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Learning to Collaborate:

Lessons in Effective Partnership Working in Health and Social Care



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Purpose of the Guide

In an increasingly complex world, many issues and problems - such as health inequalities, crime and community safety, anti-social behaviour and social exclusion - cross professional, sectoral, jurisdictional and organisational boundaries. As a consequence, no one individual or organisation has the capacity to resolve these problems unilaterally; they require collaborative action. Although this form of working has occurred sporadically in particular policy areas over the last 20 years, it is now firmly rooted as the dominant paradigm in the design and delivery of public services across all areas of policy and at different levels of governance. Flagship reports from Welsh Assembly Government, notably 'Making the Connections' and its' response to the Beecham Review both advocate this partnership approach at all levels of governance and across all policy areas.

Following an exhaustive review of the literature on collaborative working (Working in Collaboration: Learning from Theory and Practice, 2007), this guide has been prepared for managers and practitioners working specifically in health and social care, but also for others who are involved in partnership working in the public sector. It aims to provide advice and guidance on making collaboration between people and agencies work effectively in practice. It is considered that it has value for those people who are already engaged in collaborative ventures and have some experience of this form of working, but also for those who may be contemplating collaboration for the first time. There are already a number of both general and policy specific guides that aim to provide guidance on partnership working, and although there are many messages that are similar, this guide attempts to add value rather than repeat them. Good examples of existing guides include:

- Department for Communities and Local Government (2006) *Supporting People for Better Health: A Guide to Partnership Working London:* DCLG
- Hardy, B. Hudson, B. and Waddington, E. (2000) *What makes a good partnership? A partnership assessment tool* Leeds: Nuffield Institute for Health
- The Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health (2000) *Taking Your Partners: Using opportunities for inter-agency partnership in mental health* London: The Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health
- Wilson, A. and Charleton, K. (1997) *Making partnerships work: A practical guide for the public, private, voluntary and community sectors* York: York Publishing Services

This current guide does not pretend to guarantee success, but it is likely that ignoring some of the guiding principles, key issues and lessons learnt from evidence-based studies reported in the literature review (Working in Collaboration: Learning from Theory and Practice, 2007) will hinder effective collaborative working or make it less effective.

Although it is very difficult to reduce the complex management of working in collaboration to a relatively short guide, the following attempts to distil the essence of the task to twelve key messages as follows:

- Collaboration is not a panacea
- Clarity of purpose is a fundamental prerequisite
- Decide on who does what
- Effective collaboration relies on trust
- Collaboration needs appropriate leadership
- People working in collaboration need the right skills and attributes
- There is no substitute for effective governance
- Measure success and outcomes
- Resourcing is crucial
- Delivery is difficult
- Engage with the public
- Promote learning

A brief discussion of each of these key messages now follows, although it is important to recognise that there is a high degree of interdependency between them. At the end of each section, a key learning point is highlighted to underline the main messages.

Collaboration is not a Panacea

The motivations inducing individuals and organisations to work together are complex and diverse (Figure 1). Some are external and stem in part from government's attempts to co-ordinate and integrate the design and delivery of public services – sometimes referred to as 'joined up' government – and evidenced in a variety of interventions, including statutory duties, policy instruments, financial and other incentives. The Welsh Assembly Government is firmly committed to the 'partnership' model and recent pronouncements in the shape of 'Making the Connections', the Beecham Review and Delivering Beyond Boundaries further endorse this approach. The advantages of this approach lie in increased efficiency, better use of limited resources, tackling complex problems, enhancing learning and innovation, and improving the potential for inclusive and participative governance.

Figure 1: WHY DO PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS COLLABORATE?

- Because they are forced to through government or statutory edict
- To exercise power or control over other people or organisations i.e. to improve strategic position
- To reciprocate through co-operation and co-ordination
- To promote greater efficiency in the use of scarce resources
- To reduce the transaction costs of other forms of organising – markets and hierarchies
- To search for stability by reducing environmental turbulence and uncertainty, and by sharing risks
- To improve their reputation, image or profile
- To access new resources – money, skills and staff
- To promote individual and organisational learning
- To design services around the needs of citizens and clients

Other motivations and drivers are internal to individuals and organisations. Practitioners and managers promote forms of co-operative behaviour for personal, professional or work-related reasons. For instance, many professionals are driven by altruism believing that the public interest or client needs should be at the centre of public service organisation, demanding integrated and co-ordinated frameworks of service planning and delivery. Some organisations consider exchanging and sharing resources to achieve jointly agreed purposes and benefits, to be more efficient in the use of resources, reduce transaction costs, and share risks and uncertainty about the future.

There are clearly costs and benefits to different forms of collaborative working (See Appendix 1). These need to be identified, understood and subjected to close scrutiny. The benefits of collaboration are potentially attractive and include sharing ideas, knowledge and resources to achieve collectively synergies that individual organisations would not be able to produce acting independently. Collaboration offers organisations the opportunity of influencing others to behave differently and co-operatively, and the process can be beneficial in terms of building trusting relationships and social capital.

Collaboration is manifested in different forms and processes, and some of the language and terminology used to describe these can be confusing. In the absence of consensus on these terms, it is very important to seek clarity of meaning. In particular, whether joint activity involves low degrees of co-operation such as information exchange, whether the objective is to secure better co-ordination of services, or whether a high degree of interaction is envisaged to design and deliver integrated services. Key decisions over the form of collaboration need to address whether it is geared to design and formulation, or whether it involves a delivery mechanism. Equally, whether the initiative is time-limited or whether it becomes a permanent feature of the institutional landscape.

Key Learning Point 1

There is a need at the outset of collaborative initiatives to understand the reasons organisations and individuals seek to work together. It is not a panacea for all forms of public service design and delivery. The compatibility and transparency of motives is highly influential on the success of collaboration. There are costs and benefits to different forms of collaboration which need to be critically evaluated.

Clarity of Purpose is a Fundamental Prerequisite

Given that collaboration can be interpreted in a number of ways and that different partners may have different aspirations and motivations, it is critical to develop a clear sense of purpose about the objectives of the collaboration, and moreover, that this is perceived to be realistic and attainable. It is inevitable that these will require negotiation and refinement but it is important to achieve an early resolution to these issues. Collaborations that proceed in the absence of initial clarity invariably build up problems in the future, particularly at the implementation stage.

The clarity of purpose involves a process that aims to build a shared and collective vision, values and set of principles to underpin the collaborative working. This needs to be translated into jointly agreed aims and objectives which are of a sufficient quality both to drive the delivery of any programmes or projects, and which can be used to inform outcomes for the beneficiaries of the joint actions. There is a tendency for some vision and value exercises to be bland, high level and rhetorical, to enable disparate stakeholders to easily 'buy into' the collaboration, and avoid early potential conflict that may sour future progress. However, whilst recognising this danger, a balance needs to be struck at the start to negotiate a sufficient consensus and clarity of purpose to secure joint action, and to allow flexibility for the collaborative strategy to 'emerge' and be crafted rather than be predetermined from the outset.

The collaboration should focus on generating and agreeing a joint set of aims and objectives that are relevant to it. These should be linked to outcomes. However, it needs to be acknowledged that individual partners will be engaged in separate 'non-collaboration' business which may contribute to or influence the jointly agreed aims and objectives, and the relationship between them needs to be understood. (Hardy et al, 2000).

Key Learning Point 2

Collaboration requires negotiation to secure clarity of purpose and expected outcomes, and realism of objectives. This should promote greater commitment and ownership from partners, and is essential for effective implementation and informed evaluation.

Decide On Who Does What

Working in collaboration requires an acute understanding and appreciation of the prevailing institutional domain including the roles, responsibilities, statutory and legal powers, financial resources and operating frameworks of the partnering organisations. A lack of sensitivity about these parameters can lead to conflict and accusations over unwarranted incursions into jealously guarded territories. Collaboration implies that organisations are prepared to cede power to others, but this needs to be carefully negotiated against the background of certain fixed roles and responsibilities. Although recent legislation has aimed to make it easier for certain organisations to work together more effectively (e.g general power of well being for local authorities, and Section 31 Flexibilities of the Health Act), these are not meant to compromise the sovereignty of individual organisations.

At a practical level, an understanding of roles and responsibilities is key to both the collaborative process and, in particular, to delivery. The process of collaboration is often lengthy and resource intensive and each partner needs to understand what is expected of them and what they need to contribute. Equally, delivery often requires contributions from a number of different quarters and these will vary depending on who is the best placed to undertake them. Different partners and sectors will have different strengths, networks and resources to call upon, and these need to be deployed appropriately. For example, the voluntary sector is often best placed to undertake public participation because of its close connections with people and communities, whereas the statutory sector can potentially provide more access to resources and professional expertise.

Key Learning Point 3

Clarity about individual agency roles and responsibilities is essential in order to avoid duplication, to promote co-ordination and to secure effective collective purpose and action.

Effective Collaboration Relies on Trust

There is general agreement in the partnership literature that trust is a pivotal factor in determining the effectiveness of collaborative working, although there is less confidence in how this is achieved in practice. In contrast to other forms of working – markets and hierarchies – power relationships are ambiguous, dispersed and contested. It is less likely in these settings that any one individual or agency has the formal power to direct the behaviour of others, and relationships have to be mediated through trust. The notion is a notoriously complex and contested one and various interpretations suggest that it is a mechanism for coping with uncertainty, is a form of risk taking, or involves faith, predictability and goodwill. Without doubt, it takes time and effort to build and sustain, and is both rewarding and efficient as it reduces the high transaction costs of other forms of relationship (Figure 2). However, it is often fragile and can spiral downwards in a cycle of mistrust very rapidly, making repair difficult.

Figure 2: WHAT IS TRUST?

- It is the medium through which exchange relationship between people and organisations are conducted in collaborative environments
- It is the property of the relationship between the trustor and the trustee
- It is a way of coping with risk or uncertainty in an exchange relationship
- It is a belief or expectation that the vulnerability resulting from the acceptance of risk will not be taken advantage of by the other party in the relationship
- It has a dynamic – develops, builds, declines and re-surfaces; it can spiral upwards with mutually reinforcing behaviour, favourable attitudes, moods and emotions; or it can spiral downwards in a cycle of distrust where negative effects are felt
- It is constantly being evaluated
- It can be calculated or come from different sources such as shared value systems, professional competence, similar backgrounds or cultures

Trust can be observed at different levels – organisational, personal and professional, and efforts to promote trusting relationships at all these levels is likely to be a worthwhile investment. At an organisational level, efforts to build a collaborative culture are important. A culture of collaborative working and a shared history of success amongst partners in a local area can be a positive influence on future engagement. However, where this does not exist, and particularly where individuals and organisations have

not worked together before, an early investment in sharing agendas, understanding each other's cultures and working practices, and helping to find ways of overcoming differences in backgrounds and approaches, is considered to be very rewarding (Appendix 2). A failure to be open and honest at an early stage can prove to be destabilising at a later stage in the collaborative process. Therefore, helping to build trust, respect, open communication and methods to resolve conflict need to be developed from the start and this inevitably takes time, energy and commitment.

At a personal or individual level, there is no substitute for ensuring that the 'right' people are involved in collaborative projects. These individuals will need to demonstrate empathy for others, and be skilled in developing and sustaining a network of relationships through trusting behaviours. Status and seniority are less likely to be important in arenas that value equality, fairness, mutual respect and equal contributions.

Trusting relationships will be tested by external circumstances and factors that may encourage division, and the self-interests of parent organisations will be an ever present dilemma to manage. In particular, the costs and benefits of collaboration must be shared amongst the contributors – not necessarily at any one time but certainly over a period of collaborative activity. The importance of undertaking partnership health checks – preferably by an independent agent – can help to monitor levels of trust and the quality of relationships in collaboration.

Figure 3: FACTORS PROMOTING COLLABORATIVE BEHAVIOUR BETWEEN HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PROFESSIONALS

- Articulating one's own roles and responsibilities
- Recognising and respecting the roles, responsibilities and competence of other professions, and developing a high degree of mutual awareness between separate disciplines
- Encouraging flexible role boundaries
- Challenging stereotypes
- Coping with uncertainty and ambiguity
- Facilitation of interprofessional opportunities such as case conferences and meetings
- Handling conflict with other professions
- Working with other professions to assess, plan and provide care
- Co-location
- Balancing preventative and crisis management
- Joint training and secondments
- Working in teams
- Developing protocols and agreements
- Promoting innovations and developing champions
- Securing senior management commitment
- Encouraging positive personal and leadership styles
- Promoting collaborative competencies

(Adapted from Hudson et al, 1997; Engel, 1994; Hornby and Atkins, 2000; Glasby and Lester, 2004)

In view of the problems, tensions and dilemmas that often exist between people from different professions operating in collaborative initiatives, special efforts need to be invested in mitigating these such as joint training, co-location, secondments and other measures that promote inter-professionality as illustrated in Figure 3 (Hudson, 2006).

Key Learning Point 4

Building and sustaining trust between organisations, individuals and professionals is likely to encourage collective purpose and action, and build social capital and an overall culture of collaboration.

Collaboration Needs Appropriate Leadership

The leadership function in collaborative arenas needs to reflect shared responsibilities, complex systems, diversity, contested, diverse and fragmented sources of power, and divergent value systems and cultures. Leadership behaviour needs to inspire, nurture, support and communicate with individuals, teams and networks across and within different organisations. It is likely that traditional approaches to leadership which focus on the specific actions of leaders will not be appropriate in collaborative situations and, importantly, there is a need to focus on processes and skills that do not always reside in formally dedicated leaders. Hence the need to consider more dispersed and catalytic forms and approaches.

Figure 4 contrasts traditional forms of leadership with styles that are likely to be more effective in collaborative situations. Here the sovereign or charismatic leader who projects a firm and directive approach is contrasted with a more facilitative and catalytic form which is intent on fostering partnerships amongst equals.

Figure 4: CONTRASTS BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND COLLABORATIVE STYLES OF LEADERSHIP (BASED ON LUKE, 1998)

TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP	COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP
Hierarchical	Non-hierarchical and inter-organisational
Evokes followership	Evokes collaboration and concerted action
Takes charge; seizes the reins of an organisation	Provides the necessary catalyst or spark for action
Takes responsibility for moving followers in certain directions	Takes responsibility for convening stakeholders and facilitates agreements for collective action
Heroic; provides the right answers	Facilitative; asks the right questions
Has a stake in a particular solution or strategy	Has a stake in getting to agreed-upon outcomes but encourages divergent ways to reach them

The leadership skills required to be effective in collaborative settings comprise (Luke, 1998; Kanter, 1997; Feyerherm, 1994; Jean-Louis Denis, 2005):

- An ability to think and act strategically involving systemic thinking to appreciate interconnections and key leverage points; to frame and re-frame issues; to envisage outcomes; to identify, assess and reflect stakeholder interests

- A capacity to integrate the differences between people and agencies from different sectors, disciplines, professions, functions, cultures and stages of the policy process
- The interpersonal skills to facilitate effective team work or networks based on negotiation, influencing, conflict resolution, facilitation, mediation and diplomacy
- The analytical and conceptualising skills to understand and manage deep complexity
- A capacity to constitute and maintain strong and durable networks to design and deliver strategies and projects
- An ability to perform as a translator by understanding the diverse meanings and aspirations of disparate constituencies
- A capacity for creativity and an ability to create frameworks of learning to enhance the cross fertilisation of ideas and practices.

The general leadership perspective is ideally 'dispersed' which focuses on developing open, inclusive and participatory decision making processes, and reflects the interaction between the inter-organisational context and the leader's capabilities. The leadership function in this approach is not the exclusive domain of formal leaders but dispersed throughout a partnership as a collective and negotiated process. Also, this may change over time as a result of experiences and different challenges. Essentially, the leader is embedded in an ongoing social process shared with others, not as an external authority intent on imposing his/her will.

As well as different leadership roles and styles, the stage of the partnership process is likely to demand particular leadership responses. A life cycle (Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998) typically consists of a pre-partnership process where the emphasis is on networking, informality and exploration, a formal partnership creation process which requires attention to governance arrangements, membership, ways of working and accountabilities, a delivery stage which focuses on resources, contracts and project management, and sometimes a partnership termination and succession stage which is both reflective and looks to opportunities in the future. The key point here is that the form of leadership, and who enacts it, is likely to vary at these different stages. Appendix 3 illustrates another model that reflects the different stages through which partnerships often progress and the tasks involved at each stage.

Key Learning Point 5

Leadership approaches in collaborative environments need to reflect the ambiguous and complex pattern of power relationships. Leadership approaches practiced in hierarchical situations are not appropriate to collaborative settings. They should be based on dispersed forms of leadership which emphasise facilitation, networking, strong inter-personal skills, integration and strategic action and thinking. Different leadership roles (e.g. convenor, mediator, and driver) and styles need to reflect the demands of the particular situation and be flexible to accommodate circumstances at different stages.

People Working in Collaboration need the Right Skills and Attributes

Managing within collaborative arenas is materially different to managing within single organisations. These environments are characterised by deep complexity, dispersed and shifting power relationships, multiple accountabilities, different organisational cultures and ways of working and assorted motivations and aims. Typically, they are sites where people from different organisations, backgrounds, sectors and professions come together to explore the potential for co-operative action. It follows logically that these people need a particular set of skills, abilities, capabilities and behaviours to be effective in this network form of organising. The application of skill sets and behaviours suitable for intra-organisational management are not transferable to inter-organisational situations.

A number of research studies highlight the importance of having dedicated people attached to partnerships who provide important co-ordination, facilitation and liaison roles to help in particular with the complex, and time-consuming collaborative process. Naturally, it is important that these officers have the appropriate boundary spanning competencies that are necessary for effective working in this environment. However, there are many other practitioners and officers, at different levels in the partnering organisations, and involved at different stages of the policy process, who also need to be comfortable working in this mode of management, and require the necessary skills and training.

A possible framework for considering the type of competencies necessary is illustrated in Figure 5 below. It suggests that there are particular competencies (defined as skills, knowledge and experience) necessary to discharge a number of defined collaborative roles. Any form of collaboration, both new and existing, should address this important issue of individual and organisational capabilities. It is a matter that needs to be revisited on a regular basis throughout the lifetime of the partnerships, possibly through the medium of partnership health checks (Hardy et al, 2000), and specific training and development can be identified and addressed.

Figure 5: COLLABORATIVE ROLES AND COMPETENCIES (WILLIAMS, 2005)	
KEY ROLES	**COLLABORATIVE COMPETENCIES**
RETICULIST	• Networking skills • Information intermediary
ENTREPRENUEUR	• Creativity and innovation • Brokering • Entrepreneurial skills • Risk taking and opportunism
LEADER	• Skilled in different influencing strategies • Negotiation, mediation and facilitation • Political skills • Diplomacy • Coalition building and consensus seeking • Manages multiple accountabilities
INTERPRETER AND COMMUNICATOR	• Builds and maintains inter-personal relationships • Comprehensive communication skills • Active listening • Empathising • Framing and sense making • Develops and promotes trusting relationships
EXPERT	• Understanding of policy context including roles and motivation • Trans-disciplinary knowledge • Inter-organisational and inter-sectoral experience • Analytical skills

Although great emphasis here is placed on the need to enhance the collaborative competencies of practitioners and managers to work in network forms of organising, it is important to recognise that these actors will also be required to manage in other forms as well – in hierarchies and to a lesser extent markets. The challenge here is knowing when and how to switch between different modes, and how to manage the tensions that are created at the interfaces.

Key Learning Point 6

Working in collaborative environments requires a distinct set of competencies that are different to those necessary in other forms of organising. It is important to ensure that there are dedicated boundary spanners attached to collaborative ventures, but also that boundary spanning competencies are mainstreamed into the training and development of the many practitioners and managers who are involved in collaborative working.

There is No Substitute for Effective Governance

There are dangers in assuming that working in collaboration does not require effective and appropriate governance arrangements. Although there is a seductive and inherent charm in the informality and contrasts presented by collaborative working, the necessity of establishing effective governance arrangements are no less important than in other forms of organising. In fact, in some ways, it can be seen as more important in collaboratives because of the complexities of multiple accountabilities, transparency and performance. The spread and influence of partnerships across the policy spectrum now mirrors that of the much derided “quangos”, and similar concerns about lack of democratic accountability, lack of transparency and unclear performance management frameworks are frequently voiced.

Hence, the importance of constructing governance arrangements that are suitable for different forms of collaboration. A number of different models exist depending on the purposes of the venture, but a number of key issues have to be resolved including, membership, rules of engagement, scrutiny, roles, decision making arrangements, reporting mechanisms, financial accounting and lines of accountability and responsibility. Whilst trying to avoid creating an overly bureaucratic system which might conspire to reduce flexibility and innovation and ‘bog down’ the collaboration in unnecessary governance, clear, ambiguous and formal governance arrangements have to be constituted.

Protocols, contracts and legal agreements will be necessary particularly during times of programme or project delivery. Public organisations are the subject of careful scrutiny especially where finance is concerned but also in terms of effectiveness and value for money. Good governance is an essential element of achieving these, and the right balance needs to be struck between managing risks and not stifling innovation and flexibility which are the hallmarks of this method of governance.

Key Learning Point 7

It is essential to design governance arrangements appropriate for the particular partnership forms that have clear lines of accountability, reporting mechanisms and membership, and that decision making arrangements are open, transparent and formalised through protocols or other agreements (legal or otherwise).

Resourcing is Critical

The question of resources is the acid test of the commitment for joint action. The overall resource situation is likely to be tight and competition for scare resources acute. Generally, resource issues in collaboration are of two types – staff and finance. The nature of the collaborative process, which places a high premium on building and sustaining relationships, negotiating consensus amongst a range of different parties, keeping individuals and agencies informed, networking and valuing inclusivity, is heavily reliant on staff and structures to support it. This has implications for resources and it is important to resolve how these are shared between different partners. Typically, some of the staffing and administration costs are borne in kind by agencies, but the importance of dedicated personnel to bear the brunt of co-ordination and administration entails extra costs. It is not uncommon for a sense of injustice to be created if the costs of staffing and general servicing of collaborative processes are not shared equally amongst partners. However, it is likely that some agencies – for example the public agencies – will be better placed to bear a higher proportion of the costs than the voluntary or community sector.

There are reports that staff members in some organisations consider that collaborative working is something that they do which is in some way an 'extra burden' on an existing heavy workload. This view should be countered with arguments that suggest that this way of working is different rather than additional to mainstream job duties. In the longer term, the benefits of collaborative working in terms of building social capital and investing in trusting relationships should reduce normal transaction costs and release the full potential of co-operative activity.

Discussions about resource allocation or reallocation are often avoided or approached with some trepidation. In relation to financial resources, the precise form and purpose of the collaboration matter, but delivery issues are likely to be dominated by a discussion on who does what and how activities can be resourced. To some extent, this is clearer in collaborative initiatives that involve new money being injected into an area/policy issue as a result of a successful bid. Even so, clarity is important on how this money is used and accounted for. However, it is more problematic where, for example, shared strategic objectives are designed to encourage organisations to re-align or re-focus their spending patterns and priorities. This is less easily achieved, is often a source of antagonism and is often less transparent.

Some forms of collaboration are largely exploratory and experimental in nature and designed to determine what works in particular situations. The expectation is that the resultant learning experience is 'mainstreamed' into the business of affected organisations. Evidence suggests that this is rarely an automatic process, continuity of projects or programmes is difficult to sustain and expectations can be easily dashed. The lack of availability or ambiguity of evidence-based evaluation on the success or otherwise of policy interventions does not help resolve this dilemma.

Key Learning Point 8

Working in collaboration is often resource intensive both in terms of staff and finance. The staffing and servicing arrangements of collaborative ventures need to be shared equally amongst partner organisations. The financial implications of delivering programmes, seeking a re-alignment of existing resource priorities or achieving mainstreaming must be tackled robustly.

Delivery is Difficult

The problems of delivery in single agencies are well documented but they are unique and complex in inter-organisational settings because of the assembly of multiple and diverse interests, continuous bargaining and negotiation, and absence of sovereign authority and central controlling mechanisms. However, it is a salutary reminder that: "strategies will remain only great ideas and good intentions until concretized in actual institutional structures, processes, interactions, and resources" (Luke, 1998: 132).

Two issues should be addressed at an early stage. Firstly, it needs to be acknowledged that the policy process is integrated and that the formulation stage should not be detached from the delivery stage. Both need to be addressed simultaneously by strategists and deliverers. Secondly, thought should be invested in deciding what constitutes 'delivery' for the purposes of the particular form of collaboration. For instance, delivery could be interpreted as process outcomes such as sharing information and staff, understanding partners' priorities and joint funding or projects, governance outcomes such as developing shared visions, disseminating good practice and enhancing local public participation or service outcomes in terms of meeting needs (ODPM/DfT, 2006). The legislative basis in Wales, as in England, is conducive to organisations intent on devising strategies to share and pool resources.

Key Learning Point 9

Delivery is notoriously difficult and the problems and difficulties of this are exacerbated in collaboration. Therefore, attention has to be focused on designing appropriate implementation processes and structures to ensure effective delivery.

Measure Performance Outcomes and Publicising Success

Demands for greater public accountability and an emerging 'evidence-based' culture in UK public policy have increased the profile of performance and evaluation. However, these represent highly complex conceptual, methodological and practical challenges in collaborative settings, particularly in relation to establishing causal effects, additionality and sustainability. Performance management and evaluation require a commitment of time and resources, and critically, are functions that need to be built into the policy making process from inception not as an afterthought.

Performance management is now a familiar activity in public agencies but frameworks are not unified and consistent across different sectors and organisations. The Balanced Scorecard Methodology is used in the NHS whereas Wales Programme for Improvement is the preferred model in local government. In collaborative initiatives that are designed to create 'added advantage' through working together, new collaborative performance management frameworks need to be designed. Shared outcome measures, quality of life or well being indicators need to be carefully developed to capture the essence of collaborative working. It is important for the profile of a collaboration that it is able to determine the extent to which it is achieving its purposes, and that this information is regularly transmitted to the parent organisations and to the public. Some of this information may be compiled in output terms, but outcome measures are likely to be more meaningful.

Evidence suggests that 'publicising successes' particularly at an early stage is a good investment for encouraging commitment. The process of working in collaboration can be viewed as leading to significant outcomes in its own right in terms of building social capital between organisations, enhancing and sustaining effective networks based on trusting relationships, and promoting shared learning. Partnership health checks and toolkits are available to monitor and assess the robustness of partnerships, although every encouragement should be given to organisations to act on the results of such exercises.

There are a number of approaches to evaluation. Some are driven by methods and others are theory led; some tackle evaluation as separate from the intervention, whereas others see evaluation as closely linked and as a means of improving policy development; lastly, in some cases, the process of evaluation is explicitly deigned to empower local communities or service users.

Evaluation approaches such as 'Theories of Change' that acknowledge the importance of context and the range of often conflicting views and interests of stakeholders have become popular in relation to complex public policy interventions.

In view of the limited success of evaluation studies in general in informing public policy, there needs to be a greater investment in time and resources to help policy makers and practitioners understand and believe in the benefits of using evidence; that the users of the research should be involved in the evaluation process and design; that the research is timely and the methodology is uncontested; and that results are reported in forms that are useable by practitioners.

Key Learning Point 10

Robust, regular and meaningful monitoring, evaluation and performance management frameworks need to be designed into the process of collaboration from the outset and not bolted-on as optional extras at a later date.

Engage with the Public

Collaborative public management is increasingly grounded in strategies that seek to place citizens and clients at the centre of the design and delivery of public services. Citizen-centred collaborative management emphasises the role of the public within deliberative and collective governance processes and acknowledges the value of citizenship (Cooper et al, 2006). A client-focus ensures that the needs of service users are paramount in the design and delivery of public services.

There are a range of different approaches to public participation and it is very important to determine which are 'fit for purpose' for particular circumstances. Also, different forms of partnership – strategic, policy-based or neighbourhood – have different implications for public participation approaches (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002), and so the level of government is a material factor. The degree of public trust in political processes is low and insincere or ineffective attempts at public participation are likely to exacerbate this situation. Therefore, public participation strategies need to be carefully designed and, critically, built into the policy making process. A number of key issues will be the focus of discussion:

- **Who is involved?:** the 'public' takes many forms and people are involved as citizens, as users of services, and as members of area-based communities and communities of interest.
- **Why is the public involved?:** it is important to be clear at what stage in the policy process the public is being engaged – policy creation, delivery, monitoring, evaluation or throughout the entire process. Transparency is important, but above all else, is the need to ensure regular and meaningful feedback to illustrate how citizens and users have shaped the decision making processes.
- **How is the public involved?:** the processes through which the public is involved are potentially extensive and diverse, ranging from traditional techniques such as public meetings, exhibitions, focus group discussions, consultation exercises and roadshows, to more innovative methods such as vox pop and festivals. One issue that needs to be carefully managed is the potential conflict between representative and participatory approaches to public involvement, and the role and legitimacy of formal and informal community leaders.

- **Capacity and Cost?:** effective public participation is resource intensive both in terms of finance and staff; the process is often lengthy and this requires co-ordination and support. It is premised on a capacity to engage the whole community and not just those sections that are familiar with political processes. 'Hard to Reach' groups need special attention and this might take the form of capacity building programmes and the use of skilled outreach workers.

Key Learning Point 11

Collaborative public management needs to be 'citizen-centred' and 'client-focused'. Public participation approaches need to be carefully designed and informed by key decisions on who to involve, why, how and at what level? The public needs the capacity to be involved effectively and there are often significant resource implications.

Promote Learning

One of the major benefits of collaborative working is the enhanced understanding and learning that is created through people and organisations from diverse backgrounds coming together to tackle complex and unpredictable societal problems. Strategies for action emerge as people, acting collectively, come to learn about situations, as well as the joint agencies' capacity for dealing with them. Although there is a robust debate on whether organisational learning is an individual or collective matter, there are advantages in viewing it as a collective issue in that factors that inhibit or promote individual learning such as structure, process, culture and leadership, can be addressed. Organisations that deliberatively develop strategies to promote learning are sometimes referred to as 'learning organisations'.

This concept might usefully be extended to the inter-organisational level and incorporated as part of effective management strategies within collaborative initiatives. Appendix 4 illustrates a range of factors that may form part of such an approach. However, it is critically important that any strategy that aims to enhance learning and knowledge management is inextricably linked to business strategy, to work processes, to culture and to behaviour (Davenport and Prusak, 2000).

The advantages of acknowledging learning is that it recognises the importance of experimentation and disperses the burden of leadership to all levels in an organisation. The role of formal leaders is to promote a culture of learning, and to enable and facilitate individuals and groups to realise their potential in this area.

It is sometimes difficult to assess the extent to which individuals and organisations have acquired new learning and applied this in the form of organisational action. Some of this learning is 'potential' and will only be released at a later date. However, it is important to attempt to gauge change as it often represents a key outcome of collaborative working.

Key Learning Point 12

An important outcome of collaborative working is learning – for individuals, organisations and for the collaboration as a whole. Strategies need to be put in place to enhance learning and to gauge its effectiveness

CONCLUSION

Managing in collaborative environments is materially different from that in other forms of organising and it demands different approaches, behaviours and cultures. Practitioners, managers and other actors who assemble together to pursue joint strategies and action must learn and practice leadership and management skills that are different from those they have acquired and become familiar with in single organisations. The challenges they face are often daunting because of high levels of complexity, problems of multiple accountabilities and dispersed power relationships. In the face of often lengthy and tortuous decision making processes, it is easy to revert back to individual and organisational self-interest. But the benefits of collaborative working particularly in its more developed forms in terms of synergy and co-production are highly rewarding.

It is hoped that this practical guide for practitioners and managers will help to focus efforts on those issues which are likely to determine the success or otherwise of collaborative efforts.

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Appendix 1: POTENTIAL COSTS AND BENEFITS OF COLLABORATIVE WORKING

BENEFITS

- Opportunities to learn and to adapt are created
- New resources – time, money, information, raw materials, legitimacy and status – can be acquired
- The costs involved of developing new policies and services and the associated risks can be shared.
- Influence over a policy or sector can be enhanced
- Ability to manage uncertainty and solve complex problems can be improved
- The mutual support of other organisations can be gained and harmonious working relationships created
- It allows a broad and comprehensive analysis of problem to be explored
- The response capability is more diversified through joint action from different partners
- The process ensures that each stakeholders' interests are considered in any agreement
- Parties retain ownership of the solution
- Participation enhances acceptance of the solution, greater ownership and willingness to implement it
- Potential to deliver novel, innovative solutions is enhanced
- Transaction costs associated with working in hierarchies and markets methods are avoided
- Mechanisms for co-ordinating future action among partners can be established through increased trust and building social capital
- Collaboration encourages a more efficient use of scarce resources, avoids duplication and promotes co-ordination

COSTS

- Can result in loss of technological superiority
- Loss of resources – time, money, information, raw material, legitimacy and status
- Perceived danger of being linked with failure, and sharing the costs of failing such as loss of reputation, status and financial position
- Loss of autonomy and ability to unilaterally control outcomes;
- Goal displacement and general lack of loss of control
- Conflict over domain, goals, methods
- Delays in solutions due to problems in co-ordination and higher transaction costs
- Increased complexity of decision making
- Problems of lack of accountability and transparency
- Confusion over organisational identity and professional roles

Appendix 2: FACTORS SUPPORTING OR HINDERING COLLABORATIVE WORKING

Context and External Environment

- Past history of collaboration or co-operation
- Political climate
- Financial situation
- Institutional changes and re-organisation/fragmentation
- Co-terminosity
- Levels of complexity

Purpose

- Concrete, attainable goals and objectives
- Shared vision and purposes

Organisational Factors

- Roles and responsibilities
- Strategic support and commitment
- Representation
- Accountabilities
- Planning cycles and timescales

Leadership and Management

- Effective and appropriate leadership
- Practitioners and managers with appropriate skills
- Training and development
- Mutual respect, understanding and trust
- Ability to compromise

Communication

- Open and frequent communication
- Informal and formal communication links
- External publicity
- Relationship to citizens and clients

Resources

- Servicing and co-ordination of collaborative structures
- Availability of new resources
- Funding mechanisms
- Accounting procedures

Cultural and Professional Factors

- Negative assessments/professional stereotypes
- Trust and respect
- Joint training/team building
- Different professional philosophies and ideologies

Appendix 3: STAGES IN THE PARTNERSHIP PROCESS (Wilson and Charlton, 1997:16)

STAGE	ACTIVITIES
1	Partners come together through mutual recognition of a common need, or in a joint effort to obtain public funds. If they have not worked together before, the partners begin the process of overcoming differences in backgrounds and approach, building trust and respect. There may be a need for training, building each partner's capacity to operate effectively in this new organisation
2	Through a process of dialogue and discussion, the partners establish the common ground and work towards agreeing a vision and mission statement for the initiative The original core group might agree on the need to involve more individuals and organizations in the initiative The partners develop mechanisms for assessing needs and quantifying the size of the task they propose to undertake The initiative combines the information generated by the needs assessment exercise with the vision and mission statement to produce an agenda for action
3	The formal framework and organisational structure of the partnership is designed and put in place The partners set specific goals, targets and objectives linked to the agenda for action Where appropriate, the executive arm of the partnership selects or appoints a management team to oversee the work of the initiative
4	The partnership delivers to its action plan, whether this be service provision or some other function The executive arm seeks to maintain the involvement of all partners, formulates policy decisions and ensures the continuing accountability of the partnership There is an ongoing process of assessing, evaluating and refining the operations of the partnership
5	Where appropriate, the partners should plan their exit strategy. This involves developing a new set of goals for the survival and continuation of the work of the initiative in some form They should seek to create 'life after death' by transferring the assets of the partnership back into the community with which they work

Appendix 4: FACTORS PROMOTING COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

- A learning approach to strategy process
- Leaders that promote learning
- High levels of participation in policy making by practitioners, managers and other key stakeholders
- Decentralised decision making
- Regular skill inventories and audits
- Use of IT to share knowledge and encourage mutual awareness
- A culture of feedback and disclosure
- Continuous learning opportunities
- Promotion of dialogue and inquiry
- Promotion of 'reflective practitioners'
- Staff reward systems that incentivize learning
- Systems and enabling structures for sharing and exchanging learning
- Boundary workers who collect and transmit 'environmental' information within and between organizations
- Opportunities to learn from experience – action learning
- Willingness and ability to learn from others
- A culture that encourages experimentation
- The availability of learning from successes and failures
- Mechanisms to encourage and support self-development
- Cross-functional and cross-sector teams
- Sharing of ideas across boundaries – vertical, horizontal, geographical, temporal, sectoral and professional

(Adapted from Palmer and Hardy, 2000 and Burgoyne et al, 1994)