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Report of an *Every Child Matters* cultural change project. How are we discovering the common ground . . . and then building bridges?



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Every Child Matters: Change for Children in Hartlepool

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Foreword

Across the whole country there is abundant evidence of children's service staff taking hold of the *Every Child Matters* policy initiative and making it their own. Fortunately, the central policy process established by government allows this freedom to develop meaningful, responsive, child centred practices at local level in the context of a clear set of aims and objectives for national change. *Every Child Matters: Change for Children in Hartlepool* is a brilliant example of how to create the right conditions for cultural change in a complex system. 'Partnership'... 'Integration'...these are easy words to say, but very difficult aspirations to pursue in a sustained manner. The work discussed in this report is a tribute to both the commitment of staff in Hartlepool, and to the skill of those who designed and facilitated the events and processes described.

I think one part of the apparent success of this piece of work is that the design of the project reflects and embodies the everyday, but also long term challenges facing staff – how to find 'space' for the hard work of developing new relationships in the context of new structures. One participant captures this well: "*We can go through all this relationship stuff, and talk about everybody moving forward... (but) there's got to be structures in place which actually mean that things can be maintained and sustained in terms of integrated working*".

The 'relationship stuff' is absolutely vital, but as the report clearly shows, we are talking about professionals relating to one another *in role* and with awareness of their place within a multi-professional system. The report is full of allusions to the genuine difficulty of keeping 'to task' in the face of the challenges posed by new working relationships – references to how so and so "*used to frighten me*", how we "*fight together*", and to how inter-professional prejudice can lock people into 'anti-task' roles. But the hopeful, forward looking side emerges just as strongly in references to the development of trust, tolerance and co-operation, and to how the project "*has reminded me to be curious about how things work*".

Please read this report carefully, especially perhaps if you weren't a participant. It reveals how you can get 'beneath the surface and beyond the rhetoric', and how taking time to work at relationships is a necessary part of the task. If we are genuinely committed to working effectively for children's futures, professionals need to be sufficiently at ease with one another to be able to concentrate on the work (rather than be distracted by each other). The work is about improving children's lives, because indeed 'every child matters'.

Andrew Cooper
Professor of Social Work, University of East London and the Tavistock Clinic

September 2007

1 Executive Summary

Background

The *Every Child Matters* Action Learning project was designed to promote the cultural change processes necessary to deliver the *Every Child Matters (ECM): Change for Children* programme and outcomes framework in Hartlepool. It worked with a number of operational managers/ senior practitioners from across the sectors in Hartlepool as Common Assessment Framework (CAF) or Integrated Working 'champions', and also addressed wider organisational issues relating to partnership working and needs analysis and planning.

The project has operated primarily through an action learning set (ALS) comprising operational managers and senior practitioners from across local authority departments and external agencies. The ALS met on a monthly basis for half a day from October 2006 to June 2007. In addition, two whole system learning events were held to promote wider ownership of the action learning set inquiry by extending it to participating agencies. These events, which were well attended, also served to forge new links between members of the set, participants and other agencies. This report builds on the earlier findings and recommendations of the Interim Report (March 2007).

Participatory approach, experiential learning and local ownership

It is important to note that the main findings of the project have arisen entirely from action learning set members working together and with participants at the two whole system events.

The advantage of action learning as a method is its practical focus on experiential learning, which generates local ownership and testing of findings. This marks it out from more traditional approaches where external consultants report on what *they* have found. On a similar participative and experiential basis, many of the recommendations were tested and refined in practice by project participants.

Key findings

The project identified that there are a number of challenges to the development of integrated working to deliver the *Every Child Matters* outcomes framework. These include the need for;

- Appreciation of the diversity of professional roles and responsibilities.
- Respect for each others' skills and knowledge.
- Achievable and realistic goals.
- Joint working together with retention of core professional identities and strengths.
- Prioritising time to deal with changes.
- Going beyond the rhetoric of integrated working to actually doing it.

It is possible for professionals to 'build bridges' and find 'common ground' in order to establish trust and positive relationships across agencies. There are a number of lessons of relevance to a variety of multi-agency forums.

Appreciation of agency remits and priorities must become part of accepted and widespread working practices rather than relying on the quality of inter-personal relationships.

There is now a need for a clear steer on future structures and the nature of the integrated working model that will be adopted in Hartlepool.

Action learning, which engages a mix of operational managers and senior practitioners from across local authority departments and external agencies, is a valuable way of promoting ownership of the ECM agenda on the ground and generating local solutions.

Action learning, as a method, creates a different climate for listening, reflection and dialogue; it allows a more frank exchange of views and deeper exploration of issues of practice.

As an outcome of this project, Hartlepool now has a group of 'integrated working champions' able to model good inter-agency communication and working practices. For set members to continue making a grounded contribution to the future process and practice of integrated working, there is a need to sustain this momentum by providing further opportunities to periodically review and consolidate progress and plan next steps.

Recommendations

The report makes a number of recommendations developed through the action learning set and the two whole system events. The recommendations cover a range of issues and actions including:

- **Identify the needs of communities and families**

The views of parents and children should be at the heart of the integrated working agenda through genuine, high quality service user participation in the development of services to meet needs. Practitioners should also be encouraged to adopt a more proactive approach to information gathering about needs.

- **Share information about what services are available**

Services should be mapped to provide an overview of existing services and encourage more effective 'marketing' of what is available. There should be exploration of the scope to provide more information on-line.

- **Promote opportunities for exchange and sharing**

There should be a variety of opportunities for informal exchange and sharing across different professional groupings and agencies, including induction, networking events, formal lunches, open days, joint meetings, training courses and work shadowing. These should not be confined to new staff and should extend across the range of roles and seniorities. Ways need to be found for set members to build on the success of the project, for example, by freeing up some time to allow them to develop their roles on the ground as 'integrated working champions'. Specifically the 'Look who's talking' project should be rolled out to all Primary Schools in Hartlepool.

- **Make multi-agency forums work more effectively**

All partners should have a commitment to working in a multi-agency way, demonstrating a respectful and appreciative attitude towards other partners and agencies and acknowledging their constraints. There is also a need for greater clarity of the vision for the *Every Child Matters* agenda at strategic level. The Children's Trust plays a pivotal role in shaping the integrated working model for Hartlepool. It should operate on the basis of sound evidence of the needs of children and families; clarity of 'core business' for each service; avoidance of duplication of effort and services; appropriate protocols for levels of confidentiality and sharing of information across services; and a preventative approach. All staff should have a greater understanding of and timely access to the Integrated Working and Information Sharing (IWIS) programme.

- **Promote organisational and professional cultural change**

As a starting point for communication and future development, there is a need to encourage wider recognition of the strengths of work that goes on within and between different agencies. Establishing expectations about high professional standards of behaviour in relation to inter-professional interactions is vital. Encouraging the practice of giving and seeking useful challenge and feedback (from 'critical friends') can bring about enduring changes in behaviour. Practical measures that can also contribute to cultural change include consideration of the management of meetings to make them more effective; co-location of services, investigation of how funding structures may support or hinder holistic working and wider sharing; and review of management practice and style at both strategic and operational level of the *Every Child Matters* agenda.

2 Introduction

This report summarises the progress and findings from the *Every Child Matters* Action Learning project which ran between July 2006 and June 2007.

The main aims of this project were to:

- Develop 14 operational managers/ senior practitioners from across the sectors in Hartlepool as Common Assessment Framework (CAF) or Integrated Working 'champions'.
- Support the cultural change processes that need to take place to deliver the *Every Child Matters* (ECM): *Change for Children* programme and the outcomes framework.
- Address wider organisational issues relating to partnership working and needs analysis and planning.

This report builds on the early findings and recommendations of the ALS (October 2006 to January 2007) and the January whole system event (WSE) contained in the Interim Report (March 2007).

3 Action Learning and Organisational Change

The project has operated primarily through an action learning set (ALS)¹ comprising operational managers and senior practitioners from across local authority departments and external agencies. It was considered essential to engage these tiers in order to promote ownership of the ECM agenda on the ground and generate local solutions to drive forward the integrated working agenda within Hartlepool. In order to widen ownership of the project and ECM agenda beyond those in the ALS, two whole system learning events (WSEs) were held to take the action inquiry out in all directions across the sectors. This section summarises the progress and impact of the action learning set.

3.1 Membership

The following agencies/ sectors were represented within the ALS at the outset: Barnardo's, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Children's Services (Primary and Secondary Schools, Extended Schools and Social Care), Connexions, Health Visiting, Police, West View Project, Youth Offending Services, and the Youth Service. Over the life of the project four representatives (Police, Secondary Schools, Barnardo's, & CAMHS) withdrew from the group due to changes in job remit, position in the organisation, promotion and decisions about preferred learning style. The set, comprising 14 members at the outset, was already large by most standards; over the course of the project numbers reduced to a more manageable size.

¹ Action learning is a continuous process of learning and reflection that occurs through members of the group or set coming together on a regular basis to work on real issues and get things done. The participants learn from each other and drive forward matters of concern with the support of other members of the set.

3.2 Progress

From October 2006 to May 2007 the group met for a half day each month with the first whole system event being held on 25th January and the second on 14th June 2007.

3.2.1 October 2006-January 2007

During the first session of the ALS group members agreed ground rules; and through a visioning and challenges exercise, identified an overarching question for the group's monthly action/reflection cycles;

- **How are we discovering the common ground . . . and then building bridges?**

In the next two sessions, members developed and worked on individual questions relating to integrated working which contributed to the overarching question. The individual questions fell into three categories: communication within particular communities; communication within structures; and working practices.

During the January session ALS members prepared for their role as 'Story Circle'² facilitators at the January WSE. Progress was reviewed and it was agreed to revisit their individual questions after the WSE.

3.2.2 February-June 2007

In February 2007 ALS members provided feedback on the interim report. They also worked intensively on their individual questions, and formed small learning groups around issues of mutual concern, which were worked on and refined over the next four months. These were:

- *How are we going to develop integrated working, with the initial focus on the relationship between Children's Services Department and Rossmere School, acknowledging all the different teams?*
- *How do we take forward integrated working?³*
- *How can we facilitate understanding and participation, which empowers individuals and groups?*

During the following three sessions each group tracked their learning in preparation for the June 2007 WSE, using an inquiry framework to structure their progress to the group and feedback for the WSE:

- *What I/we did; what happened?*
- *What was different from what I/we had anticipated?*
- *What surprised me/us?*
- *What I/we did not do and what I/we did instead?*
- *What I/we learnt from this?*
- *What can others learn from this?*
- *What is the issue now?*
- *What are the priorities and what specific actions can I/we take now?⁴*

² Story circle is a method for sharing these narratives in a systematic way around a particular theme.

³ This question acquired a more practical focus during March and April: *How do I develop multi-agency working within my team?*

The groups also agreed the titles and themes for their stalls, including an additional stall to help identify a model for integrated working in Hartlepool, which the ALS considered was timely⁵. The four stalls were:

STALL A: Stepping from consultation to participation: brokering good practice

- Learning from good practice
- Appreciating the building blocks which promote genuine participation
- Investigating a potential model for 'brokerage'.

STALL B: Look Who's Talking:

- Developing integrated working between Health, Education and Social Care.
- First steps towards the breaking down of barriers between the three service providers.
- Looking to the future across Hartlepool.
- Come and celebrate with us!

STALL C: Nobody does it better

- How to have an Aston Martin service
- A dynamic approach to induction
- Developing multi-agency links in your service.

STALL D: Imagining the future in Hartlepool now:

help design the integrated working model

- Exploring the nature of the integrated working model that Hartlepool should adopt.
- What are the constraints and how do we bypass them?
- What are the opportunities and what's possible?

3.3 Learning from the cultural change process within the Action Learning Set

Over the course of their meetings, the ALS identified a number of challenges that integrated working poses:

- appreciating the diversity of the set and each others' roles and responsibilities back in the workplace;
- getting workers to respect each others' skills and knowledge;
- setting achievable and realistic goals;
- joint working whilst keeping identity and strengths;
- prioritising time to deal with changes; and
- not just 'talking the talk but walking the walk'.

Reviewing these challenges some nine months down the line, the group has been successful in 'building bridges' and finding 'the common ground' whilst respecting the diversity within the ALS and the professional remits of individual set members. For example, the establishment of trust and positive relationships across agencies has enabled ALS members to work together to identify common concerns, act cooperatively on these, disseminate the learning from their inquiries using innovative methods, and co-facilitate two WSEs. Participants took changes in group membership and unforeseen absences in their stride, briefing each other between set meetings through 'buddying' arrangements and the monthly progress reports. In short, they constantly juggled their commitments and extended their briefs to keep 'the show on the road'. This is a notable

⁴ Adapted from McGill, I. & Brockbank, A. 2004. *The Action Learning Handbook* London: RoutledgeFalmer, p.79 with acknowledgements to Brendan Harpur.

⁵ It was agreed that the fourth stall would be facilitated by one of the Mindful Practice team.

professional achievement given the substantial operational demands on this group of staff.

3.3.1 A climate which promotes listening and dialogue

Consideration of the way that the ALS operated might prove instructive to other multi-agency forums. This attention to process was important in enabling learning. Clear ground rules helped in the early stages, but setting a climate for listening and dialogue, rather than debate and winning an argument, was important.

In December there was an animated discussion about the different ways in which agencies go about obtaining consent from parents and children and young people to share information. A member of the group felt under pressure and potentially under attack when another member of the group voiced their frustration at the consent process of that manager's agency not being rigorous enough. This potential for miscommunication amongst professionals, where agencies have different procedures to gain consent and these are not fully understood, was acknowledged in the frank dialogue that followed: importantly the issue was essentially depersonalised but members saw how easily miscommunication could happen in a multi-agency group.

In January there was more straight talking when the ALS remit was revisited and links to the bigger picture discussed. This frank exchange of views essentially gave group members permission, throughout the remaining months of the project, to voice any concerns as they arose with a confidence that their opinions would be responded to.

3.3.2 Understanding agency remit as part of working practices

Appreciating agency remits and priorities needs to form part of accepted and widespread working practices rather than just relying on the quality of inter-personal relationships. The importance of understanding each other's remits was well summarised in the early stages by one set member:

"What we've got to do is actually start to understand each other's agendas and then we can hopefully get working together. But until we actually do that, we can't work together. All we do is we fight together, and argue together, and say nice things together, but when it actually comes down to the nitty gritty it becomes very difficult."

Some felt that there was a 'culture of personality' within the town, which overly relied on such relationships and where some felt excluded:

"It's almost as if the agencies themselves have assimilated into the culture of the town, because the town is small and their own communities know each other and separate communities such as the Headland, which is quite difficult to break into for people who move into there, and at times it's almost like that with professionals."

The set concluded that integrated working needs to be embedded within working practices where understanding and participation are promoted both up and down the line, starting with the least powerful members of the community.

Working out what the common ground or concerns of different agencies were and building on those in small ways offered a practical way forward for the group looking at improving integrated working within schools. For the group looking at induction, the importance of managers modelling the behaviour they wanted to encourage in their teams was considered important.

3.3.3 Links between the project and the bigger picture

In later set meetings, when trust had become more established, members were more frank and open in sharing their true feelings when they reviewed the project and how it linked to the bigger picture for Hartlepool:

"What this group gives you is time. This group has given me the opportunity and also [forename] used to frighten me so I'd never have approached her/him!"

[Laughs]

". . . I think as a group some of the early things that we did were about breaking down barriers and knowing people from other agencies and getting some respect for what they did and I found it really valuable for that reason. I think those bits are good, but it's the bigger picture."

"I've got a lot out of the group personally and I think it's changed some of my views about multi-agency working and has brought down some barriers for me and has caused me to think very carefully about what I'm actually promoting, so on a personal level I think it's tremendous. But we can all have our little thing about inductions and we're all going to work together to do this, but it needs to go into children's services to say "Right when people have induction we are going to give them time to visit other agencies." So we can do our little bit and it can work very well but at a higher level they've got to commit themselves to say actually we're prepared to let our staff have time to do that, new staff and current staff."

"I think we've got to keep it going beyond June, try to keep the links – [agency names]. . . I think it's helped – [agency name] and us are never going to agree. It's unrealistic to say that [forename] and I are going to sing from the same hymn sheet on every case, because we're not, because we come from different perspectives. But I think what it has given and certainly it's given me is a greater understanding of where they come from. OK, I might not always agree with you but at least it's given me an understanding of why I disagree with you now, and I think that in itself has been helpful within this group".

Reviewing the progress made in the set on the individual and group inquiries and the learning identified in this feedback, the ALS has been successful in responding to most of the challenges identified at the first meeting in October 2006.

3.3.4 Evaluation

Participants contributed to the evaluation of the project in two ways: by completing individual evaluation forms in June and through a discussion in the final ALS debrief session on June 14th. There was strong enthusiasm for the project and the changes in practice it had brought about both for them and their organisations. Some members said they would value a follow up session, perhaps in the autumn.

Key lessons

The experience of being a set member

For most being a member of the ALS has been an experience where they have gained new insights into each other's agencies, the process of integrated working or about a longstanding issue:

"The ALS has given me the opportunity to examine closely the implications of integrated working in a frank and honest way with colleagues from differing backgrounds . . . regular contact generates trust and understanding as well as a willingness to learn from one another".

"There was a moment for me . . . one of those light bulb moments . . . you find out what the community want and then you fit it into one of the five outcomes".

"I found some of the process quite uncomfortable . . . I came into it open minded but also quite defensive . . . but it was really good the way it's developed".

"Being part of a group has been a bit of an eye opener . . . I work very much on my own . . . [it's been] good not to feel it's all down to me. It's been lovely".

"The time to be with each other has been fun and illuminating!"

Many appreciated the time and a good venue to think with colleagues, away from the demands of the workplace, and some said they found the ALS discussions stimulating. Participants were also pleased with how the two WSEs had gone:

"The gradual build up to the whole system events gave me time and space to understand the concept before the events themselves".

"There's a lot going on in terms of training . . . often dry delivery, whole day . . . the two events here, [they've] been half a day, quite snappy . . ."

"Both whole system events went well".

"I particularly liked when we got the feedback from the first WSE . . . we got this really positive feedback . . . it was an instant return . . . if you looked at how it went today [14th June] you could see they were enjoying it and it was different".

Another member said that they particularly valued the wider sense of 'ownership' of the second WSE.

Purpose and selection

Set members felt that the purpose of the ALS and the project as a whole could have been made clearer at the outset. There were some questions about whether the mix in the group of senior practitioners and operational managers was right given the different remits of the two tiers, although this does not seem to have detracted from the overall positive experience of the set.

In terms of any future similar projects, participants felt that allowing a slightly longer lead-in period would allow people to positively 'opt in' after a first briefing. A second briefing just prior to the start of the set itself, could be a further useful opportunity to check out purpose again with the ALS members, particularly for those unfamiliar with the method.

Some anxiety about new approaches is perhaps inevitable and cannot be eliminated; indeed, stepping outside of 'comfort zones' is an acknowledged and necessary step for more transformative learning to take place.

Countering prejudicial thinking as a result of ALS membership

Most respondents said they now appreciated the need to actively build working relationships with other agencies, so that prejudicial thinking is reduced; creating

opportunities to share good practice across agencies was also mentioned. Set members have valued the opportunity to work together in a much more frank and co-operative way. This has had lots of positive benefits in relation to developing a more dialogical way of working, including;

- developing greater tolerance;
- developing an appreciation of the strengths of their own agencies and themselves, as well as of other individuals and agencies;
- greater understanding of roles;
- enhanced awareness of organisational limitations;
- the development of greater trust; and
- developing deeper understanding of their own attitudes and other blocks to more effective multi-agency working.

"I think we are all more tolerant of each other's situation and have more understanding of roles . . . awareness of members as people who can be trusted . . . [this] has reminded me to be curious about how things work".

"I am working more closely with colleagues [from other agencies] and I have a much greater understanding of their remit, strengths and limitations . . . Within [my agency] I will endeavour to generate a more positive attitude towards other agencies and actively encourage staff to visit and shadow other workers".

"I have re-evaluated my approach to multi agency working and identified my own prejudice. Some of the agencies represented are ones I have complained about in the past. I am now not allowing myself to fall into the way of being negative about others".

"I am now careful to consider reasons why others respond in particular ways and question thresholds rather than apportion blame for not doing what I expect. I feel [more able] to ask for explanations of actions".

Working practices/culture within and across organisations

As well as individual attitudinal change there was evidence that being part of the ALS had helped members reflect more widely on working practices and organisational culture. The view at the end of the project was that improving communication needed to become part of working practices:

"[The ALS] has made me look more closely at the way communications are conducted in my own section, examining how effective they are in terms of our own working practices".

"I am more aware of the attitudes of my own staff and the competitiveness of agencies in Hartlepool. I have challenged staff about attitudes to other agency workers and actively promote getting to know what other agencies do. I am encouraging staff to make more contact and find out why others work in particular ways".

"I feel I am more aware of barriers to integrated working and the impact of organisational culture upon outlook and motivation".

One member of the group came up with this helpful 'salad bowl' metaphor for integrated working at its best:

". . . Within that there are lettuce, tomatoes, egg and there might be a radish . . . on their own they have great value, they taste different and they taste nice – and they complement each other – if you put them in

the stew pot they all become the same - [a salad bowl] that's the way it should be in integrated services."

3.4 Identifying the vision and structures

Alongside these positive benefits, set members were keen to have a clearer steer on future structures and the integrated working model that Hartlepool will adopt:

"We can go through all this relationship stuff, and talk about everybody moving forward, developing the ethos and everybody understanding the ethos, and I think most people do understand the ethos, and understand its value . . . There's got to be structures in place which actually mean that things can be maintained and sustained in terms of integrated working."

"Nobody's telling us in Hartlepool what the plan is. It looks as if we're all just going to continue to work as we are, but is the eventual plan for us to go into these integrated working teams? That's the kind of thing I'd like to know."

"In reality, in fairness, I don't think they know. I think Building Schools for the Future is central to where we'll all end up . . . I see us all eventually based on school sites."

"What model are we following? . . . And people are saying this to us: Are you keeping this building? That's the kind of thing we would like to know, but I don't think that's at all clear."

"People think you do know as a manager what the structure will be but you're just not telling! This can make staff more unsettled."

It would seem sensible to respond as soon as feasible to this mixture of uncertainty, momentum and anticipation: set members appear to be ready for the next steps.

3.5 Building on the learning from the Action Learning Set

The development of the set discussions over time shows how set members were able to move from an individual focus on problem-solving in relation to a specific issue or question, to some reframing of those issues into broader collaborative, practical action around a common issue or concern. In addition, there is evidence of the development of self-insight into personal and organisational processes of learning and other aspects of personal development and organisational culture.

Some set members expressed a wish to meet up periodically to review and consolidate progress and plan next steps, perhaps starting in the autumn 2007. The importance of dissemination of the final report and roll out of specific learning from the market stalls was also mentioned; members are very committed to the learning from their particular integrated working projects.

One aim of the project was to create 'integrated working champions' and it is fair to say that Hartlepool now has such a group of staff who can model good inter-agency communication and working practices. As such they could make a valuable, grounded contribution to the future process and practice of integrated working in Hartlepool.

It is a strong recommendation of the facilitation team that creative ways need to be found of encouraging set members to build on the success of the project over the coming year, for example, by freeing up some time to allow them to develop their roles

on the ground as 'integrated working champions'. "We need to think about how to keep people energised and motivated" as one set member aptly put it after the June WSE.

Despite set members' concerns about purpose during the early stages and selection for this ALS, there is much evidence that the participative methods, facilitation and design of this project have been successful in meeting the aims of the project as a whole. The design might usefully be adapted to other contexts or to work on specific issues, such as other linked policy initiatives designed to improve outcomes for children and families in Hartlepool.

4 January 2007 Whole System Event

The first WSE at the mid point of the project was intended to promote wider ownership of the *Every Child Matters* action learning set inquiry by participating agencies and to forge new links between members of the set and those attending the event. It was planned to enable maximum participation and opportunities for dialogue between different agencies. The event was well attended with representation from Education, Children's Services, Neighbourhood Services, Regeneration and Planning and a variety of partner agencies, including the NHS, Connexions, Housing Hartlepool, the Probation Service, Hartlepool PCT, and voluntary sector agencies.

The design of the event first established the common ground between the participants as a basis for building trust and relationships. It then went on to identify shared issues and more concretely what actions needed to be taken by individuals and agencies to build bridges between agencies. The evaluation of the day indicated that it was a positive and well received event. The interim report, published in March 2007, outlined in some detail the progress to date, and then summarised the findings and recommendations arising from the first five months of the project.

5 June 2007 Whole System Event

5.1 Introduction

This section explores the issues discussed at the whole system event held in June 2007, which built on the earlier WSE held in January.

This event attracted about 40 professionals and others concerned with the *Every Child Matters* agenda in Hartlepool. Participants were drawn from a range of local authority departments including Education, Children's Services, Connexions, Neighbourhood Services, Regeneration and Planning and a variety of partner agencies, including the NHS, Housing Hartlepool, the Probation Service, Hartlepool PCT, and voluntary and community based agencies. This was a similar range of participants to the January event, although the second event was attended by more representatives from different management tiers, including more strategic level managers.

Both events were designed to promote wider ownership of the *Every Child Matters* action learning set inquiry by participating agencies, and forge new links between members of the set and those attending. In addition, the second event was designed to disseminate the learning from the ALS members' inquiries in the form of market stalls and propose ways of moving the agenda on in Hartlepool over the next year. Details of the June WSE programme are included in Annex 1.

5.2 Feedback from the market stalls

The June event was based around the facilitation of a series of 'market stalls' on themes identified by the ALS members as described in section 3.2.2 above. They took a lead role in

identifying the most appropriate themes for these stalls and in the facilitation of the stalls on the day. Each stall ran twice during the morning. A summary of the discussions from each stall is provided below.

STALL A: Stepping from consultation to participation: brokering good practice



This stall looked at how to move from consultation to participation. Participants took part in an exercise using 'Hart's ladder of community participation' to help them identify where their organisation fits along the 'continuum' of participation⁶. The discussion explored issues about where responsibility for participation lies; how participation can mean different things to different people; how disadvantaged groups are often excluded from participation; and how to judge the quality of participation. In terms of next steps in Hartlepool, participants wanted to see a move to a 'brokerage model of services' with users at the centre, shaping local service delivery.

⁶ This is a model of the participation of young people, taken from Hart, R (1992) *Children's Participation: from tokenism to citizenship*, UNICEF

STALL B: Look Who's Talking



This stall used the learning from the 'Look who's talking' event held at a local primary school in May to evaluate good practice, and explore challenges around integrated working. These included available time, differences in perception of each other's roles and difficulties in commissioning services, including financial constraints and school targets. The stall began by asking small groups of participants to build a structure, which represented good multi-agency working, using Lego bricks. Although on the surface this seemed quite a straightforward task, it was actually very difficult: the more complex the structure became the more likely it was to collapse. The ensuing discussions explored: the need for a strong base; the importance of the child at the centre; having pathways in and out; services that are moveable; and capacity building. The group also noted that whilst collapses will occur we have to keep re-building. An example of this was to develop an ethos and strategy to keep the core business of a multi-agency group going despite staff turnover and occasional absences. In terms of next steps, participants wanted to see the model rolled out to all primary schools in Hartlepool.

STALL C: Nobody does it better



This stall discussed the practical issues in relation to better inter-agency working. This included developing trust, exchanging information, sharing experiences and developing knowledge of the constraints of others. The group explored the need to be realistic about this – to involve a small number of agencies in induction and shadowing arrangements, and to keep visits short and focussed. It was noted that staff and managers may have different ideas about the appropriate agencies for such reciprocal arrangements and that staff should be able to identify their own priorities for these activities, with guidance for new staff. A key lesson is that this kind of sharing and learning can be undertaken with very little disruption to core business and can provide *“a real opportunity to dispel myths, preconceptions and false assumptions”*.

STALL D: Imagining the future in Hartlepool now: help design the integrated working model



This stall explored the potential role of the Children's Trust in the future. This was seen as being in a pivotal position to shape and take the lead in commissioning services based on a sound analysis of needs; with this analysis itself based on the agenda of the parents and children. It would need to have a good knowledge of who the service users are and who is providing services to particular families; in particular it would avoid duplication of effort and services, and would be able to share information within appropriate protocols for levels of confidentiality. The emphasis would be on prevention and redirection of present efforts. There would be greater clarity about 'core business' - exactly who does what and the specific skills that particular professional groups are able to offer. There would be a "big team ethic" with small groups working on particular issues. This would cut across notions of 'ownership' which tend to be based on the needs of the professional groups, rather than those of the children and families.

The challenges identified included;

- the need to make decisions about what services no longer need to be provided;
- how to ensure explicit and consistent messages to each other and to service users;
- how to instil greater understanding of each other's agendas and specific remits;
- how to retain any efficiency savings within the service;
- developing quality control across services to support joint commissioning; and
- rationalisation of targets and objectives.

It was considered that co-location of professional groups may support better integrated working and that home-based working was not suitable for frontline staff working with vulnerable children and families. There was a strong recognition that much of this requires a change in mindsets about different agencies and roles and that there is a need to start working differently now in order to effect cultural change of this kind.

The stalls were followed by a series of story circles based on small self forming groups, also facilitated by members of the Action Learning Set. Their focus was to identify the specific actions for individuals that arise from the issues raised during the morning. These were reported back to a final plenary session. Annex 2 lists the specific actions identified and the members of each group. The issues arising from both the stalls and the story circles are discussed in section 5.4 below.

5.3 General views of the event

As in January 2007, the evaluation of the day suggests that it was a useful and informative event which gave a wider group of professionals a chance to explore the tensions and possibilities of integrated working and to network with each other. Story circles did not work quite as well as in January, perhaps because less time was given to this approach and it was unfamiliar to those who had not attended the first WSE. However, it is evident that the key lessons in relation to different working practices, such as challenging perceptions, understanding others' roles, being appreciative and so on have been more widely understood.

5.4 Summary of key issues and actions

There is a notable synergy of issues and actions explored at the stalls and through the story circles, and those identified in the Interim Report, which focused on the early progress of the ALS and the January WSE.

In summary, these were:

- Identify needs of communities and families.
- Share information about what services are available.
- Promote opportunities for exchange and sharing.
- Make multi-agency forums work more effectively.
- Promote organisational and professional cultural change; including
 - Development of trust
 - Being appreciative
 - Be critical friends
 - Developing a facilitative management style
 - Make meetings more effective.

These issues and actions are still very relevant. Understanding of them has widened and deepened throughout the project and is now much more 'embedded' than in January 2007. There is also a discernible shift in both the ALS and amongst participants at the June whole system event. Initially the emphasis was on the need to build better working relationships as a foundation of integrated working. The tone of the later discussions is now much more about how to make small, practical and realistic changes so that integrated working becomes part of mainstream working practices and is therefore more sustainable. The existence and quality of relationships, which may not survive changes in staffing and structures, are not relied on to the same degree as before and are not seen as the main solution. The individual actions identified at the June WSE are listed below under each of the headings derived from the first event.

Identify the needs of communities and families

- Include the participation of children, young people and communities as a standard agenda item at all staff meetings etc.

Share information about what services are available.

- Produce a short glossary of information about different agencies including their mission statement and a practical guide to *Who's Who* – so that it's clear who to go to for information – who best fits the provision needed.

Promote opportunities for exchange and sharing.

- Identify a range of opportunities, both formal and informal, to appreciate and understand others' roles and responsibilities.
- Roll out "Look Who's Talking" to Primary Schools in Hartlepool.
- Promote three hours in induction to other agencies – throughout our group.
- Make contact with other agencies an expected and valued part of induction.
- Free up at least an hour per week within staff teams to allow visits to others.
- Open out invitations to events coming up from other agencies/professions.
- Organise "Exchange student" placements.

Make multi-agency forums work more effectively

- Undertake a 'reality check' – check that all organisations know and understand what is meant by integrated working.
- Review and monitor the implementation of IWIS through multi-agency communication forums.
- [Individuals to] map [their] own 'circles of influence'.
- Identify and retain sight of each agency's core business within the integration process.

Promote organisational and professional cultural change

- Challenge negative comments and offer information to build confidence.
- Organise local discussions about what the changes in integrated working mean to us.
- Learn to say "thank you" and "sorry".

These actions mirror the kind of issues and action identified earlier. What is distinctive is that the ALS members have had a chance to deepen and test their learning between the two events. They have become more critical and attuned to the nuances of language and the rhetoric of 'integrated' or partnership working. There is also a more critical perspective about the nature of 'participation' and what that might mean in practice. Finally, there is a deeper understanding of the need to have a sense of your own 'core business' in order to fully understand the potential and limits of integrated working.

6 Conclusions and Recommendations

There is evidence that the ALS participants are actively 'championing' the ECM agenda within and across their agencies. Set members have modelled the behaviours and actions that they wish to see adopted more widely. They have a deeper understanding of the nature and roles of other agencies, a deeper understanding of terminology and language used by other services and a greater awareness of the gaps in their own knowledge, even of the most closely related services. They are aware that relatively simple exchanges between agencies can provide valuable learning opportunities.

Both whole system events were well received and appear to have crystallised thinking amongst ALS members and wider colleagues and identified a series of actions to move the agenda forward. Understanding of the implementation of integrated working has widened and deepened throughout the project and it is evident that this is now much more 'embedded' than in January 2007. Subtle but important shifts in understanding

are discernible amongst the action learning set members and WSE participants. Initially the emphasis was on the need to build better working relationships as a foundation of integrated working. The tone of the discussions now is much more about how to make small, practical and realistic changes so that integrated working becomes part of mainstream working practices and is therefore more sustainable.

The participative action inquiry approach, which underpins this project, is designed to promote individual and collective ownership of the ECM agenda. This is the context in which the following recommendations have been generated. An important next step is for strategic level managers to consider how they might best respond to and participate in some of the recommendations, thus championing the collective vision and mobilising more sections of the ECM workforce to further improve outcomes for the children of Hartlepool.

Recommendations

These were originally developed for the interim report. The period since that report has provided opportunities to test out and refine these recommendations and hence enhanced their validity; some are already being taken forward by ALS members and by participants who attended the January and/or the June WSE. They are reproduced here with some additional refinements.

Identify the needs of communities and families.

- a) Ensure the analysis of need is based on the agenda of parents and children themselves.
- b) Develop a more nuanced and critical analysis of the quality of participation by parents and children in the development of services to meet their needs.
- c) Encourage a more proactive approach to information gathering about needs and widen responsibilities for gathering such intelligence by making it part of routine practitioner visits to children and families, and as a standard agenda item at all staff meetings.
- d) Establish a sound evidence base of who the service users are and who is providing services to particular families.

Share information about what services are available.

- e) Identify responsibility for mapping the services that exist already to provide an overview of existing services and market this more effectively.
- f) Explore the scope for developing the existing on-line directory on the local authority website, updating it and publicising it more widely to different audiences.
- g) Explore the scope for the development of an *Every Child Matters* multi-agency website.

Promote opportunities for exchange and sharing

- h) Explore creative ways for set members to build on the success of the project, for example, by freeing up some time to allow them to develop their roles on the ground as 'integrated working champions'.
- i) Roll out 'Look who's talking' to all Primary Schools in Hartlepool.

- j) Provide a variety of opportunities for informal exchange and sharing across different professional groupings and agencies, including induction, networking events, formal lunches, open days, joint meetings, training courses and work shadowing.
- k) Allow staff to identify their own priorities for such exchanges, provide guidance to new staff and ensure senior management support for staff participation in these activities. Ensure that such opportunities include a mix of staff roles and seniorities.
- l) Consider what kind of outcomes might be expected from such exchanges and how these should be measured.
- m) Ensure that such opportunities are rolled out in phases to all staff, rather than just new staff or those in training.

Make multi-agency forums work more effectively.

- n) Provide greater clarity of the vision for the *Every Child Matters* agenda at strategic level.
- o) Ensure that the Children's Trust plays a pivotal role in the integrated working model for Hartlepool and is able to operate on the basis of;
 - o Sound evidence of the needs of children and families.
 - o Clarity of 'core business' for each service and avoidance of duplication of effort and services.
 - o Appropriate protocols for levels of confidentiality and sharing of information across services.
 - o A preventative approach.
- p) Ensure that staff from all key agencies, especially those most likely to be completing CAFs, have a greater understanding of and timely access to the Integrated Working and Information Sharing (IWIS) programme.⁷
- q) Ensure that all partners have a commitment to working in a multi-agency way, demonstrating a respectful and appreciative attitude towards other partners and agencies and acknowledging their constraints.
- r) Explore the potential to rationalise targets and objectives across services and to establish quality control mechanisms across services to support joint commissioning.
- s) Consider the extension of action learning within and across agencies to develop awareness of the barriers that hinder communication and effective joint working, and of strategies to overcome them.

Promote organisational and professional cultural change

- t) Explore the options for co-location of services.

⁷ The national evaluation of the Common Assessment and Lead Professional Guidance and Implementation in 2005-6 (Brandon et al, 2006) found that Education and Health professionals were most likely to be completing CAFs <http://64.233.183.104/search?q=cache:4y1-mENa3goJ:www.dfes.gov.uk/research/programmeofresearch/projectinformation.cfm%3Fprojectid%3D14512%26resultspage%3D1+common+assessment+lead+professional+brandon&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=6&gl=uk>. A recent local evaluation 'What really matters in integrated working? Report of a qualitative evaluation of a 'Team around the Child' ISA Trailblazer' supported these early findings, but with some local variation across the two local authorities regarding CAFs and who took on the lead professional role. <http://www.mindfulpractice.co.uk/whatnew.htm>

- u) Investigate how funding structures may support or hinder holistic working and wider sharing, including the options for the retention of any efficiency savings within the service.
 - v) Encourage the recognition of strengths of the work that goes on within different agencies, as a starting point for communication and future development.
 - w) Expect high professional standards of behaviour in relation to politeness, for example, in tendering apologies or appreciating others' contributions in inter-professional interactions.
 - x) Promote personal responsibility in relation to meetings and potential contribution in order to ensure effective use of time.
 - y) Encourage the practice of giving and seeking useful challenge and feedback from 'critical friends'.
 - z) Consider the challenges to management practice and style at strategic and operational level of the *Every Child Matters* agenda.
-

Annex 1 Details of the June WSE programme

Every Child Matters: Change for Children in Hartlepool
Whole System Event at the Staincliffe Hotel, Seaton Carew on Thursday 14th June
2007, 9.30am to 1.00pm followed by lunch

How are discovering the common ground . . . and then building bridges?

The aims of the Whole System Event are to:

- Share learning from the *Every Child Matters* Action Learning Set group inquiries
- Strengthen links in the integrated working networks across Hartlepool and make new links
- Widen ownership of the *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* agenda in Hartlepool
- Propose ways of moving the agenda on in the coming 12 months.

PROGRAMME

- 9.30 *Registration, refreshments and an opportunity to look around the market stalls*
- 9.45 Welcome. Jocelyn Jones, Mindful Practice.
- 9.50 Opening address: Julia Moller, Assistant Director (Children's Services), Barnardo's North East.
- 9.55 Introduction to the Marketplace. Jocelyn Jones, Mindful Practice.
- 10.00 Market stall 1.
- 10.25 Move to next choice stall
- 10.30 Market stall 2
- 10.55 *Tea/Coffee and a further opportunity to browse the market stalls/ talk informally*
- 11.20 Introduction to Story Circle. Jocelyn Jones, Mindful Practice
- 11.25 Story Circle in self forming groups of 6/7, facilitated by members of the Action Learning Set.
- 11.50 Cross circle dialogue: What does this mean for me/us? What am I/ are we going to do next? One to three actions identified which participants in each circle commit to.
- 12.20 Short break to walk around and look at the emerging actions.
- 12.30 Plenary. Report back from each circle. Jocelyn Jones, Mindful Practice.
- 12.50 Closing address 'Taking this forward in Hartlepool': Sue Johnson, Assistant Director (Planning & Service Integration), Hartlepool Children's Service Department.
- 1.00 *Lunch*

This event is being co-facilitated by Jocelyn Jones, Mindful Practice Ltd, Leicester www.mindfulpractice.co.uk, Dr Cathy Sharp, Research for Real Ltd, Edinburgh www.research-for-real.co.uk, and members of the Hartlepool *Every Child Matters* Action Learning Set.

Annex 2 Membership and feedback from the June WSE story circles

Story Circle 1

Membership

Ali McAdams
Peter Knights
Ian Merritt
Sue Johnson
Sheila O'Connor
Kay Porritt

Actions

- Roll out "Look Who's Talking" to Primary Schools in Hartlepool.
- Promote three hours in induction to other agencies – throughout our group.
- Don't lose sight of core business within the integration process.

Story Circle 2

Membership

Chris Wise
Danny Dunleavy
Miriam Robertson
Julia Moller
Avis Brough
Lindsay Gould
Richard Wrighton

Actions

- Free up at least an hour per week within staff team to allow visits to others.
- Challenge negative comments and offer information to build confidence.
- Have discussions about what the changes in integrated working mean to us?

Story Circle 3

Membership

Chris Etherington
Phil Holland
Mark Smith
John Devenney
Cathy Sharp

Actions

- Opening out invitation to events coming up from other agencies/professions.
- Collate short glossary of info from mission statement from agency and a practical guide to Who's Who – who to go to for information – who best fits provision needed.

Story Circle 4

Membership

Louise Hurst
Pam Swainson
Sally Forth
Barbara Lyle

Terry Ashley

Actions

- “Thank you” and “sorry”.
- Expected and valued part of induction.

Story Circle 5

Membership

Brian Robinson
Dawn Gilderoy
Sandra Saint
John Robinson
Simon Richardson
Andrew Hebron

Actions

- Identify a range of opportunities, both formal and informal, to appreciate and understand others' roles and responsibilities.
- Individuals to map their own circle of influence.
- Standard agenda on all staff meetings etc. should be the participation of children, young people and communities.

Story Circle 6

Membership

Jocelyn Jones
Pauline Hunter
Sarah Foster
Rukhsana Rafiq
Francesca Magog
Mark Gwilt
Judith Hodgson

Actions

- Reality Check – Do all organisations know and understand what is meant by integrated working?
 - Multi-agency communication forums to review and monitor the implementation of IWIS
 - “Exchange student” placement.
-