

Multi-agency Working in Sure Start

Coventry North (Foleshill)

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 North

At the time of the survey, there were 25 partnership board members and 16 staff in total.

- As in the main survey, views of SSCN participants concerning the influence of local authority structures and boundaries were mixed with slightly more reporting they hindered than facilitated multi-agency working.
- As in the main survey, the majority of SSCN participants thought that resources in the form of staffing arrangements and time investment in Sure Start programmes facilitated multi-agency working.
- As in the main survey, the majority of SSCN participants thought that individuals' and Sure Start programme teams' high expectations and priorities affected multi-agency working.
- As in the main study, aims and objectives of local Sure Start programmes were regarded by the vast majority of SSCN participants as facilitative of multi-agency working.
- As in the main study, views of SSCN participants concerning the effect of confidentiality and information-sharing strategies between the various agencies on multi-agency working were mixed, with one half feeling they hindered or had no influence and one half believing they facilitated multi-agency working.
- All participants in SSCN felt that a common language across professional groups working in Sure Start local programme facilitated multi-agency working, whereas the majority of respondents in the main survey held this view.
- As in the main survey, views of SSCN participants regarding the challenge that budgets and financial arrangements posed to Sure Start multi-agency working were mixed in respect of concern about conflicts within or between agencies providing Sure Start staff and about creating more effective use of resources by reducing repetition and overlap. SSCN participants, however, did not report concern about sustainability and, thus, uncertainty about funding.
- As in the main survey, views of the majority of SSCN participants concerning issues around roles and responsibilities adopted by individuals working within Sure Start were mixed in terms of conflicts over areas of responsibility. The majority of SSCN, however, thought there were issues around understanding the roles of others and the need to go beyond existing roles to work in new ways.
- As in the main study, SSCN participants 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.

- As in the main study, the vast majority of SSCN respondents felt that non-financial resources such as the allocation of time, provision of staff and physical space in which to work together effectively, created a challenge to multi-agency working.
- As in the main study, the majority of SSCN participants felt that poor communication within and between agencies involved with Sure Start created problems between those working at different levels within agencies and undermined successful multi-agency work through poor communication between different local government departments.
- As in the main study, views on the effect of professional and agency culture on Sure Start practice were mixed, particularly in respect of disruption of existing agency cultures, values and ways of working. The majority of SSCN participants, however, felt that specific policy and practice differences and different data management systems influencing information sharing, hindered shared practice.
- In terms of management strategy, the majority felt that multi-agency working was strongly supported and promoted at management level in order to remain credible at delivery level. Views concerning management strategy organised to carry along various participants from each agency and views related to encouraging like-minded individuals who seek new ways of working to meet shared goals and work across existing management structures, however, were rather mixed in SSCN.
- As in the main survey, the majority of SSCN 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. Views were mixed as to whether a 'bottom up' as well as 'top down' management approach to engaging with other agencies was desirable.
- As in the main survey, the majority of SSCN participants 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, however, SSCN participants were more mixed in respect of views concerning commitment 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 goals were not pursued. There was a need to understand the constraints on other agencies so that expectations were realistic and the need for a mutual respect for the professional roles of other agencies and their contributions.
- Unlike the main survey, SSCN participants' views concerning the achievement of common Sure Start aims and objectives through recognition of the need for common ground and like-minded people and a needs-led approach that replaces agency-specific agendas were mixed. The majority of SSCN, however, did recognise the need for a real purpose to joint working.
- As in the main survey, the majority of SSCN participants felt that communications and information-sharing within the Sure Start local programmes had been supported by opportunities for dialogue between agencies, personal relationship building and procedures and systems of communication and information dissemination.

- Unlike the main survey, SSCN participants were mixed in view concerning leadership or drive of individual Sure Start Programme Managers in terms of clear strategic direction, tenacity to overcome obstacles to progress and bring together the Sure Start team in order to bring about change.
- As in the main survey, SSCN respondents' views concerning the involvement of the right personnel from specific agencies on the Sure Start 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, were very mixed.

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 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

The four sample Partnership Board members interviewed, represented the PCT, CC, an independent charity representative and one parent.

- Overall, it was felt that the CC was very active and had a very significant role within Sure Start. The PCT was seen as less visible though recognised to be working in partnership with the CC.
- The impact of the leading agencies was felt in different ways and it was noted that more work was needed in order to make partnership more effective with two agencies inevitably having 'different agendas and coming from different angles'.
- It was considered that the Senior Sponsor Group would allow key representatives from the two agencies to work together.
- In general, it was not felt by participants that the CC and PCT had a direct effect on their own role.
- There was a belief among participants that Sure Start complemented the goals of the leading agencies and the agencies that they represented.
- They were clear that their priorities centred around representing their organisations (or groups) within the Sure Start programme.
- Several staffing issues were raised. Vacant posts and retention issues were highlighted. The impact of differing terms and conditions of different agencies was also mentioned.
- In terms of space, it was noted that a new building was 'finally happening'. Regarding office space, the lack of buildings that were locally available impinged on their work. The new office was more accessible to parents but there was still not enough space for all staff.
- All four participants were clear that the main problem with the sharing of information was that the PCT was not passing information to Sure Start.
- With the recent loss of a Programme Manager, it was noted surprising that challenges regarding 'a clear exit strategy' when a Programme Manager left should be in place.
- With respect to communication, a lack of IT systems was mentioned.

- With various staff members working in different ways, it was thought that termly meetings might help overcome lack of understanding of roles and responsibilities.
- Dual supervisions of staff by Sure Start and the parent agency were thought to be a potential cause of problems at times.
- A number of successful methods of communication was generated by this group, for instance, between regular team meetings there was a system in place to keep all team members informed of developments. .
- In terms of 'hard-to-reach' strategies, it was noted that Foleshill itself was in general a hard-to-reach' area with a high ethnic minority population. The fact that the Sure Start team was multi-racial was felt to be a strong asset, particularly in the area of 'hard-to-reach' activities.

v) Team Member Interviews

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

- There was some recognition of the management role of the CC and the PCT. The participants felt that the CC had more involvement with them as an organisation. Two participants identified the PCT as the Accountable Body.
- The largest effect that the two leading agencies appeared to have on the programme was related to the differing policies they had. This was seen by participants as causing problems for staff working within Sure Start as both sets of procedures had to be learned. The valid but separate agendas of each organisation were thought to impact on the Sure Start programme and hinder its development.
- Team members felt that these organisations had a significant effect. One noted that having two leading agencies, along with a programme-specific governing body meant that there were three separate interests in their roles that might conflict with what parent agencies desired.
- Sure Start was thought both to complement and contrast the goals of the various parent agencies from which staff originated and who currently provided professional leadership. It was emphasised that there was a need to maintain a focus on what the community needed or wanted.
- Working alongside other agencies was met with varied degrees of success according to one participant. In order for the needs of the Sure Start area to be understood, there was a need for all agencies working in that area to investigate these further than was currently the case.
- All participants were aware of their personal priorities. These were reflected in their job descriptions but beyond individual roles there was a consensus regarding how they were working in different but complementary ways to their parent agencies.
- All interviewees indicated that several posts were vacant and key posts were to become vacant imminently, including the Programme Manager's post. Some posts had not been filled for a relatively long time. Inevitably, development of that role ceased and development of the programme did not occur.

- Contracts of existing staff were not renewed and this was not good for the morale of the team.
- Integrating staff from different disciplines was seen as a challenge by one participant yet working in this multi-agency manner was seen as very beneficial by another
- Finding enough space for staff and resources for staff was seen as a 'huge challenge' for the programme by all staff. Staff had relocated several times during the course of the project. This caused upheaval and the current office space was viewed by all as inadequate.
- All staff were aware of the various data-storage procedures, both electronic and paper-based that were established for the project. These procedures were still developing at the time of the interview and all were aware of this.
- Staff members offered different comments concerning information sharing. They were aware that the four Sure Start programmes across the City were attempting to establish uniform procedures for the sharing of information and considered that much needed training opportunities would arise.
- Communication was said by all respondents to be established in a variety of ways. Staff being open to each others' professional ideas was believed to strengthen communication according to one respondent.
- Keeping everyone informed was a challenge and lack of IT facilities hindered communication. Part-time staff were particularly challenged.
- Communicating with parents in the Sure Staff area was seen as particularly challenging due to the ethnic diversity and, hence, the variety of languages spoken within the area.
- Clarification of the role of the CC as Lead Agency in terms of 'line management' for Programme Managers and, thence, between Programme Managers and Programme staff would help communication.
- One of the biggest challenges this programme faced was the high percentage of people for whom English was not their first language. Various activities and approaches were outlined that attempted to reach out to different groups within the community.
- 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 – 'how are these findings to be taken forward?'

Contents

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

3.4	Results	22
3.5	Discussion	36
3.5	Conclusion	38
Chapter 4 Interviews with representatives of the leading agencies		39
4.1	Introduction	39
4.2	Aims	39
4.3	Methods	39
4.3.1	Participants	39
4.3.2	Materials	40
4.3.3	Procedures	40
4.3.4	Analysis	40
4.4	Results	40
4.4.1	Knowledge of structures	40
4.4.2	Roles and responsibilities	41
4.4.3	Staffing and space	42
4.4.4	Data procedures and information sharing.....	43
4.4.5	Communication.....	43
4.4.6	Leadership style	43
4.5	Discussion	44
4.6	Conclusion	45
Chapter 5 Partnership Board Interviews		46
5.1	Introduction	46
5.2	Aims	46
5.3	Methods	46
5.3.1	Participants	46
5.3.2	Materials	46
5.3.3	Procedures	46
5.3.4	Analysis	47
5.4	Results	47
5.4.1	Knowledge of structures	47
5.4.2	Roles and responsibilities	49
5.4.3	Staffing and space	49
5.4.4	Data procedures and information sharing.....	51
5.4.5	Communication.....	51
5.4.6	Hard-to-reach strategies	52
5.6	Conclusion	54

Chapter 6 Team Member Interviews	56
6.1 Introduction	56
6.2 Aims	56
6.3 Methods	56
6.3.1 Participants	56
6.3.2 Materials	56
6.3.3 Procedures	56
6.3.4 Analysis	57
6.4 Results	57
6.4.1 Knowledge of structures	57
6.4.2 Roles and responsibilities	59
6.4.3 Staffing and space	61
6.4.4 Data procedures and information sharing.....	64
6.4.5 Communication.....	65
6.4.6 Hard-to-reach strategies	67
6.6 Conclusion	69
Chapter 7 Conclusion	70
7.1 Introduction	70
7.2 Research questions.....	70
7.2.1 How much is known about effective multi-agency working?	70
7.2.2 What are the key factors of success and challenges raised by multi-agency working in this particular Sure Start local programme?	71
7.2.3 What future lessons can be learned from multi-agency working for widespread dissemination?	72
7.3 The limitations of the study.....	74
7.4 Conclusion	75
References	76
APPENDIX A Evaluating Multi-Agency Working in Sure Start: Partnership Questionnaire	80
PARTNERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE	81
APPENDIX B Evaluating Multi-Agency Working in Sure Start: Interview Schedule	89
APPENDIX C Results of Pilot Interview Schedule	92
APPENDIX D Letter to Partnership Board Members	94
APPENDIX E Letter of Validation	95

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Social and political context

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

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

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

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

1.2 Sure Start

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

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

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

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

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

1.3 Sure Start Unit

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

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

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

1.3.1 'Expansion' of Sure Start local programmes

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

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

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

1.4 Evaluation

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

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

1.4.1 Evaluation strategy for Sure Start local programmes

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

1.4.2 National evaluation

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

1.4.3 Local evaluation

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

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

1.4.4 Partnership effectiveness and team working

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

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

findings of the main survey will be discussed in Chapter 2 and the programme-specific findings for Sure Start Coventry North (SSCN) 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, SSCN.

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

3.3 Methodology

3.3.1 Participants

At the time of the survey, 6 Partnership Board members and 8 staff responded from SSCN. (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

	Facilitates	Doesn't influence	Hinders
Team members	3	1	3
Partnership Board	2	1	3
TOTAL	5	2	6

As in the main survey, views of SSCN concerning LA structure and boundaries were mixed, with opinion divided as to whether they facilitated or hindered multi-agency working.

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

	Facilitates	Doesn't influence	Hinders
Team members	4	1	1
Partnership Board	3	0	0
TOTAL	7	1	1

As in the main survey, it was felt by the majority of SSCN that staffing arrangements and time investment of the local programmes facilitated multi-agency working.

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

	Facilitates	Doesn't influence	Hinders
Team members	5	0	1
Partnership Board	3	2	1
TOTAL	8	2	2

The majority of SSCN felt that local programme teams' expectations and priorities facilitated multi-agency working.

Question 4: Aims and objectives of Sure Start local programmes

	Facilitates	Doesn't influence	Hinders
Team members	6	1	0
Partnership Board	5	1	0
TOTAL	11	2	0

Again, as in the main survey, the majority of SSCN staff felt the aims and objectives of the Sure Start programme facilitated multi-agency working.

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

	Facilitates	Doesn't influence	Hinders
Team members	5	0	3
Partnership Board	2	1	3
TOTAL	7	1	6

As in the main survey, SSCN were mixed in view concerning the effect on multi-agency working of confidentiality and information sharing strategies between the various agencies involved.

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

	There is a need	Makes no difference	There is not a need
Team members	7	0	0
Partnership Board	6	0	0
TOTAL	13	0	0

The majority of SSCN, like participants in the main survey, acknowledged that there was a need for the development of a common language across professional groups working in Sure Start local 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

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	3	2	2
Partnership Board	3	1	2
TOTAL	6	3	4

SSCN were quite mixed in view concerning challenges that conflicts within and between agencies that might pose to budgets and financial arrangements.

b) Concern about general lack of programme funding

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	0	4	2
Partnership Board	0	3	3
TOTAL	0	7	5

Most SSCN respondents were not concerned about general lack of programme funding and the rest stated that they did not know.

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

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	2	1	3
Partnership Board	1	1	3
TOTAL	3	2	6

Views of Sure Start North were quite mixed concerning sustainability of the services and, hence, uncertainty about funding.

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

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	5	1	1
Partnership Board	3	1	2
TOTAL	8	2	3

The majority of staff felt that creating more effective use of resources through Sure Start working would reduce repetition and overlap in work. The rest said they did not know or felt that repetition and overlap would not be reduced.

Question 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
Team members	6	0	1
Partnership Board	3	0	0
TOTAL	9	0	1

As in the main survey, the majority of SSCN staff felt that there were issues around understanding the role and responsibilities of others.

b) Conflicts over areas of responsibility

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	2	0	4
Partnership Board	2	1	2
TOTAL	4	1	6

The views of SSCN were quite mixed concerning conflicts over roles and responsibilities adopted by individuals working within Sure Start.

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

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

Like the main survey respondents, the vast majority of SSCN 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

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	0	3	3
Partnership Board	2	3	1
TOTAL	2	6	4

Views of SSCN were quite mixed in respect of differences between target groups leading to specific agency aims competing with Sure Start local programme aims.

b) Different Government targets

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	0	2	5
Partnership Board	2	2	1
TOTAL	2	4	6

Views of SSCN were quite mixed in respect of different Government targets leading to competing aims with Sure Start local programme aims.

c) A focus on preventative work versus crisis intervention

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	3	1	4
Partnership Board	1	3	1
TOTAL	4	4	5

Again, views of SSCN were quite mixed in respect of a focus on preventative work versus crisis intervention leading to agency aims competing with Sure Start local programme aims.

Question 10: Non-financial resources create challenges concerning:

a) The allocation of time

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	7	0	0
Partnership Board	5	0	1
TOTAL	12	0	1

The vast majority of SSCN staff felt that allocation of time created challenges to Sure Start working

b) The provision of staff

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	5	0	1
Partnership Board	4	0	1
TOTAL	9	0	2

The vast majority of SSCN staff felt that provision of staff created challenges to Sure Start working.

c) Physical space in which to work together effectively

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

As in the main study, the vast majority of SSCN staff felt that having physical space in which to work effectively challenged Sure Start multi-agency working.

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

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

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

The vast majority of SSCN staff felt that poor communication within and between agencies created problems between those working at different levels within agencies.

b) Creates different availability of professionals from different agencies

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	4	0	3
Partnership Board	4	0	2
TOTAL	8	0	5

SSCN staff had mixed views concerning the role of poor communication created by the different availability of professionals from different agencies.

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

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

SSCN had mixed views with respect to poor communication between different local government departments, undermining 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)

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	2	2	2
Partnership Board	2	3	1
TOTAL	4	5	3

SSCN had mixed views regarding the impact on agency culture of Sure Start multi-agency work.

b) Specific policy and practice differences hinder shared practice

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

The majority of SSCN felt specific policy and practice differences hindered shared Sure Start practice with a few confessing that they did not know.

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

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

Again, the majority of SSCN felt that different data management systems effected information sharing and, thus, impacted upon shared Sure Start practice.

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

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

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

A majority of Sure Start North felt that multi-agency working was strongly supported and promoted at management level in order to remain credible at delivery level.

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

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	2	1	3
Partnership Board	1	3	2
TOTAL	3	4	5

Views of SSCN concerning management strategy drive being organised in order to drive along various participants were mixed.

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
Team members	4	0	2
Partnership Board	2	2	2
TOTAL	6	2	4

Views of SSCN concerning the role of management strategy in encouraging like-minded individuals to seek new ways of working in order to achieve shared goals were, again, mixed.

Question 14: Training opportunities for Sure Start team members

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

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

The majority of SSCN responded positively to the possibility of additional multi-agency training to meet the extended role of agencies.

b) Training to enhance knowledge and understanding of other agencies

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	7	0	0
Partnership Board	5	0	1
TOTAL	12	0	1

As in the main survey, the vast majority of SSCN showed an active desire to engage in training that would enhance the knowledge and understanding of other agencies.

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

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

Most of SSCN were uncertain about whether there was a need for professional development to occur at the parent agency of each professional within the Sure Start team.

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

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

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	4	0	4
Partnership Board	6	0	0
TOTAL	10	0	4

The majority of SSCN expressed an active desire to engage with other agencies at the management level.

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

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	7	0	0
Partnership Board	5	0	1
TOTAL	12	0	1

The majority of SSCN expressed 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

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	3	0	6
Partnership Board	4	0	0
TOTAL	7	0	6

SSCN were mixed in view concerning a commitment to engage with other agencies by a ‘bottom up’ as well as ‘top down’ management approach.

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

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	7	0	1
Partnership Board	6	0	0
TOTAL	13	0	1

The majority of SSCN 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

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	7	0	1
Partnership Board	6	0	0
TOTAL	13	0	1

The vast majority of SSCN recognised the 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

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	8	0	0
Partnership Board	6	0	0
TOTAL	14	0	0

All SSCN recognised the need for mutual respect for the professional roles of other 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

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	2	1	3
Partnership Board	4	0	2
TOTAL	6	1	5

Views of SSCN were mixed with regard to the recognition of a need for common ground and like-minded people.

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

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	5	0	3
Partnership Board	5	0	1
TOTAL	10	0	4

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

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

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	1	0	5
Partnership Board	5	0	1
TOTAL	6	0	6

Views of SSCN regarding a needs-led approach which replaced agency-specific agendas were quite mixed.

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

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

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

Views of SSCN regarding opportunities for keeping open communication between agencies being achieved were, again, mixed.

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

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	6	0	1
Partnership Board	2	1	2
TOTAL	8	1	3

Views of SSCN regarding the role of personal relationship-building to support information sharing were a little more positive but still mixed.

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

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

Views of SSCN participants agreed that there was a need for procedures and systems of communication and information dissemination to be put in place.

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

a) Show/s clear strategic direction

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	4	1	1
Partnership Board	2	1	2
TOTAL	6	2	3

SSCN were quite mixed concerning the clear leadership strategy direction of the individual Sure Start Programme Manager.

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

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

SSCN were, again, quite mixed in view about the individual Sure Start Programme Manager's leadership in respect of tenacity to overcome obstacles to progress.

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

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	3	0	3
Partnership Board	2	1	2
TOTAL	5	1	5

SSCN were quite mixed in view concerning the individual Sure Start Programme manager's capacity to bring together the Sure Start team in order to bring about change and overcome obstacles.

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

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

SSCN were unsure about whether the right personnel from specific agencies were being involved in Sure Start activities.

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
Team members	2	1	4
Partnership Board	2	1	1
TOTAL	4	2	5

Sure Start Coventry were also unsure about whether personnel at the right level of responsibility were being involved in order to make the necessary decisions and activate the right services.

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

	Yes	No	Don't know
Team members	1	0	6
Partnership Board	0	3	2
TOTAL	1	3	8

SSCN reported not knowing about priority being given to the work of Sure Start by individual agencies.

3.5 Discussion

Views of SSCN on multi-agency working were in line with respondents in the main survey though, if anything, there was a greater uncertainty about responses and greater tendency to report not knowing how to respond.

The respondents were mixed in view concerning whether or not LA boundaries and structures facilitated or hindered multi-agency working. They were uncertain whether or not confidentiality and information sharing systems hindered or facilitated joint working but agreed that poor communication could create problems for those at different levels within agencies and those working in different local government departments. There was uncertainty about whether or not the aims of specific agencies, such as the focus on preventative work versus crisis intervention, different target groups or different government targets competed with Sure Start programme aims. It was thought, however, that specific policy and practice differences could have an adverse effect on the development of an inter-agency culture and that different data management

systems hindered information sharing. It was agreed that information sharing was supported by opportunities to keep dialogue between agencies open, through personal relationship building and through procedures for information dissemination.

Participants were more mixed in view concerning whether or not Sure Start culture disrupted agency-specific culture. Views were also mixed concerning whether or not programme management drive was organised to carry participants along or whether the local programme management strategy encouraged like-minded people to seek new ways of working to achieve shared goals. SSCN respondents did believe that there was support and promotion at local programme management level of multi-agency work in order to remain credible at delivery level. Overall, views concerning the leadership drive of individual programme managers were quite mixed. There was uncertainty whether or not clear leadership was shown, tenacity to overcome obstacles or bring along the team to bring in change or overcome obstacles.

Participants were also mixed in view as to whether or not budgetary and financial arrangements facilitated or constrained Sure Start work though many stated they did know whether or not uncertainty about funding posed a challenge to sustainability of such work. Moreover, allocation of time, provision of appropriate staff and physical space to work together all posed challenges.

SSCN participants felt there were issues around understanding the roles and responsibilities of other agencies though were not certain that this led to conflicts in the Sure Start workplace. They did recognise, however, the need to go beyond existing roles and responsibilities. They realised a clear understanding of the roles of others was needed in order to avoid different agendas being pursued and to recognise the constraints of others so that expectations were realistic. There was a need for mutual respect for the professional roles of other agencies and their contribution and a need for a real purpose to joint working.

Participants were agreed that staffing arrangements and time investment facilitated multi-agency working, as did local team's expectations and priorities and overall aims and objectives of local Sure Start programmes. They agreed that there was a need to develop a common language across professional groups and a potential for more efficient use of resources to avoid repetition and overlap. Indeed, the majority were in

favour of additional multi-agency training to meet the extended role of agencies and felt an active desire to engage with other agencies at the delivery level. Notwithstanding that, they were more uncertain about engaging with other agencies by a 'bottom up' as well as 'top down' management approach. Overall, respondents were uncertain whether or not the right people, at the right level from the specific agencies had been involved or whether priority had been given to work of Sure Start by individual agencies.

3.5 Conclusion

The findings highlight the complexity of the challenge facing multi-agency Sure Start workers. That said, the vast majority believed that Sure Start facilitated multi-agency working in terms of staffing arrangements, teams' expectations and priorities, and staff training was seen to have an important function in developing new ways of working. In general, there seemed a greater uncertainty in some areas that emerged from responses of SSCN. To what extent this may have been influenced by management changes that were being made at the time of the survey is impossible to say, however, it seems reasonable to suppose that this may have affected the responses made.

Chapter 4

Interviews with representatives of the leading agencies

4.1 Introduction

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

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 SSCSE Partnership Board members.

Chapter 5

Partnership Board Interviews

5.1 Introduction

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

5.2 Aims

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

5.3 Methods

5.3.1 Participants

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

5.3.2 Materials

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

5.3.3 Procedures

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

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

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

5.3.4 Analysis

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

5.4 Results

5.4.1 Knowledge of structures

5.4.1.1 Role of the CC and PCT

Two of the people interviewed stated that the role of the CC was similar to SS in that “they have management and employment responsibilities”. Overall it was felt that the CC was “very active”; they had “a very significant role” within SS.

The PCT were said, by two respondents, to “work in partnership with the CC” regarding the SS programme. Another acknowledged that they also had employment responsibilities within the programme. The PCT’s role was felt by one interviewee to be difficult to describe as they appeared to have less input into the project than the CC. They were seen to be less visible and, therefore, offer less of a contribution in terms of strategic guidance.

It is hard for me to describe really because they are not so visible on the PB I feel in the same way that the Local Authority is through Margaret I suppose. I see a very little contribution from the PCT, really I have to say’.

5.4.1.2 Effect of the CC and PCT on the local programme

The impact that the two leading agencies had on the project were felt in different ways. Firstly, it was noted by one member that more work was needed in order to make the

partnership more effective: “there are two agencies which have different agendas and [are] coming from different angles” therefore an understanding was needed so that the joint role they were supposed to operate in the SS programme could be effected. Due to staff in the programme, representing both the CC and PCT, it was considered that this may “create some issues” that needed to be dealt with as staff were working to different policies and procedures. In order to deal with this, this person explained, a Senior Sponsor Group had been established that allowed key representatives from the two agencies to work together. This group provided a forum where “things [were] discussed and put out on the table and dealt with in a professional manner”.

One person mentioned the effect of the PCT and LA together, with regard to the senior sponsor group. Discussions had taken place between this group and the Partnership Board but outcomes from the discussions did not seem to be known. As such there was felt to be little effect from this group on the programme.

It was a three way agreement process and protocol I think including employment and stuff like that. ... But actually what’s the outcome of it? I don’t know. I’ve had no feedback ... and I don’t know if the PM has or not.

One respondent remarked that it was unclear whether parents’ views were considered the priority in shaping services. The approach whereby priority was given to the priorities assigned by the leading agencies was considered to oppose the SS ethos.

I think they have an agenda which they are trying to push through ... in terms of where they want their services to be; what they want them to look like.

5.4.1.3 Effect of CC and PCT on own role.

Three members noted that the CC had little or no effect for them as individuals. Another member’s view was that SS was to be:

something very different, starting up from grass roots, looking at what people needed and delivering what people wanted in the area, and actually really affect some change in the area.

Being part of this process, this member expressed that there was a hope to be part of the change but felt that this had not always occurred.

A 10 year programme where you could have really affected some change and I suppose that’s what I was really hoping I would really be able to be part of. And I have to say I have been very disheartened at times.

All four interviewees stated that the PCT had no effect on their own role. One member did express, however, that due to personal connections that members from other programmes appeared to have with Senior Management within the organisation. This left the person feeling “an outsider” and, therefore, “further removed” from opportunities to find out information that may be relevant to the running of the SS programme.

5.4.2 Roles and responsibilities

5.4.2.1 Specific aims of Sure Start complementing or contradicting the goals of other agencies, including the leading agencies

The three respondents that commented felt that SS complemented the goals of the leading agencies and of the agencies that they represented, if different. One person added that it was “about working together and ensuring you don’t duplicate” the services offered in the area by others. Another member explained that there was sometimes a bit of overlap in service provision between SS and the agency that this person represented.

One representative felt that it was important for dual ownership to occur when organisations were working together. This required people cooperating rather than attempting to take.

5.4.2.2 Individuals priorities

All four respondents were clear as to their priorities. These centred around representing their organisations (or groups) within the SS programme. A central theme was also how it was important to make sure that people could access the information they needed, rather than getting “moved from pillar to post”

5.4.3 Staffing and space

5.4.3.1 Staffing

Regarding staffing, several issues were raised. One person mentioned that there was a challenge because staff were employed by different agencies. This, it was stated created management difficulties. Some staff were employed 100% for SS, through either the CC or the PCT, others were employed partly by an organisation outside of SS and partly within.

Retention was viewed as a large issue for the programme. Two respondents mentioned that there was a difficulty in keeping staff in post, this was particularly pertinent as close to interview it was announced that the Programme Manager (PM) was leaving. Staff, it was felt by one person, needed to be told who they could access information through in the period of time between one PM leaving and another starting.

It's about that communication, you know who's accountable for what and who's the decision maker. But there needs to be a clear lead there.

The PM's exit was thought to present a loss of vision for the programme:

I think she had a very clear vision of all that and the programme and how it was going to look finally, and with her going goes that vision really.

Several other key posts were becoming vacant at the same time which was thought to be a loss for the programme.

Terms and conditions of employment was also mentioned. It was felt to be an area that was important to the success of working in partnership.

I think that one of the key issues is that when you have got partnership working; ... when you've got ... somebody who is employed by one body, ... or you've got it joint funded by two funding agencies, ... I think sometimes ... there may be some misunderstanding ... about where those roles and responsibilities start and finish.

5.4.3.2 Space

In terms of venues, although one member felt there were no problems, another noted that parents had considered there to be no suitable venues in the area.

One of the things they [the parents] consistently said was 'actually we haven't got venues around that are suitable and of good quality, that people can access'. [We] have had problems finding venues.

Another stated that a new building was "finally happening ... and should provide a better venue" (there had been delays in this building work commencing). However, regarding a new children's centre the programme was "still struggling to have a final outcome on where the children's centre will be".

Regarding office space, the lack of buildings that were locally available impinged on this area as well. Although the team now had a building in the area that was more accessible to parents, there was not enough space for all the staff. People were cramped and had to share desks:

Everybody is tripping over each other. It's just not good enough really. ... It is very difficult to identify premises because of the nature of the location of the part of the city it's in.

5.4.4 Data procedures and information sharing.

5.4.2.1 Data procedures

Two interviewees felt that they had no knowledge of the data procedures for the programme. A further participant noted that, although the detail was not known personally, the SS worker originating from the same organisation did.

5.4.4.2 Information sharing

All four board members were clear that the main problem with the sharing of information was that the PCT were not passing information to SS. This was commented upon further by two of the respondents. The PCT were seen, by two people, to be *unable* to share the information. One of these people continued to express a sense of frustration in the fact that SS were unable to access data to enable them to perform their role, particularly when the language used was that of working together.

[The] PCT cannot divulge any information about their service users, their clients to anybody else, even though it is Sure Start. So it's stupid really, when you're talking about working together, you're talking about colleagues and having teams that are going to be interchangeable, almost, really and then you've got your own professional barriers and then, on top of that, you've got your own agency barriers around information sharing etc., etc. ... The issue about new birth; who knows that information? The PCT have that information. Who need it? Sure Start need it because they need to go out and do their initial baby visit and [the PCT] can't pass the information on. It made a mockery of the whole thing for me personally.

5.4.5 Communication

As noted above, challenges with communication were raised regarding a "clear exit strategy" when the Programme Manager left so that staff knew who to go to for various information.

A lack of IT systems was mentioned; "not everybody is on email and that can pose difficulties". There was thought to be a need for everyone working on the programme to have access to electronic communication.

The result of various staff members working in different ways was also noted. Potentially, it was thought that the parent agency might hold one view, the individual

worker another and SS a third view as to the understanding of what a particular person's role was. The strategy for overcoming this possible problem was termly meetings. Also there were dual supervisions of staff between SS and the parent agency. This was thought to be a potential cause of problems at times.

Staff using profession-specific vocabulary was also seen as a potential barrier, more than this, the fact that some families in the SSCN area spoke little or no English.

I think it's also about how that information is disseminated to the community. Now in the [north] you've got a very diverse community so, again, it's about finding ways [to communicate]. Not everybody may be literate in their mother tongue.

Successful methods of communication mentioned included: one-to-one informal meetings and formal meetings, such as between the Chair of the Partnership Board and the Programme Manager, formal PB meetings (bi-monthly) where they "have average attendance". These methods were mentioned by two participants. Parents that sat on the Partnership Board were provided with taxis and childcare in order to assist them in attending meetings – this system worked most of the time. Informal emails were also mentioned: "I think the email has been useful for me to really keep me in touch with what's going on". One person also mentioned how regular visits to the SS office enabled him/her to feel part of the project. S/he was recognised and, in turn, recognised the staff and some parents.

One identified strategy for good practice was the existence of the Partnership Board itself: "I think the Partnership Board is an important forum really and I think that there needs to be more work doing in order to build that up". It was also thought, however, that the Partnership Board members should meet more frequently, and not necessarily for a formal meeting, in order to "look at [themselves] as a group".

5.4.6 Hard-to-reach strategies

In terms of hard-to-reach strategies, one person expressed the view that "Foleshill [was] a hard to reach area generally as it [had] a high ethnic population". Others were vague in their knowledge of specific strategies for reaching those deemed 'hard-to-reach'. One member explained how the SS worker, originating from the agency the member belonged to, was able to access certain groups of people by working outside of normal working hours and using an interpreter. Two participants also explained that there was

a link with the local refugees' worker. This enabled SS to gain access to people without "banging on the door or sending mail out" which people do not want by using existing services that had an established relationship with the community.

Finally, the fact that the SS team in SSCN was multi-racial was felt to be a strong asset, particularly in the area of hard-to-reach activities.

5.5 Discussion

Regarding knowledge of structures, participants were aware of the roles of the leading agencies though they were not aware of these roles affecting their work in the local programme. There was a sense that the PCT was less visible than the CC. Participants recognised the management and employment responsibilities of the CC and PCT and were aware that a Senior Sponsor Group had been created in order to allow key representatives from each leading agency to work together. Overall it was acknowledged that the goals of the leading agencies complemented those of the local programme.

In terms of staffing, retention was identified as a large problem with several key posts, including Programme Manager being unfilled. Being employed by different agencies was both a challenge and a strength.

I think if we're going to truly work in a multi-agency, multi-professional way we have to work harder at breaking down the barriers, barriers around professionalism and acknowledge that we all have skills that are valued and we all have something to offer and there isn't a hierarchy of skills or position in an organisation when you're delivering out there. But I think that's one of the biggest challenges because what I see is that everyone becomes very precious about it; 'this is what I do ...'.

A mixed view concerning physical space was expressed. Parents, it was felt had no suitable meeting area, a new building was happening and there was more office space. The office gave greater access to parents but it was still too small. A lack of IT systems was also mentioned. Communication and information sharing created a frustration and barriers to carrying out professional roles effectively:

As SS is a government-run initiative there is a lot of bureaucracy. My heart sinks with so much red tape that is the main problem. ... We are not yet singing from the same hymn sheet.

In general, it was felt that formal and informal meetings contributed to information sharing. Taxis brought parents to attend Partnership Boards. A key challenge for the local programme was considered to be its ethnic diversity. As one respondent commented, the whole local area was 'hard to reach'. Having an ethnically diverse team was regarded a strength as were particular links to the community such as the local refugee worker. In terms of benefits to families of SS, as one participant commented:

You know we mustn't lose sight of who we are working for. And in this case, it's for the young parents and children in the Sure Start area. It's about giving that service out there.

5.6 Conclusion

What the interviews revealed was how 'young' the programme was in terms of its development.

I think we are too young to say we're working as a team. I don't feel that. I don't think we've gone along far enough in terms of spending plans, in getting to know each other to actually feel that we're working as a team. And I don't know what the PCT or the CC could do about that really.

A challenge particular to this programme, at the time of the interviews, was the loss of a Programme Manager that could not help but have a destabilising effect. This came at a time when staff still felt that they were building their partnership, their common vision, their policy and practice:

I think that there was a lot of commitment from people on the steering group and then we had the transition to the Partnership Board and I think that we needed to spend more time as a Partnership Board looking at what we were trying to deliver. I know all the paper work's been sent out and how much of that people have read I can't say ... there needed to be more time spent looking at 'this is what we're trying to deliver as a Partnership Board'. And I think that that would have helped us. So we've got a common vision ... But I don't think there was that continuity really ... there was a change of personnel ... so there's been no continuity and that's been part of the problem.

First of all, an acting Programme Manager covered this post. Now a new Programme manager is in post. This will lead to a change in dynamics and a period of settling in for everyone.

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

Chapter 6

Team Member Interviews

6.1 Introduction

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

6.2 Aims

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

6.3 Methods

6.3.1 Participants

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

6.3.2 Materials

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

6.3.3 Procedures

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

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

6.3.4 Analysis

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

6.4 Results

6.4.1 Knowledge of structures

6.4.1.1 Role of the CC and PCT

Regarding the role of the CC, one person mentioned that the CC “gives up to date information through the post” and that there was a sense of more involvement with them as an organisation. Two respondents said that the CC had management responsibilities in respect of the Programme Manager. They also employed a lot of staff that worked within SS.

In terms of the PCT two members felt that they knew little about their role except that they employed some of the staff. It was noted by one that in spite of being line managed through the PCT there was a lack of support for them as employees within SS: “I don’t really get much at all from the PCT”. Two people identified the PCT as the Accountable Body for the programme.

They have a lot to do with the financial side of things and how we spend our money.

One team member added that the PCT were:

responsible for making sure the programme really operates in, its legal and its programme operations, [that] it meets its statutory duties and aims.

6.4.1.2 Effect of the CC and PCT on the local programme

The largest effect that the two leading agencies appeared to have on the programme was related to the differing policies they had. This caused problems for the staff working

within SS as both sets of procedures had to be learned; more than that, they had to be self taught.

Most of the employees work through CCC. So ... the rules and regulations are through CCC which is quite hard when you're a PCT employee.

Another member expressed the view that because the CC employed more staff than the PCT, they influenced the programme to a greater extent than the PCT.

The majority of staff are Coventry City Council staff in Sure Start, there feels more [of an] influence over Sure Start than [from the] PCT really.

The valid but separate agendas of each organisation were thought to impact on the programme by one interviewee. It was felt that sometimes these organisational agendas hindered the SS programme developing in a way that they, as an individual project, wanted to.

The PCT appeared to affect the programme by a lack of clarity in the role that they performed within the programme. One person went on to explain how the most direct contact between SS and the PCT was through the finance manager who was a temporary appointment and not fully embedded within the organisation. Also, having to go through the PCT processes for financial issues caused some confusion for the programme.

I think the PCT are not yet clear, or have had difficulties defining, what their role is and how they actually perform it. ... There's been all sorts of issues about how that Accountable Body role ought to manifest itself in day to day work and so, if I give you an example, our senior admin worker is employed by the PCT and line managed through their finance manager ... but that line manager, the finance officer, is only a temporary appointment and really isn't embedded in the PCT structure.

6.4.1.3 Effect of CC and PCT on own role.

Regarding specific roles within SS, several team members felt that the organisations had a significant affect as there were management responsibilities provided by more than one of the agencies, including SS itself. One noted that there was a personal challenge in having to learn, and use appropriately, two or three different systems for areas of personnel and administration. Another noted that having two leading agencies, along with a programme-specific governing body meant that there were three separate

interests in their roles and this might also conflict with what parents within the area desired, in terms of programme development.

I feel really torn having 3 sets of people who have an interest in supervising or directing my work. ... I may have parents who want to do something very specific; ... [they] may have a different view and so constantly you're torn between, well who do I serve? As a programme I'm supposed to serve the needs of the community through the Partnership Board, but as a worker for the CCC I also have duties to undertake what the CCC would like. ... When I first took the job I was really enthusiastic about the concept of local people and parents directing the course of where the programme went and its priorities etc and so I personally feel very constrained sometimes when I'm not able to do that.

However, on a positive note it was acknowledged that working in such a way provided opportunities for new ways of working.

It means that you are working very closely with people that you probably wouldn't have had the opportunity to work closely with in the past because of the traditional boxes that you used to fit into.

6.4.2 Roles and responsibilities

6.4.2.1 Complement or contrasting goals of parent agency

Sure Start was thought to both complement and contrast the goals of the various parent agencies, that is, those agencies that the various members of staff originated from and who currently provided professional leadership for the staff members.

Examples were given showing how, at times, the goals of the parent agency differed from what SS were attempting to do, by one member of staff. Developing what the parents in the area wanted, rather than what the leading agency felt was most beneficial was an area that appeared to be contradictory. Relating to the matter, raised above, concerning the various sets of people that held an interest in the programme, these sorts of issues were described as 'battles' in order to maintain the parents' priorities as the programmes priorities.

Sometimes ... I have to struggle to argue for resources to be given for parent participation, or to enable parent participation.

It was emphasised that there was a need to maintain a focus on what the community needed or wanted, rather than introducing activities and/or services just because of national acclaim. It was deemed by this person to be very important to encompass the economic and community's development with what was done through SS.

I feel, sometimes, that we're developing programmes, but as professionals, without ... necessarily matching these programmes to the

needs of the area. ... I do sometimes think that we don't look enough and pay, maybe combine the whole economic development or community development aspect of what we do with those individual interventions that parents might take hold of.

One team member explained how working in Sure Start provided the resource for the main service in order to achieve what they'd always wanted to do but had not had the capacity. So, SS was not duplicating but enhancing what was done by the main service.

They definitely complement it. ... What I'm now being able to do in Sure Start is what we've always wanted to do in the [main service], in that we wanted to do preventative type work, and work more with parents, and be able to be more visible in the community, and be able to provide any intervention for children, but because of the limited resources that there is in the [main service], like lack of staff and lack of funding for posts ... there isn't the time or the resources there to deal with the preventative side of things.

6.4.2.2 Specific aims of Sure Start differing from other agencies

Working alongside other agencies was met with varied success, as reported by one team member. One important lesson that had been learned from these experiences was the need "to draw up a contract before engaging with other agencies". This enables SS to maintain control over what they were attempting to accomplish.

Another person expressed that, in order for the needs of the SS area to be understood, there was a need for all the agencies working in that area to investigate further than was currently the case.

6.4.2.3 Individuals' priorities

All were aware of their personal priorities. These were reflected in their job descriptions. Aside from individual roles there was a consensus regarding how they were working in a different but complementary way to their parent agencies.

It's been a bit easier for me than some of the professionals in Sure Start I think because I worked for Coventry [main service] in the past. ...The gaps were quite obvious when I started in Sure Start. When I started in Sure Start it was drummed into me, 'now you're not meant to replicate what else goes on, this is a new service and a new way of working and we're complementing what's already there not replacing it and it was quite obvious to me and to my management at speech therapy as well where the gaps were.

One person described their role as very varied and “not a job for one person”. There was too much work in this area for the amount of people working in it.

On a positive note however, the opportunities to work in the varied and multi-agency manner promoted by SS was seen as exciting and beneficial for those receiving services in that way.

Another really good thing amongst the staff team is when they do things in a different way and they're excited by what they achieve and they can see the values of working in a different way.

6.4.3 Staffing and space

6.4.3.1 Staffing

All interviewed indicated that several posts were vacant and several key posts were to become vacant imminently, including the Programme Manager's post. Some of these vacant posts had not been filled for a relatively long time. Recruiting new staff for these posts was viewed as problematic. Although advertised and possibly even interviews conducted, posts remained unfilled.

We haven't been able to recruit a lot of posts for where we've had people leave.

As key posts left, or were about to leave, there was an inevitable period of time where, as it was known that the posts were to be vacated, developments within that role ceased. Indeed, in the interim and then when the new person started their job, there would be more time that was 'lost' and development for the programme did not occur.

One member described how new staff appeared to start in batches. This changed the team dynamics each time it occurred. It was predicted that, as the Programme Manager left, and then a new Programme Manager started, dynamics within the team would change each time. The challenge during this period of time, it was thought, was to keep the team united and positive. In fact, with the departure of the programme manager known, several staff indicated that they were not sure, at the time of interview, who would be managing the programme in the interim period before a new Programme Manager was appointed. Therefore, there was a period of uncertainty which would not help the morale of the staff.

One respondent indicated that creating new posts, in order to fulfil the needs of the project, was difficult, particularly if the posts had not been identified at the very beginning of programme development. It was not the sole decision of the programme but procedures involving the leading agencies had to be followed.

Having a community development worker in post ... was really, really crucial. ... It was very stressful trying to have that seen [as a necessity].

One person stated that in spite of contracts expiring, people were not notified about what was going to happen regarding their posts. This lack of information, it was suggested, was not good for the morale of the team.

My contract ... was up last week and as yet I've had no written confirmation that I'm carrying on. ... Other people [are] in the same situation. ... I think that is a big issue on staff morale ... because people aren't certain that their jobs are continuing and we don't seem to have been given much information. You're told not to worry and that's fine but we've had nothing in writing at all.

Another team member highlighted that, despite the fact that all of the team were working for Sure Start, there were differences in the terms and conditions of their employment, depending on whether or not they originated from the PCT or the CC. This was considered to be unfair.

[For] example the CCC employees have more holiday than PCT and the NHS. ... Just making it fair really, the rules and regulations, they all need to be Sure Start rules and regulations given to all staff, not just the one ...because we're all equal staff at the end of the day.

Integrating staff from different disciplines was seen as a challenge by one team member. Some disciplines were thought to have managed this more easily, once initial "adjustments and learning what each of them [did] and gaining respect" had taken place.

Working in this multi-agency manner was seen as very beneficial by another member. It enabled much more cross-communication and developing of knowledge than working in a traditional way ever could.

You can have meetings but there's so much that goes on over a cup of tea or over lunch, or you just catch people and mention something and it leads somewhere.

Having more than one manager, the Programme Manager and a professional manager, was thought to be both a benefit and a detriment. One person held the view that, sometimes, the professional manager's view was more influential than the Programme Manager's view in determining what their practice was within the programme. Another person acknowledged the benefits of maintaining contact with their profession, in order to provide specific support and development opportunities. However, this person, and another, noted that having more than one person interested in their professional activities could lead to conflict and a lot of meetings, which took up valuable time.

6.4.3.2 Space

Finding enough space for staff, resources and to run services was seen as "a huge challenge" for the programme by all staff.

We've had a lot of problems trying to find, not only office space, but also space to run sessions from.

Although venues had been found, it was identified that they were "not always the quality of venue that you'd want them to be". This was due to the venues being owned by other organisations or people and, therefore, Sure Start not being in the position to improve them.

Using other venues was noted, by one person, to cause additional concerns related to health and safety regulations. The CC and PCT, it was stated, "have now agreed protocols for health and safety ... so it's easing" the problems that existed with this.

Staff had re-located several times during the course of the project. This had caused upheaval for them as they not only had to move themselves, but all the resources the resources that the project had. The current office space was viewed, by all, as inadequate:

There are six people all sharing one room which is the size of a medium-sized bedroom. In this room there are four telephones and six desks.

Health and safety-wise we're only supposed to have ten people and there are roughly about seventeen or eighteen in here.

Two team members explained how the building occupied by the team was not able to be open to the public, so was not ideal for the project.

6.4.4 Data procedures and information sharing.

6.4.4.1 Data procedures

All staff were aware of the various data-storage procedures, both electronic and paper-based, that were established for the project. These procedures were still developing at the time of interview and all were aware of this.

6.4.4.2 Information sharing

Staff members from some disciplines were thought, by one respondent, to have more adjustments to make than others in order to work in a way that made sharing information across disciplines possible. It was felt that more training was needed in this area.

They fear it will break confidentiality. ... There's still quite a way to go with that.

One interviewee explained that the four Sure Start programmes across the City were attempting to establish uniform procedures for the sharing of information; all had experiences similar difficulties. It was believed that as this process occurred, the much needed training opportunities would arise.

Another employee felt that there was no real issue regarding the sharing of information, as long as parents' permission was obtained first.

I don't think there are any real issues about that really. If I'm seeing a family and think they could benefit from another Sure Start service I will ask the family if it's OK to ask the [team member] to offer some support and I will always get the parents' permission to do that. ... I think that's the same with everybody here.

When, however, the information originated from outside of the Sure Start programme it was much harder to access it, even if required at a national level. One person highlighted how certain information was not given to SS, the nature of which impacted on their ability to monitor whether or not they are meeting the government-set targets.

We collect monitoring data and things like that, we can't get all our base line data from the PCT.

6.4.5 Communication

Communication was said, by all respondents, to occur in a variety of ways. One person believed that communication between each other, as a team, was good, despite the differences they may have.

We obviously have our difference, but ... given the diversity of our work and where, personally, people are coming from and ... the pressure of work we've got to do, ... I think we still manage to maintain quite good communications really.

Staff being open to each others' professional opinions and ideas was believed to strengthen communication by one team member. This was felt to be easier to achieve when there was an openness toward working in a multi-agency manner.

I think that the success of it, as well, is the attitude of the staff involved really because the people I've worked with in Sure Start, they're all very sort of pro multi-agency working and they're very open to other people's ideas and nobody seems to really stick to their own little area ... and not want to work alongside or with [others], or adapt what they're doing. It's the opposite of that really. People are very open and I think that makes it a success. ... We all acknowledge that we learn a lot from one another and I know that I've learnt so much from working with other professionals ... that I would never have learnt working just within the [main service].

In between the regular team meetings there was a system in place to keep all team members informed of any developments. This was described by one member:

We have a circulation folder where anything new coming in goes and we all have a look at that.

One team member described how working within SS was a 'revelation'. It helped this person to realise how increased access to, and communication with different professionals enhanced each professional's individual role.

I did feel I always worked closely with those people, but coming to Sure Start has made me realise that I didn't really. People were on the end of the phone, or you'd send reports to people or read other people's reports, but you weren't actually working together. ... With Sure Start it feels like you're working and all pulling together.

Another respondent expressed enjoyment about the way all of the professionals worked together.

It's amazing how we can all work together. ... [The project has] been going for a year and a half and we're still moving forwards which is good. You're learning from each group which is nice in partnership working. ... We all help each other out.

One of the challenges, as the programme expanded, and due to some staff working in the project on a part-time basis, was keeping everyone informed. This was a common concern.

That's a challenge sometimes, in terms of how to keep them fully updated.

This situation was felt by another, part-time, member of staff to be improving.

As we go on we're getting better at that and working out more effective ways. ... We're all conscious that we do try to communicate well and find the best ways of communicating.

The reverse problem was equally true. As some staff were part time and then also worked away from the main SS site for a lot of their time, it meant that there were sometimes problems contacting these members of staff.

One person acknowledged that communication was hindered due to a lack of IT facilities within the project. If people wanted to access the internet or shared drives then only specific computers could be used. These computers were used regularly by certain staff members so access for the others was limited.

Communicating with parents in the SS area was seen as challenging due to the ethnic diversity and, hence, the variety of languages spoken within the area.

Language is a problem as many of our parents don't speak English as a first language.

This situation was eased by the fact that several team members were able to speak some of the languages spoken within the community.

Referring to communication between the SS programme and the leading agencies, one respondent noted that sometimes it felt as though the programme was not kept updated on issues faced, or raised, by the leading agencies that concerned them.

One person said that there was some confusion as to the role that the CC had within the programme. It was explained that the CC was the appointed Lead Agency for the programme but also, because the Programme Managers were employees of the CC, there were line management responsibilities. The difficulty arose when a discussion

ensued and it was not clear if it was coming from the Lead Agency or the Line Manager directly.

Another problem noted by one team member was that problems arose with partnership working when “some partners do not do their share of the work”. This comment referred to a particular service set up between SS and another agency.

6.4.6 Hard-to-reach strategies

Lots of examples were given by all staff of the range of activities carried out by the project in order to reach different groups within the community.

One of the biggest challenges this programme faced was the high percentage of people for whom English was not their first language. A visual timetable had been introduced into a local nursery class and use was intended to be extended into all SS activities as a result of the perceived success it met. A bi-lingual rhyme time session had also been set up for French-speaking residents. It was felt by one person that it was important to “speak to parents and carers in their own language” if possible. There was also a group for grandparents who took on the role of carers of children in the area. Alongside these activities, one person noted that “other strategies, for other groups”, were in place and would “be rolled out within the project in the course of the year”.

One team member explained how part of his/her role was to provide a service to the children of parents who would not attend appointments given by the main service. These children and families were traditionally classified as hard-to-reach by the main service.

6.5 Discussion

Participants’ responses very much mirrored those of participants in the previous chapter, thus, triangulating the findings. There was a sense in which the leading agencies, the PCT and CC, were regarded as rather remote from the day-to-day working of the people concerned, yet there was an awareness that the leading agencies were responsible for programme operation. It was also remarked that with two leading agencies, one might feel managed by three – the PCT, the CC and SS. The challenge, however, was to focus on the community and the parents. It was concluded that multi-agency work was beneficial but that specific agency aims might not always be

consistent with SS aims. Moreover, one participant mentioned that, at times, there was a feeling that four very different programmes in one city might be required to adopt a common approach despite their very particular and very different circumstances:

Something happens in one of the areas therefore we all need to follow, sometimes it's not appropriate and sometimes I just feel really constrained by doing things that I don't know would have been my priorities.

In terms of staffing, again, reference was made to several posts being vacant, the consequence of which was that some longstanding development work ceased and team dynamics were changed. Moreover, contracts of existing staff expired leaving them in an uncertain and morale-sapping position. The tensions arising from staff's different terms and working conditions were highlighted as were the conflicting feelings generated by having 'more than one manager' with the Programme Manager and parent agency manager, leading to a feeling of curtailment of professional activity as a result of the number of professional and clinical supervision meetings involved.

Office space was raised again as a 'huge challenge' and the current office space described as 'inadequate'. Using a variety of venues could raise health and safety issues. Furthermore experiencing several relocations during the course of a programme was unhelpful.

Various views were expressed concerning data procedures and information sharing though there was an awareness that uniform procedures were going to be put in place that would bring new training needs. Frustrations were again expressed about inaccessibility of information that was required for monitoring the meeting of government targets. Despite the difficulties, it was felt that openness among staff had been established. The challenge was to keep everyone adequately informed and parents, created the biggest challenge here. Again, the challenges of working in a multi-lingual and multi-cultural area were emphasized.

for me there's something about innovation and trusting and actually enabling communities to express really their views rather than superficial consultation and I think we do much too much of superficial consultation. And I think that has a negative effect after a while because people just wonder what the heck you're bothering for.

6.6 Conclusion

What comes over poignantly is the enormity of the challenge and the responsibility of the Programme Manager:

The infrastructure isn't there. I don't think it would be difficult if the infrastructure was there, but when it's not, to try and achieve within a 12 month period, for example, the recruitment of all your staff, the development of all your work programmes, having sorted out your buildings, having got your agreements, you know, everything done within a 12 month period is sometimes a real big challenge.

What is also clear is the fragility of the enterprise in terms of staffing loss, continuity and change. This serves as a reminder of the importance of the commitment of the individuals who delivered the service.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

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

The opportunity to research multi-agency working in SSCN 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 and lack of storage space were felt not to contribute to the success of 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 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: SSCN 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)¹ 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:

¹ 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?
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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?

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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 21st July and 13th 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.

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