeopardise the whole process.

There's always a danger with multi-agency working or multidisciplinary working that people won't be prepared to do anything that's not their job. I think you have to be fairly fluid in multi-agency working and be prepared to do things that you wouldn't normally do and sometimes people aren't

prepared to do that. ... There are always bits of work that are nobody's and somebody's got to do them really otherwise nothing happens.

It was felt that there was a fine line between crossing boundaries but not picking up responsibilities that are clearly someone else's. The importance of communication and everyone understanding everyone else's roles and responsibilities becomes pertinent here. The type of workers needed for such work, are those who are comfortable with being initially unsettled and challenged in a positive and productive way.

It's very complex and I don't think organisations realise the complexity at the time they get that partnership working.

In order to work ... effectively, ... not stepping on one another's toes, can we work out which [area] we're going to lead on and if we need supplementary help we'll come, otherwise we don't need to give you the authority and give you the power, and do it that way.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

Staff were undoubtedly committed to this new way of working.

People come into Sure Start with the philosophy that they want to work together in a multi disciplinary team. So they are prepared to work different ways and because of that I don't think that they feel threatened at all.

The challenge they saw, as they moved towards Children's Centre status, was the cost in human, financial and non-financial resource terms:

I'd just like this truth to come out that the people are expecting us to deliver more with less money and that money's significantly less.

# 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 SSCW 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 appeared to have provided insufficient support for Sure Start 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 lead 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 identified by this programme. For example, communication, the number of locations, temporary building accommodation and lack of storage space created a challenge to this programme.

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 initial 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 the mainstreaming of some services already 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 (Appendix F). 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: SSCW 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 investigate 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.

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## 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.

		Official use only
Accountable Body (PCT)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
Lead Organisation (CCC)	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
Area coordination	<input type="checkbox"/>	3
Programme manager	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
NESS Regional Support Officer	<input type="checkbox"/>	5
Sure Start Regional Office	<input type="checkbox"/>	6
SS team member	<input type="checkbox"/>	7
Agency from which SS team member came	<input type="checkbox"/>	8
Steering group member	<input type="checkbox"/>	9
Partnership Board member	<input type="checkbox"/>	10
Sub-group member	<input type="checkbox"/>	11
Parents' forum member	<input type="checkbox"/>	12
Service provider – Voluntary sector	<input type="checkbox"/>	13
Service provider – Statutory sector	<input type="checkbox"/>	14
School/Nursery manager (outside of Sure Start)	<input type="checkbox"/>	15
School/Nursery worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	16
Playgroup/Crèche manager	<input type="checkbox"/>	17
Playgroup/Crèche worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	18

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

1
2
3

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

1
2
3

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

1
2
3

Can you say more about this?

--

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

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

1
2
3

Can you say more about this?

--

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

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

1
2
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	
This would make no difference	
There is no need	

1
2
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	1	2	3
b.	Concern about general lack of programme funding	Yes	No	Don't know	1	2	3
c.	Concern about sustainability of the services and, thus, uncertainty of funding	Yes	No	Don't know	1	2	3
d.	Creating more effective use of resources (human and material) by reducing repetition or overlap	Yes	No	Don't know	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	1	2	3
b.	Conflicts over areas of responsibility	Yes	No	Don't know	1	2	3
c.	The need to move beyond existing roles to work in new ways	Yes	No	Don't know	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
b.	Different Government targets	Yes	No	Don't know
c.	A focus on preventative work versus crisis intervention	Yes	No	Don't know

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

1	2	3
1	2	3
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
b.	Creates different availability of professionals from different agencies	Yes	No	Don't know
c.	Undermines successful multi-agency work through poor communication between different local government departments	Yes	No	Don't know

1	2	3
1	2	3
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
b.	An active desire to engage with other agencies at the delivery level	Yes	No	Don't know
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
1	2	3
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
b.	The need to understand the constraints on other agencies so that expectations are realistic	Yes	No	Don't know
c.	A need for mutual respect for the professional roles of other agencies and their contribution	Yes	No	Don't know

1	2	3
1	2	3
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
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
c.	Priority being given to the work of Sure Start by individual agencies	Yes	No	Don't know

1	2	3
1	2	3
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